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ARTICLE

Special issue introduction: Towards a global history of international organizations and decolonization

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Abstract
Decolonization and the expansion of international organizations in the twentieth century are crucial developments in modern global history, yet scholars have seldom closely studied their impact on one another. While decolonization is often presented as the 'success story' of international organizations, these bodies have also been condemned as instruments of neocolonialism. This introduction and special issue moves beyond this binary and investigates the multifaceted roles that international organizations have played in decolonizing countries and how the dissolution of European empires has in turn affected the development of international organizations. International organizations were neither straightforward tools of empire or neocolonialism, nor natural instruments for 'Third World' liberation. Rather, the contributions collected here underline a history of decolonization that defies any teleological framing and emphasizes diverse trajectories of global interaction facilitated through international organizations. The introduction offers an overview of recent literature on the topic and discusses promising avenues for further research.

Keywords: International Organizations; Decolonization; League of Nations; United Nations

Membership in the United Nations has almost quadrupled since its founding in 1945, with the vast majority of new states admitted over this period resulting from the collapse of European imperial regimes. Decolonization or 'the great transformation that brought into being the countries of the Third World', and the expansion of international organizations (both non-governmental and inter-governmental) in the twentieth century are among the most momentous developments in modern global history, yet scholars have seldom closely studied their impact on one another.[1] Statistics of UN membership are frequently cited as proof of decolonization in historical overviews, but such surveys pay little attention to the significance of international organizations for that process.[2] While UN officials tend to present decolonization as the 'success story'

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[1]A recent exception being Nicole Eggers, Jessica L. Pearson, and Aurora Almada e Santos, eds., *The United Nations and Decolonization* (New York: Routledge, 2020).

[2]See for example Jan Jansen and Jürgen Osterhammel, *Dekolonisation: Das Ende der Imperien* (München: C.H. Beck, 2013); Dane Kennedy, *Decolonization: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016); similarly, the Oxford Handbook of the Ends of Empire seems to feature a photograph of UN member name tags on its cover, while no single chapter is devoted to the role of international organizations (though of course they surface in individual chapters), see Martin Thomas and Andrew Thompson, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of the Ends of Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

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of the world organization, numerous scholars and commentators have condemned international organizations as instruments of neocolonialism.[3]

This special issue moves beyond this binary and investigates the multifaceted roles that international organizations have played in decolonizing countries and how the dissolution of European empires has in turn affected the development of international organizations. Collectively, we ask how the end of empire has affected twentieth century processes of global integration through international cooperation.[4] The contributions underline a broader history of decolonization that defies any teleological framing and emphasizes diverse trajectories of global interaction facilitated through international organizations. What emerges is not a story of international organizations as straightforward tools of empire or neocolonialism, or as natural instruments for 'Third World' liberation. Rather, the articles reveal the importance of the agency and coordination, but also fundamental disagreements with regard to decolonization among the broad swath of countries that are often lumped together as the Global South. They demonstrate that there were multiple projects folded into decolonization and international organizations, which served as incubators of challenges to the political, economic, and civilizational hierarchies of the day. Taken together, the articles reveal the plurality of chronologies and meanings of global decolonization in the twentieth century, which, we argue, cannot be separated from the history of international organizations.

What are international organizations? Rather than proceed from a narrow definition, we consciously use 'international organization' as a broad umbrella term for different types of organizations, both intergovernmental and non-governmental, that were active in multiple countries and/or composed of members – not necessarily states – from different countries. Each international organization encompasses multiple entities of its own (from intergovernmental forums, to expert communities, to international bureaucracies) and each entity had its own implicit or explicit vision of world order and decolonization. No IO, we suggest, was able to impose a coherent system of international order on the world. Taken together, the papers collected in this special issue, reveal the multiplicity of entities that make up any international organization, and accordingly, the different, often contradictory roles that they have played in processes of decolonization in the twentieth century.

For example, as the contributions by Disha Jani, Cindy Ewing and Elisabeth Leake show, international organizations have served as sounding boards and norm-setting spaces to reimagine and (re)formulate ideas about self-determination and decolonization. As Bogdan Iacob's article demonstrates, IOs have also served as anchors for international expert communities that helped shape processes of decolonization in specific fields and locales. Or as Giorgio Potì's contribution makes clear, they have served as mediators caught in-between competing interests of member states and even non-member states negotiating de- as well as 'post-colonial re-colonization'. The most interesting contributions to the study of international organizations, we believe and hope to show with this special issue, pay close attention to this multiplicity of actors and functions contained within any IO, the complex interplay between these different entities, as well their interaction or relationship with each other, and, in some cases, with rival international organizations at the time.

[3]For the necolonialism argument see for example Antony Anghie, *Colonialism, Sovereignty, and the Making of International Law* (New York City: Cambridge University Press, 2004); for decolonization as a success story of the UN see e.g. Brian Urquhart, *Ralph Bunche: An American Life* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1993), 122. The UN Website 'Decolonization' reads: 'The wave of decolonization, which changed the face of the planet, was born with the UN and represents the world body's first great success.'

https://www.un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/decolonization/index.html, last accessed 13 January 2020.

[4]See also the emphasis of the authors of the introduction to the Oxford Handbook of the Ends of Empires on writing a global history of decolonization and their insistence on seeing 'the end of empires as geopolitical force just as profound as globalization, and not merely a function of it'. Martin Thomas and Andrew Thompson, 'Rethinking Decolonization: A New Research Agenda for the Twenty-First Century,' in *The Oxford Handbook of the Ends of Empire*, ed. Martin Thomas and Andrew Thompson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 18.

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Collectively, we would like to advance an understanding of IOs as more than passive international forums, but rather as multi-body entities that fundamentally shaped processes and outcomes of decolonization.

Recent years have witnessed a proliferation of excellent historical studies of international organizations, especially the League of Nations, the UN and affiliated agencies, as well as internationalism and globalism broadly defined.[5] These 'new histories' approach international organizations as 'observation points' for studying the plurality of intellectual, cultural and political phenomena that transcend the borders of nations – such as development, human rights, or anti-colonialism, and, increasingly, also focus on the changing nature of these institutions themselves.[6] Scholarship on decolonization, meanwhile, has shifted away from a primary focus on understanding the reasons for the dissolution of European empires that resulted in the political independence of former colonies. Rather, the broader transformation itself – changes in culture, economics, law, the state bureaucracy and so on – that both preceded and outlasted constitutional independence has become a central scholarly concern.[7] The special issue brings these two important strands of historical scholarship into conversation to better illuminate the world created by decolonization and the global institutions that seek to govern it.

At the most basic level, decolonization has been described as a global 'apparatus for the production of sovereignties, … a sovereignty machine that produces political entities according to international law: states with demarcated territory, a constitution, a legal framework, a government, police, a flag, and a national anthem'.[8] In the postwar period, UN membership became an important marker of recognition for statehood. What has received comparatively little attention, however, is that representatives of international organizations were often intimately involved in the constitution-writing processes, the formation of post-colonial governments, and the maintenance

[5]For overviews and introductions to League and UN history see Susan Pedersen, 'Back to the League of Nations,' *The American Historical Review* 112, no. 4 (October 2007); Sunil Amrith and Glenda Sluga, 'New Histories of the United Nations,' *Journal of World History* 19, no. 3 (2008): 251–74; Simon Jackson and Alanna O'Malley, eds., *The Institution of International Order: From the League of Nations to the United Nations* (London: Routledge, 2018); for studies of internationalism and globalism see Daniel Gorman, *The Emergence of International Society in the 1920s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Mark Mazower, *Governing the World : The History of an Idea* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2012); Glenda Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, Inc., 2015); Glenda Sluga and Patricia Clavin, eds., *Internationalisms: A Twentieth-Century History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Or Rosenboim, *The Emergence of Globalism: Visions of World Order in Britain and the United States, 1939–1950* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017); Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo and José Pedro Monteiro, eds., *The Pasts of the Present: Internationalism, Imperialism and the Formation of the Contemporary World* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

[6]Amrith and Sluga, 'New Histories'; Sandrine Kott, 'International Organizations – A Field of Research for a Global History,' *Zeithistorische Forschungen/Studies in Contemporary History*, 2011; for 'new histories' of indvidual international organizations based on institutional archival papers, see e.g. Michele Alacevich, *The Political Economy of the World Bank : The Early Years* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009); Daniel Maul, *Human Rights, Development and Decolonization : The International Labour Organization, 1940–70* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Patricia Clavin, *Securing the World Economy: The Reinvention of the League of Nations, 1920–1946* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Susan Pedersen, *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire* (Oxford University Press, 2015); Matthias Schmelzer, *The Hegemony of Growth: The OECD and the Making of the Economic Growth Paradigm* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Patrick Sharma, *Robert McNamara's Other War: The World Bank and International Development* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017); Eva-Maria Muschik, *Building States: The United Nations, Development, and Decolonization, 1945–1965* (New York City: Columbia University Press, 2022); Elisabeth Röhrlich, *Inspectors for Peace: A History of the International Atomic Energy Agency* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2022).

[7]Kennedy, *Decolonization*; Maurice M. Labelle and Chris Dietrich, 'Editors' Note: New Histories of Twentieth-Century Decolonization,' *Canadian Journal of History* 52, no. 3 (2017): 417–19; Thomas and Thompson, 'Rethinking Decolonization'; Cyrus Schayegh and Yoav Di-Capua, 'Why Decolonization?,' *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 52, no. 1 (2020): 137–45.

[8]Jansen and Osterhammel, *Dekolonisation*, 12.

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and restructuring of state bureaucracies.[9] Scholars have begun to push back against the notion of a simple extension of a 'Westphalian system' of nominal nation-based sovereignty from Europe to the rest of the globe.[10] The task for historians going forward in writing a truly global history of decolonization, we argue, is to look more closely at *what kind* of sovereignties were produced and the multifaceted roles that international organizations have come to play in them since.[11]

Richard Drayton and David Motadel argued in these pages that global history as we know it is itself as result of postwar decolonization.[12] They also suggest that national history still remains the primary mode through which most contributions to 'world history' or 'international history' happen.[13] This special issue avoids such 'container-based' histories (be it national or imperial), by using international organizations as observations points for global history, as both 'protagonists and seismographs of global decolonization', as Daniel Maul puts it.[14] Yet, global history is necessarily concerned with more than connections and entanglements, namely with increasing global integration.[15] We argue that international organizations must be seen as important vehicles for integration in the twentieth century. Yet, as this special issue illustrates, integration was neither a quasi-natural process nor an imposition of 'the West on the rest', but the work of diverse historical actors, with a variety of often-times competing agendas.

A brief history of international organizations and decolonization[16]

International organizations have a long history, but their proliferation reached unprecedented heights at the beginning of the last century.[17] Similarly, decolonization is not strictly a twentieth century phenomenon: a first wave of decolonization swept the Americas in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.[18] Yet it took two world wars to usher in the wave of decolonization that – after a relatively short-lived 'federal moment' –[19] produced the system of nation-states across

[9]The UN involvement in Libya in the early 1950s and in the Congo in the early 1960s provide but two examples. For Libya and the Congo, see Muschik, *Building States*, Chapter 2 and 6; for UN involvement in building up state bureaucracies more generally see Eva-Maria Muschik, 'Managing the World: The United Nations, Decolonization, and the Strange Triumph of State Sovereignty in the 1950s and 1960s,' *Journal of Global History* 13, no. 1 (2018): 121–44; for constitution writing as a form of expert knowledge see Sara Kendall, '"Constitutional Technicity": Displacing Politics through Expert Knowledge,' *Law, Culture and the Humanities* 11, no. 3 (2015): 363–77; also see Guy Fiti Sinclair and Nehal Bhuta, 'Introdcution: Technologies of Stateness,' *Humanity* 11, no. 1 (2020): 1–5 as well as other contributions to that special issue.

[10]Karuna Matena, 'Popular Sovereignty and Anti-Colonialism,' in *Popular Sovereignty in Historical Perspective*, ed. Richard Bourke and Quentin Skinner (New York City: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 297–319; Adom Getachew, *Worldmaking After Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019); also see Claire Vergerio, 'Beyond the Nation-State,' *Boston Review*, May 27, 2021.

[11]For a similar approach see Gregory Mann, *From Empires to NGOs in the West African Sahel : The Road to Nongovernmentality*, African Studies Series 129 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Guy Fiti Sinclair, *To Reform the World: International Organizations and the Making of Modern States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

[12]Richard Drayton and David Motadel, 'Discussion: The Futures of Global History,' *Journal of Global History* 13, no. 1 (2018): 4; Sebastian Conrad, by contrast, sees the 1990s as a watershed moment, see Sebastian Conrad, *What Is Global History?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016).

[13]Drayton and Motadel, 'Discussion: The Futures of Global History,' 8.

[14]Maul, *Human Rights, Development and Decolonization*, 4.

[15]Conrad, *What Is Global History?*, 67f.

[16]Parts of this section overlap with the introduction to Muschik, *Building States*.

[17]For the growth of international organizations, see Akira Iriye, *Global Community: The Role of International Organizations in the Making of the Contemporary World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Madeleine Herren-Oesch, *Internationale Organisationen seit 1865: Eine Globalgeschichte der internationalen Ordnung* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2009); Mazower, *Governing the World*.

[18]On the inadequacy of distinguishing between subsequent regional waves of decolonization see Schayegh and Di-Capua, 'Why Decolonization?,'143.

[19]Michael Collins, 'Decolonisation and the "Federal Moment",' *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 24, no. 1 (2013): 21–40; Getachew, *Worldmaking After Empire*, Chapter 4.

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much of Africa, Asia and the Pacific that we still inhabit today.[20] The wars, too, proved a catalyst for international cooperation, but the relationship between the newly created institutions aspiring to global governance and the proliferation of independent states was not as straightforward as one might assume.

Despite a 'Wilsonian moment' in 1919, when anti-colonial leaders converged on Europe to demand self-determination at the Paris Peace Conference, the premier institution of global governance that emerged from World War One – the League of Nations – was designed by the victorious allied states to protect the interests of empire.[21] The League, much like its successor organization the UN, was a multilateral organization that brought member states together to solve issues on an intergovernmental basis. Unlike the UN, the League included non-sovereign polities such as British India as member states and required restrictions on their sovereignty from others upon entry (e.g. in the form of minority protection contracts).[22] As Adom Getachew insists: unequal membership was a key feature of the League; though more inclusive and universal than prior projects of international organization, inclusion in Geneva operated through a process of unequal integration.[23]

In addition to the main intergovernmental bodies – the League Assembly and Council –, where national representatives convened, the League also featured the first permanent international bureaucracy composed of civil servants who carried out the day-to-day work of the organization. Reflecting international power hierarchies at the time, it was dominated by Western Europeans, especially from imperial powers, who shaped the organization's work.[24] There were also a number of boards, offices, commissions and organizations that were officially affiliated with the League, most prominently the still-existing International Labor Organization (ILO), as well as several expert networks that were more or less loosely connected with the world organization.[25] If we want to better understand the League's role in decolonization, we thus need be explicit about which particular entity we study as a stand-in for 'the League'.

At the heart of the League effort to protect empire was the mandates system, which provided for international oversight of the administration of former Ottoman and German colonial

[20]Kennedy broadly distinguishes between 'New World' decolonization of the Americas in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, 'Old World' decolonization of the Russian and Habsburg Eurasian land empires, and 'Third World' decolonization following the two world wars. He notes that 'decolonization of a sort' occurred across much of the Ottoman Empire in south-eastern Europe before the wars, as Greece, Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria and Albania gained independence, but notes that rival empires played crucial roles in these upheavals. Kennedy, *Decolonization*, Chapter 1 'Waves of decolonization'; on the relatively recent vintage of the nation-state system see Vergerio, 'Beyond the Nation-State'.

[21]For the 'Wisonian moment' see Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); for the 'Wilsonian moment' as counterrevolutionary see Getachew, *Worldmaking After Empire*, 40; for the League as a project of imperial rejuvenation see Mark Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace : The End of Empire and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009); Pedersen, *The Guardians*; Sean A. Wempe, 'A League to Preserve Empires: Understanding the Mandates System and Avenues for Further Scholarly Inquiry,' *American Historical Review* 124, no. 5 (2019): 1723–31.

[22]Susan Pedersen, 'An International Regime in an Age of Empire,' *American Historical Review* 124, no. 5 (2019): 1678; Thomas Gidney, '"An Anomaly Among Anomalies": Colonial Membership of the League of Nations' (PhD Thesis, Geneva, Graduate Institute of International Studies, 2021); on the restricted sovereignty of Ethiopia and Liberia see Getachew, *Worldmaking After Empire*, Chapter 2; on Eastern Europe see Natasha Wheatley and Peter Becker, eds., *Remaking Central Europe: The League of Nations and the Former Habsburg Lands* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021); Natasha Wheatley, *The Temporal Life of States: Central Europe and the Transformation of Modern Sovereignty*, forthcoming.

[23]Getachew, *Worldmaking After Empire*, 41, 51.

[24]Karen Gram-Skjoldager and Haakon A. Ikonomou, 'The Making of the International Civil Servant c. 1920–60: Establishing a Profession,' in *Organizing the 20th-Century World: International Organizations and the Emergence of International Public Administration, 1920–1960s* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020), 222.

[25]For an introduction to League historiography see Pedersen, 'Back to the League of Nations'; for the ILO see Maul, *Human Rights, Development and Decolonization*; Daniel Maul, *The International Labour Organization: 100 Years of Global Social Policy* (Berlin: DeGruyter, 2019).

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territories that were distributed among the victors of World War One.[26] The mandates system, as Susan Pedersen has shown, was intended as a project of imperial reconciliation and legitimation – despite its pronounced goal to benefit 'native peoples'. Above all, it was meant to foster constructive cooperation among the existing imperial powers. Beyond that, it was an attempt to turn imperialism into a transnational project that all League members – in different ways – could partake in.[27] Yet as Pedersen points out, intentions were not institutions. Though the League covenant, by promising 'wellbeing and development' to the inhabitants of the mandates and alluding to a (faraway) time when they might be 'able to stand by themselves', legitimized imperial hierarchies and the civilizing mission at the international level; it also provided an opening for claim-making.[28]

More importantly perhaps, the Permanent Mandates Commission in Geneva, the League body staffed with 'colonial experts', which reviewed reports from the mandate territories on a regular basis, functioned as an international stage on which imperial matters were publicly scrutinized. This novel mechanism normalized the notion that empire required defense and made imperial governance in the mandates burdensome.[29] Nominal independent statehood thus soon seemed like a preferable alternative to imperial powers and also appealed to revisionist League member states such as Germany, as well as anti-colonialists in the territories alike. That the mandates system thus became a force for decolonization, or, as Susan Pedersen puts it, that it 'lurched towards normative statehood', was unintended and inadvertent: sovereignty for 'dependent territories' was not *the result of*, but *an alternative to* international oversight.[30] Accordingly, but often missing from celebratory accounts of decolonization: the sovereign states that emerged from this process often featured economic arrangements 'that would do the work of empire' beyond independence.[31]

As the contributions to this special issue reveal, the League also had important effects on the colonial world beyond the immediate confines of the mandates system, and even beyond the confines of its limited membership: as Giorgio Potì shows, for both Egypt (which was only admitted to the League in 1937) and Great Britain, the League was an important site for mediating competing claims of sovereignty in the Nile Valley in the early 1920s. Bogdan Iacob in turn reveals how the League of Nations Health Organization – a predeccors to today's World Health Organization – facilitated the circulation of public health knowledge and practices across colonial territories and encouraged colonial administrators to expand health care to a broader population. Inadvertently, the League thus became a forum and sounding board for both Europeans and colonial peoples to reimagine the world and their place in it, thus breaking the monopoly of empires as the premier site for these negotiations.[32]

[26]The mandatory powers were Australia, Belgium, France, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, South Africa and Japan. Mandates in the Middle East included Palestine and Transjordan, Syria and Lebanon, as well as Iraq; in Africa: British and French Togo, British and French Cameroon, Ruanda-Urundi, Tanganyika, South West Africa; in the Pacific: the Japanese Mandated Islands, New Guinea, Nauru and Western Samoa. See also Cyrus Schayegh, 'The Mandates and/as Decolonization,' in *The Routledge Handbook of the History of the Middle East Mandates*, ed. Cyrus Schayegh and Andrew Arsan (London: Routledge, 2015), 412–19; the main study of the mandates system is Pedersen, *The Guardians*; for more recent reflections see Pedersen, 'An International Regime in an Age of Empire'; and Wempe, 'A League to Preserve Empires' as well as other contributions to the AHR forum by Sherene Seikaly, Carol Hakim, Yiğit Akın, Tze M. Loo, Molly McCullers, Meredith Terretta and Benjamin N. Lawrence, and George N. Njung.

[27]Pedersen, *The Guardians*, 403.

[28]See Article 22 of 'The Covenant of the League of Nations,' at https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/leagcov.asp, last accessed 13 January 2020. For a reflection on the disciplining nature of IO vocabulary see Pedersen, 'An International Regime in an Age of Empire,' 1676, 1679; for a much stronger condemnation see Wempe, 'A League to Preserve Empires,' 1728.

[29]Tracey Banivanua-Mar, *Decolonisation and the Pacific: Indigenous Globalisation and the Ends of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), Chapter 3; Pedersen, *The Guardians*; Pedersen, 'An International Regime in an Age of Empire,' 1680.

[30]Pedersen, *The Guardians*, 402f.

[31]Pedersen, 'An International Regime in an Age of Empire,' 1678 building on; Anghie, *Colonialism, Sovereignty, and the Making of International Law*; also see Getachew, *Worldmaking After Empire*, 62.

[32]Patricia Clavin, 'Time, Manner, Place: Writing Modern European History in Global, Transnational and International Contexts,' *European History Quarterly* 40, no. 4 (2010): 630.

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At the same time, the interwar period saw the emergence of anti-imperialism as a global movement that went well beyond the League.[33] Political activists from around the world increasingly sought to coordinate and connect their anti-colonial efforts through international meetings and novel organizations. The multiple pan-African and pan-Asian congresses, which took place in the 1920s, must be seen in that context. Participants called for regional unity and an end to European colonialism, condemning the League for its complicity in empire. The League Against Imperialism (LAI), established in Brussels in 1927, was one effort to institutionalize the anti-colonial movement at the global level. As the name suggests, it was intended as antidote to the League of Nations.[34] Supported by the Communist International – itself an avowedly anti-imperialist international organization – the LAI brought together anti-colonial leaders, as well as a motley crew of left-leaning activists, politicians and intellectuals from around the world.[35] A permanent Secretariat was set up in Berlin (the German communist Willi Münzenberg had been a driving force in establishing the LAI) and twenty-two local chapters were established by 1927. However, the organization broke apart in the early 1930s, after the Comintern increasingly sought to control the activities of its members and affiliates.[36] Nevertheless, the LAI, as Disha Jani argues in her contribution to this issue, was an important catalyst and incubator for anti-colonial networking and ideas regarding political as well as economic sovereignty that would prove influential well beyond the organization's relatively short-lived existence.[37]

World War II sent the League of Nations and affiliated agencies by and large into hibernation.[38] Somewhat paradoxically, however, the war also brought forth new forms of international cooperation, including a number of inter-imperial configurations, such as the Middle East Supply Center and the Anglo-American Caribbean Commission.[39] Thus, it was no foregone conclusion that another world organization would be set up after the war, and that, despite all the rhetoric of new beginnings, it would be fairly closely modeled on the League.[40] Much like the League in 1919,

[33]Vijay Prashad, *The Darker Nations: A People's History of the Third World* (New York: The New Press, 2008); Michael Goebel, *Anti-Imperial Metropolis, Interwar Paris and the Seeds of Third World Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Marc Matera, *Black London: The Imperial Metropolis and Decolonization in the Twentieth Century* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015); Jürgen Dinkel, *The Non-Aligned Movement: Genesis, Organization and Politics (1927–1992)*, New Perspectives on the Cold War 5 (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2019); Michele Louro, *Comrades against Imperialism: Nehru, India, and Interwar Internationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

[34]As an example of anti-colonial formations outside the communist umbrella Jeffrey Byrne points to the Negro Race Defence League, a francophone African movement founded by Léopold Senghor and the French Sudanese Tiemoko Garan Kouyaté to protest the Italian conquest of Ethiopia in 1935. Jeffrey J. Byrne, *Mecca of Revolution: Algeria, Decolonization, and the Third World Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 27.

[35]On the Comintern and decolonization see Getachew, *Worldmaking After Empire*, 51.

[36]Jürgen Dinkel, *Die Bewegung Bündnisfreier Staaten. Genese, Organisation Und Politik 1927–1992*, Studien Zur Internationalen Geschichte 37 (Berlin: Oldenbourg, 2015), Chapter 2; also see Michele Louro et al., eds., *The League against Imperialism: Lives and Afterlives* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, forthcoming).

[37]Also see Anne-Isabelle Richard, 'The Limits of Solidarity: Europeanism, Anti-Colonialism and Socialism at the Congress of the Peoples of Europe, Asia and Africa in Puteaux, 1948,' *European Review of History* 21, no. 4 (2014): 519–37 on socialist anti-colonialism in the post-World War Two period.

[38]Some League affiliates, like the ILO, saw the war as an opportunity for reinvention. See Sandrine Kott, 'Fighting the War or Preparing for Peace? The ILO during the Second World War,' *Journal of Modern European History* 12, no. 3 (2014): 359–76.

[39]Both organizations have received little scholarly interest. For the importance of the Caribbean Commission for British plans for postwar international organization, see Lawrence Finkelstein, 'Castles in Spain: United States Trusteeship Plans in World War II' (PhD Thesis, New York, Columbia University, 1970), 52, Columbia University, Rare Book & Manuscript Library; for the impact of working for the Middle East Supply Center on UN officials, see Craig Murphy, *The United Nations Development Programme: A Better Way?* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 39.

[40]In contrast to Mark Mazower, Stephen Wertheim argues that American postwar planners based their design of the UN on a thoroughgoing critique of the League. Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace*; Stephen Wertheim, 'Instrumental Internationalism: The American Origins of the United Nations, 1940–3,' *Journal of Contemporary History* 54, no. 2 (2019): 265–83; for an in-depth study of wartime American planning see Stephen Wertheim, *Tomorrow, the World: The Birth of US Global Supremacy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2020); also see Jackson and O'Malley, *The Institution of International Order*.

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the founding of the United Nations at San Francisco in 1945 offered 'no New Deal for the Black man'.[41] Washington, the principal sponsor of the new world organization, had floated proposals to internationalize all imperial administrations during the war and even briefly considered securing immediate independence for all colonies.[42] Ultimately, however, the League of Nations mandates system was slightly revised (petitioning from and visits to the territories in question, for example, became standard procedure); it was applied to even fewer territories in Africa and the Pacific, and was rebranded as the UN trusteeship system.[43] Going beyond the League Covenant, however, the UN Charter offered a codification of general principles of colonial rule applicable to *all* colonies – the so-called Declaration Regarding Non-Self-Governing Territories.[44] This declaration, which was signed by all UN member states, explicitly posited self-government (if not independent statehood) as the ultimate goal of colonial trusteeship, thus rendering imperial governance in general – at least nominally – temporal and finite. With the trusteeship system, however, the UN continued the system of unequal international integration pioneered by the League.[45]

To be clear: independence for former colonies did not follow automatically from the letter of the UN Charter; it would take protracted battles and negotiations at multiple levels – the colonies, the metropoles, and on the international stage.[46] Within the UN system, the main arena for this struggle was not so much the Trusteeship Council (the intergovernmental successor body to the important Permanent Mandates Commission of the League), but rather the General Assembly and its various subcommittees, which gained increasing political power due to the Cold War stalemate in the Security Council. Most important perhaps was the Committee on Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories, which was set up by the first General Assembly in 1946, against

[41]Marika Sherwood, '"There Is No New Deal for the Blackman in San Francisco". African Attempts to Influence the Founding Conference of the United Nations, April-July, 1945,' *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 29, no. 1 (1996): 71–94; also see Carol Anderson, *Eyes off the Prize: The United Nations and the African American Struggle for Human Rights, 1944–1955* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

[42]Wm. Roger Louis, *Imperialism at Bay: The United States and the Decolonization of the British Empire, 1941–1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978); Stephen Wertheim, 'Tomorrow, the World: The Birth of U.S. Global Supremacy in World War II' (Dissertation in History, New York City, Columbia University, 2015).

[43]In further contrast to the League's mandates system, the UN trusteeship system comprised a special category of 'strategic' UN trust territories. These territories in the Pacific were reserved for US military purposes and nominally overseen by the Security Council, where Washington could veto any interference. While the strategic trust territories have received little scholarly attention, a book-length historical study of the trusteeship system as such is also sorely lacking. UN Trust Territories included: British Togoland, which, united with the British Gold Coast, achieved independence in 1957 as Ghana; Somaliland under Italian Administration, which, united with the British Somaliland Protectorate, formed the independent state of Somalia in 1960; French Togoland, which became independent Togo in 1960; French Cameroons, which gained independence as Cameroon in 1960; British Cameroons, whose northern part joined Nigeria, while the southern part joined Cameroon in 1961; British Tanganyika, which gained independence in 1961 and, in union with the former British Protectorate of Zanzibar, became Tanzania in 1963; Belgian Ruanda-Burundi, which a plebiscite divided into the two sovereign States of Rwanda and Burundi in 1962; Western Samoa which gained independence from New Zealand as Samoa in 1962; Nauru, administered by Australia, which became independent in 1968; Australian New Guinea, which together with the Australian colony of Papua formed the independent State of Papua New Guinea in 1975; as well as the US Trust Territories of the Pacific Islands, compromising the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and, lastly, Palau, which became 'fully self-governing in free Association with the United States' in 1990 and 1994, respectively. 'Trust Territories that Have Achieved Self-Determination' http://www.un.org/en/decolonization/selfdet.shtml, last accessed 18 July 2016. For strategic trust territories, see Ganeshwar Chand, 'The United States and the Origins of the Trusteeship System,' *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)* 14, no. 2 (1991): 171–230; for a recent history of US overseas expansion see Daniel Immerwahr, *How to Hide an Empire : A History of the Greater United States* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2019); for recent research on UN trusteeship, see Julius Heise, Maria Ketzmerick, and Jan Lüdert, eds., *The United Nations Trusteeship System: Legacies, Continuities, and Change*, Global Institutions (London: Routledge, forthcoming).

[44]See Charter of the United Nations, Chapter XI at https://www.un.org/en/charter-united-nations/, last accessed 13 January 2020.

[45]On the latter point see Getachew, *Worldmaking After Empire*, 99.

[46]For the battle at the UN, see Getachew, Chapter 3.

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the wishes of the imperial powers.[47] Featuring imperial powers and non-imperial powers in equal measure, it would henceforth review and discuss reports relating to ostensibly *technical* matters in 'dependent territories' (that is economic, social and educational conditions), which were submitted to the UN by the colonial powers on a regular basis. The Committee became an important site for both pro- and anti-colonial government representatives to discuss which territories would be considered colonies, as well as how and to what end colonial rule should be practiced. In Jessica L. Pearson's words, it created a significant opening that allowed the world to see 'the inner lives of empires'.[48]

In addition to scrutinizing colonial rule and holding imperial powers accountable to lofty promises of protection and development, delegates from the Middle East, Asia and Africa – aided by the Soviet Union and its satellite states – mounted an active campaign within the UN (as well as outside of it, of course) to end formal 'saltwater' colonialism, i.e. instances of alien rule of geographically distant territories.[49] This campaign – the beginnings of which are explored in Cindy Ewing's contribution to this special issue – culminated in the 1960 UN General Assembly Declaration on Granting Independence to Colonial Peoples, which called for the immediate transfer of power 'without any conditions or reservations' and thus marked a watershed in the history of decolonization.[50] The UN General Assembly Committee of twenty-four that was established to oversee the implementation of the Declaration featured an overwhelming number of anti-colonial powers. It became a year-round source of critique of imperial rule.[51]

Yet as Adom Getachew points out, there were limits to the success of the specific right to anti-colonial self-determination won within the UN: it provided no solution for settler colonial contexts, for secessionist movements within post-colonial states, or neocolonial arrangements.[52] As the contributions to this issue also underline, the fight for global decolonization was not simply a straightforward extension of national liberation struggles to the international level. In her study of Arab-Asian coordination at the UN in the late 1940s, Cindy Ewing shows that even though the UN was a formative setting for the emergence of post-colonial internationalism and Global South solidarity, the common goals pursued by these states at the UN did not translate into uniformity or consensus on specific instances of decolonization or a common understanding of the word itself. Similarly, Elisabeth Leake recovers Afghanistan's fight at the UN against a growing global consensus otherwise promoted in the General Assembly that self-determination in the era of decolonization equaled the establishment of a sovereign nation-state within colonial era boundaries.

While international organizations played a vital role in shaping postwar decolonization, the dissolution of European empires also dramatically changed both the composition as well as the focus and work of international organizations themselves, especially of the UN and its

[47]The Committee was initially called 'Ad hoc Committee on Information transmitted under Article 73e.'

[48]Evan Luard, *A History of the United Nations: The Age of Decolonization, 1955–1965*, vol. 2 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), 176ff; Jessica Pearson, 'Defending Empire at the United Nations: The Politics of International Colonial Oversight in the Era of Decolonisation,' *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 45, no. 3 (May 31, 2017): 541.

[49]Getachew, *Worldmaking After Empire*, 86.

[50]Getachew, 90. For recent research on the Declaration see contributions to 2021 conference 'Reckoning with Empire: The Right to Self-Determination in Historical View' organized by Charlotte Kiechel at Yale University, https://resolution1514.yale.edu/, last accessed 30 July 2021.

[51]For the anti-colonial campaign see Yassin El-Ayouty, *The United Nations and Decolonization: The Role of Afro-Asia* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971); Luard, *The Age of Decolonization*; Prashad, *The Darker Nations: A People's History of the Third World*; Ryan Irwin, 'Imagining Nation, State, and Order in the Mid-Twentieth Century,' *Kronos*, no. 37 (2011): 12–22; for the 1960 Declaration also Alessandro Iandolo, 'Beyond the Shoe: Rethinking Khrushchev at the Fifteenth Session of the United Nations General Assembly,' *Diplomatic History* 41, no. 1 (2017): 128–54; Oliver Turner, '"Finishing the Job": The UN Special Committee on Decolonization and the Politics of Self-Governance,' *Third World Quarterly* 34, no. 7 (2013): 1193–1208. Also see Alanna O'Malley's new research project 'Challenging the Liberal World Order from Within, The Invisible History of the UN and the Global South' at the University of Leiden.

[52]Getachew, *Worldmaking After Empire*, 74.

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affiliated agencies and programs, but also of European institutions.[53] Of the fifty-one UN founding member states, only three had recently emerged from colonial rule or were about to do so (India, Lebanon and Syria) – though others like China, Egypt, Iran and Iraq, too, had been subjected to semi-colonial status. Within twenty years, almost 50 out of 119 member states were recent formal 'dependent territories', while at least half a dozen others had experienced a form of foreign tutelage little different from colonial rule.[54] The change in membership shifted the power relations within the UN system, and according to one standard account of UN history, ended the years of 'Western domination' within a decade.[55] Interestingly, earlier studies suggest that the United States nevertheless continued to be able to rally majority support for virtually all General Assembly decisions dealing with Cold War issues, while remaining in opposition on colonial questions until well into the 1960s.[56]

During 1960s, mobilizations from the Global South, for which the 1955 Asian-African conference in Bandung had been an important turning point, gained incrasing momentum: the Non-Alignment Movement, which was founded in Belgrade in 1961 and later institutionalized, and the Group of 77, an ever expanding alliance of mostly post-colonial, self-described 'developing countries', born at the first UN Conference on Trade and Development in 1964, carved an intermediate space in postwar geographies, an alternative to the Cold War competition between the United States and the Soviet Union.[57] Decolonization in Asia and Africa increasingly restructured policies and conceptualizations within international organizations along a North-South rather than an East-West axis.[58] This development reached its apex in 1976, when at UNCTAD IV, post-colonial states stopped differentiating ideologically between the socialist and capitalist states of the northern hemisphere.[59]

Already from 1955 onwards, however, the great majority of conflicts that the UN considered had to do with the end of the colonial era, either because independence struggles reached a climax, as they did in Algeria, or, because conflicts arose in the aftermath of independence, as in the case of the Congo. Even issues that were not in the strictest sense colonial, such as the war over Suez, concerned relationships between Western powers and their former 'dependencies'.[60] In addition to considering specific political crises resulting from the demise of empire, the UN turned its attention to different issues as a result of decolonization, above all to global economic inequalities.

[53]For the impact of decolonization on Europe's aid bureaucracy see Giuliano Garavini, *After Empires: European Integration, Decolonization, and the Challenge from the Global South 1957–1986* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Martin Rempe, *Entwicklung im Konflikt: Die EWG und der Senegal, 1957–1975* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2012); Véronique Dimier, *The Invention of a European Development Aid Bureaucracy: Recycling Empire* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2014); for the (former) OEEC's turn to development and the Global South see Matthias Schmelzer, 'A Club of the Rich to Help the Poor? The OECD, 'Development,' and the Hegemony of Donor Countries,' in *International Organizations and Development, 1945–1990*, The Palgrave Macmillan Transnational History Series (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 171–95; Schmelzer, *The Hegemony of Growth*.

[54]Another 20 had been colonies in a former age. Luard, *The Age of Decolonization*, 2:2.

[55]Evan Luard, *A History of the United Nations: The Years of Western Domination, 1945–1955*, vol. 1, 2 vols. (New York City: St. Martin's Press, 1982); Luard, *The Age of Decolonization*.

[56]Richard Mansbach, 'The Soviet Union, the United Nations, and the Developing States,' in *The Soviet Union and the Developing Nations* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), 260; Edward T. Rowe, 'The United States, the United Nations, and the Cold War,' *International Organization* 25, no. 1 (1971): 59–78.

[57]On the NAM see Nataša Miškovic, Harald Fischer-Tiné, and Nada Boškovska, eds., *The Non-Aligned Movement and the Cold War: Delhi - Bandung – Belgrade* (London: Routledge, 2014); Dinkel, *The Non-Aligned Movement: Genesis, Organization and Politics (1927–1992)*; Christopher Lee, ed., *Making a World after Empire: The Bandung Moment and Its Political Afterlives* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2020).

[58]On the Cold War and IOs see Sandrine Kott, *Organiser Le Monde: Une Autre Histoire de La Guerre Froide* (Paris: Le Seuil, 2021). Also see conference contributions to 'International Organizations and the Cold War,' University of Vienna, 2021 and 2022 at https://ioscoldwar.univie.ac.at/about/, last accessed 2 August 2021.

[59]On the North-South conflict see Jürgen Dinkel, Steffen Fiebrig, and Frank Reichherzer, eds., *Nord/Süd: Perspektiven auf eine Globale Konstellation* (Munich: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2020).

[60]Luard, *The Age of Decolonization*, 2:2f.

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In UN informational materials, so-called 'underdeveloped' territories, as they were initially called, broadly mapped onto the world's colonies and former 'dependencies'. In the early years of the UN, campaigns for the transfer of knowledge and funds to foster national development dominated the discussions; obscuring the fact that problems faced by the (post)colonial world were in large part a result of empire.[61] By the 1960s, Global South delegates, who were influenced in their thinking by the research of UN personnel such as Hans Singer and Raúl Prebisch, increasingly shifted their attention from the question of national development to the unfair terms of world trade, culminating in the General Assembly call for a New International Economic Order in 1973.[62]

The increasing focus on international inequalities within the UN, not only fostered intergovernmental discussions but also prompted the expansion and reinvention of new international programs and activities, from the provision of development assistance to peacekeeping.[63] The first UN peacekeeping missions were dispatched to mediate post-imperial or 'decolonization conflicts' in 1948: one relating to the creation of Israel and the subsequent outbreak of the first Arab-Israeli about the future the former League of Nations mandate Palestine; and the other was intended to help solve the post-partition dispute between India and Pakistan over Kashmir. The first armed peacekeeping intervention – the UN Emergency Force (UNEF) – was created to peacefully solve the Suez Crisis, by facilitating a face-saving retreat of Western imperial powers from the Sinai.[64] While UNEF's initially ambitious goal of administrating the contested territory was never realized, another such attempt was made in the wake of the Congo Crisis in the early 1960s.[65] Though the UN intervention in the former Belgian colony proved a political and financial disaster for the organization (and did little to 'stabilize' the newly independent country as promised), the developmental peacekeeping practices that were pioneered in the Congo enjoyed an unprecedented comeback in post-1989 experiments of 'international territorial administration', from Kosovo to East Timor.[66]

Decolonization thus triggered global debates and activities within international organizations that – to a degree – reflected the agency and interests of newly sovereign peoples, weakened the hierarchies of the Cold War, and ultimately laid the ground for the post-1989 world. In this sense, one might agree with Akira Iriye, who considered the Cold War a mere footnote in the longer and ultimately more consequential story of decolonization.[67] Seeing the twentieth century, and

[61]Wempe, 'A League to Preserve Empires,' 1728.

[62]On Singer and Prebisch see John Toye and Richard Toye, *The UN and Global Political Economy: Trade, Finance, and Development* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004); on the NIEO see Nils Gilman, 'The New International Economic Order: A Re-Introduction,' *Humanity* 6, no. 1 (2015): 1–16 and other contributions to the special issue; as well as more recently Samuel Moyn, *Not Enough: Human Rights in an Unequal World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018); Getachew, *Worldmaking After Empire*.

[63]On the UN technical assistance programs see Digambar Bhouraskar, *United Nations Development Aid: A Study in History and Politics* (New Delhi: Academic Foundation, 2007); Murphy, *The UNDP*; Olav Stokke, *The UN and Development: From Aid to Cooperation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009); Muschik, *Building States*.

[64]For an introduction to the history of peacekeeping see contributions in Joachim A. Koops et al., eds., *The Oxford Handbook of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); for more recent research see Margot Tudor, 'Reputation on the (Green) Line: Revisiting the "Plaza Moment" in United Nations Peacekeeping Practice, 1964–1966,' *Journal of Global History* 16, no. 2 (2021): 227–45; Margot Tudor, 'Gatekeepers to Decolonisation: Recentring the UN Peacekeepers on the Frontline of West Papua's Re-Colonisation, 1962–1963,' *Journal of Contemporary History*, 2021, 1–24, https://doi.org/10.1177/0022009421997894.

[65]Ilana Feldman, 'Ad Hoc Humanity: UN Peacekeeping and the Limits of International Community in Gaza,' *American Anthropologist* 112, no. 3 (2010): 416–29.

[66]On the Congo see Anne Orford, *International Authority and the Responsibility to Protect* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Muschik, *Building States*, Chapter 6; for a review of ITA literature see Anne Orford, 'Book Review Article: "International Territorial Administration and the Management of Decolonization,"' *International and Comparative Law Quarterly* 59 (2010): 227–50.

[67]Mark Bradley, 'Decolonization, the Global South, and the Cold War, 1919–1962,' in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War. Volume I: Origins*, ed. Melvyn Leffler and Arne Westad (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 484; Akira Iriye, 'Historicizing the Cold War,' in *The Oxford Handbook of the Cold War*, ed. Richard Immerman and Petra Goedde (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 18. I thank Bogdan Iacob for the references.

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especially its post-1945 years from the vantage point of decolonization brings into focus actors as well as turning points and chronologies that for a long time have been considered outsiders or peripheral to global history.[68] The contributions to this special issue show that such a perspective is necessary to undertstand the diversity and importance of Global South agency in restructuring the postwar world.[69]

A brief overview of the recent historiography and possible avenues for future research

This special issue builds on a spate of new research that looks at the relationship between international organizations and decolonization in more depth.[70] There are a number of case studies, focused above all on specific League mandates and UN trust territories, but also on states and territories, where the UN assumed a kind of transitional authority, or where member states assumed a 'special responsibility', such as with regard to Palestine, South West Africa (former League mandates) or South Africa.[71] There are studies of the mandates system more generally and edited volumes on UN trusteeship.[72] There is work on anti-colonial powers at the UN, especially on India's preeminent role.[73] And there is research on specific fields of IO activity in the context of decolonization – including economic development, public health, refugees and international law (with most work on the latter topic focusing either on the issue of self-determination or on human rights).[74] This research can also be divided according to the functions that international organizations played in the process of decolonization. We propose to distinguish three

[68]Drayton and Motadel, 'Discussion: The Futures of Global History,' 10.

[69]For a similar emphasis see Matthew Hilton and Rana Mitter, 'Introduction,' *Past & Present*, Supplement, no. 8 (2013): 8.

[70]For recent bibliographies see the UN History Project at https://www.histecon.magd.cam.ac.uk/unhist/research/bibliographies.html, last accessed 16 January 2020, especially 'Decolonization: Secondary Sources' under 'Governance,' but also the other compilations. Also see the website accompanying Amy Sayward's 2017 book *The United Nations in International History* (London: Bloomsbury Publisher, 2017): https://www.bloomsbury.com/cw/the-united-nations-in-international-history/the-united-nations/periodicals/decolonization/, last accessed 17 January 2020.

[71]Many examples cannot be cited here due to the word limit; for references see bibliographies cited above. For a good starting point on Palestine and IOs see Amy Sayward, *The United Nations in International History* (London: Bloomsbury Publisher, 2017), Chapter 7; on South West Africa/Namibia see e.g. Teresa Barnes, '"The Best Defense Is to Attack": African Agency in the South West Africa Case at the International Court of Justice, 1960–1966,' *South African Historical Journal* 69, no. 2 (2017): 162–77; on South Africa see Ryan Irwin, *Gordian Knot: Apartheid and the Unmaking of the Liberal World Order* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Simon Stevens, 'The External Struggle Against Apartheid: New Perspectives,' *Humanity* 7, no. 2 (2016): 295–315.

[72]On the mandates system see footnotes 26 and 27 on the trusteeship system see footnote 44.

[73]See e.g. Gerard McCann, 'From Diaspora to Third Worldism and the United Nations: India and the Politics of Decolonizing Africa,' *Past & Present* 218, no. Suppl 8 (2013): 258–80; Daniel Gorman, 'Britain, India, and the United Nations: Colonialism and the Development of International Governance, 1945–1960,' *Journal of Global History* 9, no. 3 (2014): 471–90; Alanna O'Malley, 'India, Apartheid and the New World Order at the UN, 1946–1962,' *Journal of World History* 31, no. 1 (2020): 195–223; for India's role in interwar internationalism see Louro, *Comrades Against Imperialism*.

[74]Again, many examples could be cited here. For the most recent research on international law and decolonization see Natasha Wheatley and Samuel Moyn, 'Towards a History of the Decolonization of International Law,' *Journal of the History of International Law* 23, no. 1 (2021): 1–3 as well as other contributions to the special issue; on development see e.g. David Webster, 'Development Advisors in a Time of Cold War and Decolonization: The United Nations Technical Assistance Administration, 1950–59,' *Journal of Global History* 6, no. 2 (2011): 249–72; Maul, *Human Rights, Development and Decolonization*; Marc Frey, Sönke Kunkel, and Corinna R Unger, eds., *International Organizations and Development, 1945–1990* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Muschik, *Building States*; on public health see Sunil Amrith, *Decolonizing International Health: India and Southeast Asia, 1930–65* (New York: Palgrave, 2006); Jessica Pearson, *The Colonial Politics of Global Health: France and the United Nations in Postwar Africa* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018); on refugees see Jérôme Elie and Jussi M Hanhimäki, 'UNHCR and Decolonization in Africa: Expansion and Emancipation, 1950s to 1970s,' in *Dekolonisation: Prozesse und Verflechtungen*, ed. Anja Kruke (Bonn: Dietz, 2009), 53–72; Peter Gatrell, *The Making of the Modern Refugee* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), Chapter 7; Joel Glasman, 'Seeing Like a Refugee Agency: A Short History of UNHCR Classifications in Central Africa (1961–2015),' *Journal of Refugee Studies* 30, no. 2 (2017): 337–62.

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approaches, though some of the most interesting work combines them. (1) The most prevalent approach views international organizations as public forums for negotiating the meaning of decolonization more generally and the decolonization of specific places in particular. (2) Another approach examines international organizations as hubs for forging both anti-colonial and inter-imperial alliances. (3) A third presents international organizations and their employees as historical actors in their own right, who sought to respond to and shape the process of decolonization, rather than simply follow the lead of government representatives.[75] Below, we discuss some examples and interesting recent trends with regard to these three approaches, before suggesting promising avenues for further research.

A pioneering example of the first ('international public forum') approach is Matthew Connelly's study of the *Front de Libération Nationale's* success in using international organizations to delegitimize French colonialism and win recognition as Algeria's legitimate rulers.[76] More recently, however, scholarly attention has turned to histories of what one might call 'frustrated decolonization'. Tracey Banivanua Mar, for example, recovered Pacific peoples' struggles to be heard within the halls of the League of Nations to demand self-determination. Though not conventionally successful, she writes, they form part of a longer anti-colonial struggle of appealing to an international public and thus putting empire on the defensive.[77] Petitioning by inhabitants from 'dependent territories' indeed became a formal feature of the UN Trusteeship System, but this did not ensure that petitioners were in fact always heard or that they received redress from the world organization, as Meredith Terretta has shown with regard to British and French Cameroons and Julius Heise with regard to British and French Togoland.[78] Still others, with no official means to petition the UN, were likewise unsuccessful in their campaigns for self-determination, as Emma Kluge demonstrated in her study of West Papuan activists.[79]

The example of Papua or Western New Guinea, which was 'transferred' to Indonesia from the Dutch after a brief UN interim regnum in the early 1960s, as Margot Tudor reminds us, should also prompt us to further think about the roles played by IOs in cases of 'post-colonial re-colonization' that are often left out of standard accounts of decolonization (but discussed in Potì's contribution here).[80] It also raises the broader question about the roles played by the UN (and other IOs) in the often-times frustrated quest for decolonization or self-determination by minorities and indigenous peoples within states, and especially settler colonies – both newly sovereign as well as long established ones.[81] Taken together, this research complicates facile assessments of decolonization as a rare success story of the postwar UN system.

[75]Alanna O'Malley similarly distinguishes between three dimensions of UN history: the UN as a public stage, the UN as an actor; and the UN as a socializing space. Alanna O'Malley, *Diplomacy of Decolonisation: America, Britain and the United Nations during the Congo Crisis 1960–64* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018), 2f.

[76]Matthew Connelly, *A Diplomatic Revolution : Algeria's Fight for Independence and the Origins of the Post-Cold War Era* (New York City: Oxford University Press, 2002); a more recent example is David Stenner, *Globalizing Morocco: Transnational Activism and the Postcolonial State* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019).

[77]Banivanua-Mar, *Decolonisation and the Pacific*.

[78]Meredith Terretta, '"We Had Been Fooled into Thinking that the UN Watches over the Entire World" : Human Rights, UN Trust Territories, and Africa's Decolonization,' *Human Rights Quarterly* 34, no. 2 (2012): 329–60; Julius Heise, 'Right to Petition vs. Rules of Procedure,' in *The United Nations Trusteeship System: Legacies, Continuities, and Change*, ed. Julius Heise, Maria Ketzmerick, and Jan Lüdert (London: Routledge, forthcoming); for a similar dynamic see Ullrich Lohrmann, *Voices from Tanganyika : Great Britain, the United Nations and the Decolonization of a Trust Territory, 1946–1961* (Berlin: Lit, 2007).

[79]Emma Kluge, 'West Papua and the International History of Decolonization, 1961–69,' *The International History Review*, 2019, https://doi.org/10.1080/07075332.2019.1694052.

[80]Tudor, 'Gatekeepers to Decolonisation'.

[81]Lydia Walker, 'Decolonization in the 1960s: On Legitimate and Illegitimate Nationalist Claims-Making,' *Past & Present* 242, no. 1 (2019): 227–64; David Meren, 'Safeguarding Settler Colonialism in Geneva: Canada, Indigenous Rights, and ILO Convention No. 107 on the Protection and Integration of Indigenous Peoples (1957),' *The Canadian Historical Review* 102, no. 2 (2021): 205–31; also see Jonathan Crossen, 'Decolonization, Indigenous Internationalism, and the World Council of Indigenous Peoples' (Dissertation, Waterloo, Canada, University of Waterloo, 2014); Getachew, *Worldmaking After Empire*, 86ff.

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Arguments about the UN as a force of decolonization usually point to anti-colonial alliances formed within the world organization – (the 'hub approach'). States emerging from colonial rule often did not have personnel and funding to maintain diplomatic missions in more than a few countries. The regular meetings of international organizations thus provided important opportunities for informal diplomatic networking outside of the conference halls. Vijay Prashad's *The Darker Nations,* for example, offers an early assessment of the role of international organizations in facilitating a 'Third World' movement.[82] Perhaps more surprising is that colonial powers, too, seized on international organizations, such as the UN, as instruments to defend empire. (Though this might be less surprising if we consider the League of Nations attempt to internationalize empire by way the mandates system and see the UN as building on the League.) Jessica Lynne Pearson, for example, has examined how European imperial powers, when confronted with anti-colonial sentiment in various UN committees, joined forces on the international stage, both in New York and through technical cooperation in public health in Africa.[83] But such inter-imperial cooperation predated and went beyond the UN; the resulting institutions, such as the (Anglo-American) Caribbean Commission, another Allied cooperation that extended into the postwar period, for example, still remain to be studied.[84]

How exactly international organizations and their employees shaped the decolonization of specific locales through their activities – including standard setting, military intervention, development assistance, advocacy or humanitarian aid – is only beginning to be examined.[85] Yet, research in this vein (the 'agency-centered approach') seems particular important to probe generalizing arguments about the neocolonial nature of international organizations. There is a related body of literature that invokes a 'rule', or even a 'tyranny of experts', suggesting that representatives of international organizations (among others) enjoyed unprecedented powers in the decolonizing world in the postwar period. Empirical historical research, however, suggests that this 'rule' came in multiple forms and was seldom straightforward.[86] Aldwin Roes, for example, has shown how World Bank survey missions indeed helped shape the monetary and financial arrangements of Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya – states that emerged from the British East Africa in the late 1950s and early 1960s – in line with British expectations.[87] Focusing on excavations in Egypt and Sudan, William Carruthers, by contrast, has demonstrated how India was able to 'decolonize' or rearrange colonial logics of archeological knowledge production under UNESCO's auspices.[88]

[82]Prashad, *The Darker Nations: A People's History of the Third World.*

[83]Jessica Pearson, 'Promoting Health, Protecting Empire: Inter-Colonial Medical Cooperation in Postwar Africa,' *Monde(s): Histoire, Espaces, Relations* 7 (2015): 213–30; Pearson, 'Defending Empire at the UN'.

[84]On interimperial cooperation see Daniel Hedinger and Nadin Heé, 'Transimperial History – Connectivity, Cooperation and Competition,' *Journal of Modern European History* 16, no. 4 (2018): 429–52, as well as other contributions to this special issue; and Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo, 'Competing Developments: Intercolonial Organisations and Colonial Education (1940s-1970s),' in *Education and Development in Colonial and Postcolonial Africa. Policies, Paradigms, and Entanglements, 1890s-1980s*, ed. Damiano Matasci, Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo, and Hugo Gonçalves Dores (London: Palgrave, 2020), 237–62.

[85]See e.g. Bastiaan Bouwman, 'From Religious Freedom to Social Justice: The Human Rights Engagement of the Ecumenical Movement from the 1940s to the 1970s,' *Journal of Global History* 13, no. 2 (2018): 252–73; on WHO/UNICEF standard setting see Tehila Sasson, 'Milking the Third World: Humanitarianism, Capitalism and the Moral Economy of the Nestlé Boycott,' *American Historical Review* 121, no. 4 (2016): 1196–1224.

[86]Writing about the Washington-based agencies that became increasingly active across the postcolonial world, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and USAID, Timothy Mitchell, too, suggests that 'they were seldom able to impose new policies, still less control the outcome when their interventions were successful. Where they did achieve results, however, was in the monopoly of their expertise'. Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of Expert: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 211; for further arguments about the triumph and tyranny of development experts, see Joseph Hodge, *Triumph of the Expert: Agrarian Doctrines of Development and the Legacies of British Colonialism* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2007); William Easterly, *The Tyranny of Experts: Economists, Dictators, and the Forgotten Rights of the Poor*, 2013.

[87]Aldwin Roes, 'World Bank Survey Missions and the Politics of Decolonization in British East Africa, 1957–1963,' *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 42, no. 1 (2009): 1–28.

[88]William Carruthers, 'Archaeological (Non?) Alignments: Egypt, India, and Global Geographies of the Post-War Past,' *South Asian Studies*, 2019, https://doi.org/10.1080/02666030.2019.1674487.

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The proliferation of recent research on international organizations and decolonization should not suggest that the field is nearing saturation. To the contrary, there are many areas left to explore if we aim for a more global history of international organizations and decolonization. Within the broader League and UN systems, the work of a number of specialized agencies, and programs, as well as the regional economic commissions, their impact on decolonization and vice versa remains to be explored.[89] Moreover, it seems essential to look beyond the League and the UN, as Jani does in this issue with the League against Imperialism. Others might ask: What role(s) did the Organization of African Unity play in the process of decolonization, or the Organization of American States?[90]

The Arab League, for example, was born of British efforts to play a 'father-figure' for Arab cooperation.[91] However, much like other international organizations, too, this League based in Cairo quickly developed a life its own. Member states took an active interest in the decolonization of the former Italian colony of Libya, for example, which was administered by the British and the French, but overseen by the UN. In 1951, as Libya was about to emerge as a sovereign state, the Arab League organized demonstrations against the imperial powers' appointment of representatives to the Libyan National Assembly, leading UN Secretary-General Trygve Lie to cancel his visit to the territory to avoid drawing international public attention to the lack of elections and thus embarrass colonial, UN and Libyan officials.[92] As much as it is important to go beyond the League of Nations and the UN, it is thus also vital to connect, compare and contrast the approaches of different international organizations and their respective roles in decolonization.

Likewise, it is important to connect, compare and contrast the interwar and the postwar periods as Jani, Iacob, and Leake do in their papers. By the 1930s, the League of Nations was an influential center for norm-making and technocratic knowledge production. The interwar years were formative in the conceptualization and institutionalization of technical assistance, laying the groundwork for a vision of development that linked social change with economic growth and shaped the UN-system's approach to newly independent states. Continuities and discontinuities from the League to the United Nations remain under-researched, yet they are central to understanding

[89]On the UNHCR see Elie and Hanhimäki, 'UNHCR and Decolonization in Africa'; on the ILO see Maul, *Human Rights, Development and Decolonization*; on UNESCO see Todd Shepard, 'Algeria, France, Mexico, UNESCO: A Transnational History of Anti-Racism and Decolonization, 1932–1962,' *Journal of Global History* 6, no. 2 (2011): 273–97; Paul Betts, 'The Warden of World Heritage: UNESCO and the Rescue of the Nubian Monuments,' *Past & Present* 226 (2015): 100–125; Larissa Schulte Nordholt, 'From Metropole to Margin in UNESCO's General History of Africa – Documents of Historiographical Decolonization in Paris and Ibadan,' *History in Africa: A Journal of Method* 46 (2019): 403–12; Carruthers, 'Archaeological (Non?) Alignments: Egypt, India, and Global Geographies of the Post-War Past'; on the WHO see Amrith, *Decolonizing International Health: India and Southeast Asia, 1930–65*; Pearson, *The Colonial Politics of Global Health: France and the United Nations in Postwar Africa*; on the FAO see Corinne A. Pernet and Amalia Ribi Forclaz, 'Revisiting the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO): International Histories of Agriculture, Nutrition, and Development,' *The International History Review* 41, no. 2 (2018): 345–50 as well as other contributions to the special issue.

[90]For dated references on the OAU see Yassin El-Ayouty, *The Organization of African Unity After Thirty Years* (University of Michigan: Praeger, 1994); Gordon Harris, *The Organization of African Unity*, International Organizations Series: Selective, Critical, Annotated Bibliographies (Oxford, UK: Clio Press, 1994); and more recently Getachew, *Worldmaking After Empire*, 133ff; on the OAS see Stella Krepp, 'America Para Los Americanos: The British Caribbean, Decolonization and the Inter-American System, 1940–1969' (International Organizations and Decolonization in Historical Perspective, Munich, 2019). Also see Jason Parker 'The Imperialism of Descolonización? The OAS, Anticolonialism, and Realpolitik in the Postwar Americas' (Forthcoming) and Marcia Schenck's project 'Decolonization, Cold War, and the Organization for African Unity: The Creation of the African Refugee Regime in Global Perspective' https://www.uni-potsdam.de/de/hi-globalgeschichte/prof-dr-marcia-c-schenck/projekte, last accessed 30 July 2021.

[91]R.F. Holland, *European Decolonization 1918–1981: An Introductory Survey*, Themes in Comparative History (London: Palgrave, 1985), 122; also see Stefanie Wichhart, 'The Formation of the Arab League and the United Nations, 1944–5,' *Journal of Contemporary History* 52, no. 2 (2019): 328–46.

[92]Adrian Pelt, *Libyan Independence and the United Nations: A Case of Planned Decolonization* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), 298; Saul Kelly, *Cold War in the Desert: Britain, the United States, and the Italian Colonies, 1945–52* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), Chapter 6; Muschik, *Building States*, Chapter 2.

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the role of international organizations in refashioning the relationship between empires and their (former) colonies.[93]

Comparing the interwar and postwar periods, Cemil Aydin has posed the question of why states emerging from colonial rule so heavily invested in the UN system. Given the imperial DNA of the UN Charter, he writes, why did anti-colonial leaders not challenge this system and look for a better alternative, as many did during the interwar period?[94] Perhaps, as the history of Anglophone anti-colonial activism suggests, the contrast was not as stark? Or rather, the anti-colonial challenge to the UN system was simply more successful.[95] But if the UN really became the lodestar of decolonization in the postwar period as some research assumes, when and why did anti-colonial stalwarts grow disenchanted with the world organization? Should we trace it to the UN's controversial intervention in the Congo crisis in the early 1960s, the protracted struggle against Apartheid, the inability to find a solution for Palestine, or the disappointed hopes for a New International Economic Order in the late 1970s, early 1980s?[96] Probing such questions will lead us to new chronologies of and insights on twentieth century history.

There is also much work to be done in overcoming the colonial-post-colonial divide in historical scholarship on international organizations: we need to further examine continuities in personnel, ideas, and inequalities, and inquire about the ways in which colonial frameworks and the legacies of decolonization continue to inform doctrines and practices of international organizations. As empires were crumbling, (former) colonial servants constituted the prime recruiting ground for international organizations. For example, about one third of all UN development experts in the 1950s were recruited from European colonial powers.[97] Some scholars have convincingly argued that the development narratives and frameworks laid out during the last years of empire were therefore reproduced after the formal end of colonialism to become part of the conventional wisdom and lexicon of international organizations and post-colonial states.[98] While acknowledging important imperial genealogies, others have argued that the process of decolonization *remade* the development knowledge and practices that informed the work of international organizations in important ways.[99] Emily Baughan for example has examined how the British NGO Save the Children tried to shed its imperial skin by 'indigenizing' the workforce, which in turn changed the organization's activities 'in the field'.[100]

To advance this debate, further case studies that go beyond Geneva or New York are sorely needed. How did meditators, visiting missions, peacekeeping forces, technical experts and humanitarians shape particular conflicts and places and how did their engagement in the decolonizing world, as well as their own changing personnel as a result of decolonization, in turn shape the activities and evolution of international organizations? When UN peacekeeping forces landed

[93]Daniel Speich Chassé, 'Technical Internationalism and Economic Development at the Founding Moment of the UN System,' in *International Organizations and Development, 1945–1990*, ed. Marc Frey, Sönke Kunkel, and Corinna Unger (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 23–45; Jackson and O'Malley, *The Institution of International Order*; also see Corinna Unger, *International Development: A Postwar History* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018).

[94]Cemil Aydin, 'Review of Mark Mazower: No Enchanted Palace,' *H-Diplo Roundtable Reviews* XI, no. 47 (2010): 7.

[95]Getachew, *Worldmaking After Empire*, 52, 87f.

[96]On the Congo crisis see e.g. Alanna O'Malley, 'Ghana, India, and the Transnational Dynamics of the Congo Crisis at the United Nations, 1960–1,' *International History Review* 37, no. 5 (2015): 970–90; also see Irwin, 'Imagining Nation, State, and Order in the Mid-Twentieth Century'; Irwin, *Gordian Knot*; on the NIEO see special issue introduced by Gilman, 'The New International Economic Order: A Re-Introduction'.

[97]Stokke, *The UN and Development*, 74.

[98]See e.g. Joseph Hodge, 'British Colonial Expertise, Post-Colonial Careering and the Early History of International Development,' *Journal of Modern European History* 8, no. 1 (2010): 24–46.

[99]Eva-Maria Muschik, 'The Art of Chameleon Politics: From Colonial Servant to International Development Expert,' *Humanity* 9, no. 2 (2018): 219–44.

[100]Emily Baughan, 'Decolonising Development? The International Council of Child Welfare in Western Nigeria, 1963–1970' (International Organizations and Decolonization in Historical Perspective, Munich, 2019); Emily Baughan, *Saving the Children Humanitarianism, Internationalism, and Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2021).

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in the Congo in 1960, a UN official quipped that the world organization now had its first own colony.[101] Soviet representatives, too, accused the world organization of establishing 'a new form of [Western] colonial enslavement … under cover of the United Nations flag'.[102] Yet, in 1962, for example, Haitians – largely working as educators – constituted the second largest contingent of UN expert staff working to transform a decolonizing Congo.[103] What impact did they have on the newly emerging sovereign state? How did their activities on the ground – as well as UN officials from non-aligned countries – help transform the UN mission in the Congo, and thus likely help shape the work of later peacekeeping missions as well? Going beyond Geneva and New York will also allow us to arrive at a better understanding of how people around the world understood international organizations, how they interacted with them and, how this in turn, impacted debates and activities within IOs and the territories they were engaged in.

To look beyond Geneva and New York, means further exploring how actors from South America, Eastern Europe, China and other actors from the Global South shaped decolonization through international organizations and how they in turn were affected by this engagement.[104] New scholarship on Eastern European countries, for example, has demonstrated that their involvement with the post-colonial world, particularly through UN institutions, did not necessarily deepen Cold War divides. Paradoxically, these interactions also facilitated inter-European cooperation across the iron curtain, as East and West rediscovered each other through expert cooperation in international organizations or in development projects in the South. The so-called 'return to Europe' of the socialist camp that began at the end of the 1970s then was premised on its distancing from the decolonized world in what Algerian intellectual Zaki Laïdï called in 1990 'l'autocentrage du Nord' – 'the self-centering of the North'.[105]

Part of the challenge of writing a global history of international organizations and decolonization is uncovering and using new sets of sources. Much of the earlier scholarship on international organizations, often written by political scientists, legal scholars or former international civil servants, drew above all on the published records of the various organizations.[106] In many cases, historians are only beginning to examine the archival papers of the organizations themselves.[107] Of course, combing through the various organizational archives does not suffice to tackle the research agenda outlined above. Studying multiple sources and archives, from personal papers of civil servants and experts, to national and local archives in the imperial metropoles and former colonies, the former Cold War superpowers and their allies, as well as non-aligned countries is essential.

[101]Antony Gilpin, 'Letters from the Congo,' United Nations Career Records Project, Ms.Eng.c.4675 (2) [back], Bodleian Library, Oxford University.

[102]See Security Council Verbatim Records (*proces-verbaux*), meeting 889 (S/PV.889), 21 August 1960, paragraphs 57–60.

[103]Regine Jackson, 'The Failure of Categories: Haitians in the United Nations Organization in the Congo, 1960–64,' *Journal of Haitian Studies* 20, no. 1 (2014): 35.

[104]On Latin America see Piero Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions. Havana, Washington, and Africa, 1959–1976* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); on China see Jeremy Friedman, 'Soviet Policy in the Developing World and the Chinese Challenge in the 1960s,' *Cold War History* 10, no. 2 (2010): 247–72; Jeremy Friedman, *Shadow Cold War: The Sino-Soviet Competition in the Third World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015); also see Jeffrey Byrne, 'Revolutionary Transatlanticism: Cuban-Algerian Relations and the Competing Apparata of the Third World Project' (International Organizations and Decolonization in Historical Perspective, Munich, 2019).

[105]James Mark et al., *1989: A Global History of Eastern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 127; Michel Christian, Sandrine Kott, and Ondrei Matejka, 'International Organizations in the Cold War: The Circulation of Experts Beyond the East-West Divide,' *Studia Territorialia* 17, no. 1 (2018): 35–60; Sandrine Kott, 'The Social Engineering Project: Exportation of Capitalist Management Culture to Eastern Europe (1950–1980),' in *Planning in Cold War Europe: Competition, Cooperation, Circulations (1950s-1970s)*, ed. Michel Christian, Sandrine Kott, and Matejka, Ondrej (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), 123–42; Louis H. Porter, 'Cold War Internationalisms: The USSR in UNESCO, 1945–1967' (Dissertation in History, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina, 2018).

[106]See for example many of the contributions to the UN Intellectual History Project at http://www.unhistory.org/publications/, last accessed 23 January 2020. For an exception see Toye and Toye, *The UN and Global Political Economy*.

[107]For a helpful introduction to the archives of international organizations see the UN History Project website: Home> Research > Archives at https://www.histecon.magd.cam.ac.uk/unhist/research/archives.html, last accessed 23 January 2020.

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Research of this kind requires time, money and mobility. To foster a more inclusive scholarly conversation that includes voices from the beyond the trans-Atlantic triangle – and to avoid excessive carbon footprints – historians should consider joint research efforts in the future in order to write a more global history of decolonization and international organizations.[108]

The goal of this special issue, of course, is not to deliver a final assessment of the topic, but to showcase a variety of methodological approaches, subjects and times frames that advance current scholarly conversations. Taken together, the collection of articles illuminate the variety of – sometimes contradictory – functions that international organizations had in the process of global decolonization: from serving as forum for debating the meaning of decolonization, to serving as a tool for imperial ambitions, rivalry or cooperation, reform or abolishment. The collection features actors from regions that have received little attention in the study of twentieth-century decolonization, such as Eastern Europe or Central Asia, and shines the spotlight on less known organizations such as the League Against Imperialism. Expanding beyond the heyday of postwar decolonization, it covers a broad timeline from the 1920s to the early 1980s. The articles bring together scholars from diverse regional and thematic historical subfields and introduce a range of different actors who shaped processes of decolonization and the development of international organizations: from colonial subjects, to representatives of new states and imperial powers, bureaucrats and experts. As a whole, this special issue cautions against whigish histories of international organizations as engines of global decolonization, while also guarding against simplistic arguments that present international organizations in general as instruments of neocolonialism. Rather, we argue that decolonization fundamentally remade the postwar world and that international organizations served as important instruments in that process, while also developing a life of their own. Hopefully, this issue will be a starting point for further research on an important topic in global history.

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[108]For an emphasis on collaboration, see Drayton and Motadel, 'Discussion: The Futures of Global History,' 15.

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