Introduction

One of my favorite documents of the Cold War is the 1958 book by
William J. Lederer and Eugene Burdick entitled *The Ugly American*.[1] This
work of middlebrow fiction depicted a motley assortment of Americans –
diplomats, aid workers, soldiers, and even chicken farmers – serving in
the fictional southeast Asian state of Sarkhan, where they were competing
with their Soviet counterparts for the hearts and minds of the citizens
of the new nation. These Americans were supposed to represent the
best of the United States in its Cold War struggle against the menace of
communism. But the Sarkhanites did not always hold them in such high
esteem. In one passage, a fictional Sarkhanite journalist contrasted the
arrogance and pretentiousness of the Americans with the professionalism
of their Russian counterparts. The Russians, he noted, did not display
any of this American ostentatiousness. They were far more sensitive to
local culture and customs; they spoke the local language; and they did
not comport themselves like colonial rulers by living in large houses
and keeping a retinue of servants. Moreover, while large-scale projects
favored by American experts showed off America's wealth and know-
how, the Sarkhanite journalist could not refrain from noting that they
were far less successful in meeting the needs of the local people, whose
pride they often offended.

It would probably be possible to devote an entire volume to the
analysis of the Cold War imaginary at work in this novel and to the
visions of development around which it is organized. But I would like to
begin by asking a simple question. What would happen if we introduced
"ugly Germans" into the plot? How would the histories of the two
German states read if they were narrated as the provincial object of a tale

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told by the Sarkhanites?[2] Such a story would caricature East and West
German doctors competing with one another in Southeast Asia, gleefully
pointing out the failings of the social system and developmental model
espoused by the "other" German state. However, it is unlikely that the
Sarkhanites would see much difference between the visions of modernity
and development advocated by the representatives of the two countries.

We could go one step further by introducing into the story barefoot
doctors and aid workers from China and Cuba. This would make the plot
far more complicated because Chinese and Cuban strategies for improv-
ing the health and educational level of the Sarkhanites represented just
as much of a challenge to the Russians and the East Germans as they did
to the Americans and West Germans. In what ways would we have to
alter our conceptual apparatus to make sense of such a world? Last, how
would the narrative change if we were to imagine *The Ugly American* as
the middle volume in a trilogy standing between a colonial past and an
essentially open postcolonial future? This would introduce into the nar-
rative a number of new social groups, including the national bourgeoisie,
landed elites, and the communally minded peasantry, each vying with the
others to shape the country's future. It would also have to take account of
the constraints and opportunities presented by the ideological affinities of
these groups with the superpowers and their allies.

The moral of this story is twofold. First, decolonization was a complex
process. It antedated the Cold War and involved regional conflicts that
cannot be explained as epiphenomena of superpower ideological and
geopolitical rivalry. Once we free ourselves from the idea that all aid
was manipulated by Moscow or by Washington and subordinated in a
monomaniacal manner to the superpower quest for world domination, it
becomes possible to identify a whole host of actors, analytical levels, and
narratives that could not be made visible through the Cold War–centered
perspectives. This book explores the methodological and conceptual
implications of this shift. Second, the Cold War was, in the felicitous
words of Heonik Kwon, "a globally staged but locally diverse regime of
ideas and practices."[3] When seen from such a perspective, the Cold War –
its chronology, spatiality, and topography – will assume a very different
shape. My aim here is to narrate the history of a space where, as Walter
Mignolo has observed, "*local* histories inventing and implementing global
designs meet *local* histories, the space in which global designs have to be
adapted, adopted, rejected, integrated, or ignored."[4] Accordingly, I have
chosen to narrate topics that cut across the scalar divisions of the global
and the local and the hierarchies implicit in them.

Although many of the local episodes that gave the Cold War its dynamic have remained untold, this does not mean, Kwon argues, that they are either "an insignificant part of local histories or an irrelevant aspect of international history."[5] The challenge is to identify which of these stories signifies something beyond itself and is thus capable of mediating between the global logic of superpower rivalry and local conflicts, which are implicated in this rivalry, but which cannot be reduced to it.

One of the central mechanisms through which the global North defined its relation to the global South were the humanitarian, development, and medical aid programs established in the 1950s and 1960s. These programs, the discourses through which they were structured, the institutions in which they were embodied, and the modes of governance that they made possible collectively constituted what I am calling here the global humanitarian regime. This regime formed the bridge by which the asymmetries between the global North and South, which had been constructed in the age of imperialism and colonial mandates, were re-articulated and reproduced across the 1945 divide. It was grounded, I argue, in notions of racial and civilizational difference, which were articulated most clearly in relation to public health, hygiene, and human rights.

However, these conceptions of difference generated specific forms of political power and authorized specific forms of global governance. In the overdetermined context of decolonization and the Cold War, the political effects of these discourses and practices of difference made it impossible to neatly separate emergency *humanitarian* relief to meliorate the human costs of decolonization and national liberation struggles from more overtly politicized *development* and *medical* aid, whose goal was to shape long-term postcolonial state-building projects in accordance with the ideology of one party or another. In this book, I will use the humanitarian, development, and medical aid programs of the two German states for the newly independent countries of Asia and Africa to explore their intertwined postwar histories, the refiguration of European modernity in its relation to the extra-European world during the era of decolonization, and the theoretical problems involved in writing a global history of the Cold War.

The individual chapters examine in detail the concrete workings of the humanitarian regime in different places and at different historical moments. They explore those transnational spaces in Korea, Vietnam, the Congo, and Tanzania, where a bevy of Cold Warriors from the North – engineers, architects, doctors, and nurses – interacted with each other

and with the local inhabitants. Situating multiple actors in a polycentric transnational field will enable us not only to look at metropolitan intent but also to see how the reactions and perceptions of non-European peoples influenced the self-perception and the policies of the metropolitan powers.[6]

In Chapter 1, I trace the formation of the postwar humanitarian regime from the end of World War II through the mid-1950s. I begin by analyzing the notions of civilizational difference on which this regime rested and then show how they were encoded in the institutional and legal DNA of the United Nations, the World Health Organization, and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. In theory, the postwar global order was structured in terms of the rights of formally equal, sovereign states. However, these discourses of difference led the Western powers to argue that the sovereignty and right to self-determination of the peoples of the Third World could only be proportionate to their level of civilization and development. Aid programs were then structured in ways that permitted these powers to govern the Third World beneficiaries of their assistance. As a result, the rights of the developing states that had to depend on humanitarian relief during the Cold War were only a pale reflection of Western norms. The formation of the postwar humanitarian regime was facilitated by the Soviet boycott at the turn of the 1950s of many of the global organizations through which this regime operated. This created a space in which France, Belgium, Britain, and the United States were able to define humanitarian and development problems as matters of security, both domestic and global, and then to instrumentalize such aid to contain communism, delegitimate national liberation movements, and reproduce neocolonial rule.

A new global constellation, which emerged in the mid-1950s, created the opportunity for multiple challenges to the Western dominance of the postwar humanitarian regime. Although it has often been assumed that communism has little to do with humanitarian and other types of aid, I show that – for reasons I detail in Chapter 1 – the Soviet Union, East Germany, and other East European countries became quite active in this domain beginning in 1955/1956. All of these countries expected that their extensive aid programs would serve as effective practical advertisements for socialism. Their conception of solidarity was based on the assumption that the countries of the Third World could only achieve their ultimate goal of self-determined development by collaborating with the Soviet bloc against capitalism and (neo)colonial rule and by emulating their model of socialist modernity. Socialist fraternal aid, however, also had a seamy

underside. While it would be wrong to dismiss the rhetoric of socialist internationalism as a fig leaf for Soviet imperial ambitions, I show that the Soviet humanitarian regime was also based on conceptions of civilizational difference similar to those employed by the West, that it also represented a strategy for integrating the global South into a socialist version of the capitalist world system, and that, as a result, it reproduced the structures of domination and exploitation characteristic of its capitalist counterpart.

At the same time, the Western-dominated humanitarian regime was also challenged from a second direction by the Third World movement, which was founded at the 1955 Bandung conference. In the postwar years, the discourses of difference upon which the global humanitarian regime were based had also forced the countries of Asia and Africa into a subaltern position. The importance of the Third World movement lay in the increasingly self-conscious and assertive way that it used the language of sovereignty, self-determination, and human rights to contest both the asymmetries of the postwar humanitarian regime and the discourses on which it rested.

There was potential for both collaboration and conflict between the socialist bloc and the Third World movement. However, not all socialist countries were the same. The Chinese approach to development aid, their conception of socialist solidarity, and their response to the use of military force by settler governments and colonial powers to reassert white power in southeast Africa were quite different from those of the Soviet Union and East Germany. The growing rivalry between the Soviet Union and China for leadership of the socialist bloc thus added another dimension to an already complex account of socialist aid to the region, a story that was further complicated by the efforts of Egypt, Ghana, Guinea, and even Cuba to position themselves as champions of Third World liberation.

The two German states, both founded in 1949, played an important role in shaping the postwar humanitarian regime. The outbreak of the Korean War in 1950 accelerated the integration of both East and West Germany into their respective alliance systems. It also provided the stimulus for their participation in the bloc-wide humanitarian and development aid programs for North and South Korea. Chapter 2 examines East Germany's first development aid project in North Korea, while Chapter 3 focuses on the misbegotten history of West Germany's first major humanitarian aid program, the operation of a hospital in Pusan, South Korea. These chapters chart the initial intermeshing of the histories of the

two Germanys and their East Asian partners, a development that has been virtually invisible in the dominant historical narratives of *all* of these countries. On the other hand, I argue that these programs backfired in ways that reveal as much about aims of the two German states as about the impact of their respective conceptions of racial and civilizational difference on proletarian internationalism and Western humanitarianism.

Chapter 4 examines international medical aid to both South and North Vietnam in the 1950s. Here, I argue that the securitization of U.S.-led medical aid programs to South Vietnam blurred beyond all recognition humanitarian relief, propaganda, and covert activity. In the north, a number of countries, including the Soviet Union, China, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, and East Germany, provided aid to the socialist government under the rubric of international socialist solidarity. While this "friendly socialist competition" between the Eastern bloc countries for political support shows that the Cold War in the Third World was, indeed, a multipolar process, I argue that such solidarity gestures were also intertwined with the desire to obtain tangible material benefits and that the East Germans endangered their own efforts to win the support of the North Vietnamese by couching their offers of assistance in the language of civilizational difference.

East Germany was one of the major supporters of a number of militant, often pro-socialist national liberation struggles, and Chapter 5 shifts from Asia to the liberation struggles in Algeria and the Congo, which together represent a watershed in the history of the postwar humanitarian regime. Picking up on questions raised in Chapter 1, I argue that the initial success of the French in defining the Algerian conflict as a matter of domestic security enabled them to securitize international humanitarian aid to Algeria and ensure that such aid could only be provided through channels and in ways that supported French military efforts to pacify the country. However, I argue that West European attitudes toward Africa and the national liberation struggles there cannot be understood apart from contemporary debates over European identity and West European integration, and I show how East German aid supported Algerian efforts to use the language of human rights and national self-determination to challenge both the parameters of the postwar humanitarian regime and French efforts to contain the conflict as a matter of domestic security. The last part of the chapter focuses on international medical aid, especially that provided by the two German states, during the 1960–1961 Congo crisis. While the story of the Congo crisis has often been told from political and military perspectives, the literature has largely ignored the

topic of medical and humanitarian assistance to the Congolese and the associated controversies over the provision of this aid. I use the Congo as a case study to show how the subaltern position of Third World countries within postwar humanitarian regime prevented them from upholding their claims to sovereignty and self-determination.

The Cold War was an ideological hothouse in which each of the two blocs was constrained to insist upon the universal validity of its respective vision of modernity. On the other hand, each was ready to pounce upon the most minor failings of the other and interpret them as an indisputable sign of the moral and theoretical limitations of the liberal capitalist or the state socialist project. In this process, I argue, both West and East Germany were whipsawed by their mutual rivalry, by their relations to the superpower with which they were aligned, by other bloc members, and by the Third World countries they were supposedly trying to help. West Germany, for example, suffered from guilt by association with both the United States and the ongoing colonial wars of France, Belgium, and Portugal, and it was forced to negotiate a path between affirming its membership in the Western bloc and distancing itself from these conflicts. In a similar manner, East Germany found itself forced to compete with other Eastern European countries in Vietnam before it was caught in the downdraft of the Sino-Soviet conflict.

The Third World was also present in the two German states in the histories of their own postwar state-building projects. During these years, both East and West Germany were searching intensely for ways to legitimize their own existence, while at the same time distinguishing themselves from their ideological competitors across the inner-German border and from their shared Nazi past. The Third World was the global stage on which this Teutonic drama played out. It was also the global judge who would be swayed by the force of the better argument. The articulation of master narratives of the German past and global modernity was part of this process. While these narratives objectified the Third World in specific ways and, thereby, located them in specific discursive positions, the problem, as the two countries quickly discovered, was that their policies did not always correspond to these narratives. Not only were the Germans unable to control the ideas and expectations of these Third World publics, who were free to choose the course of their post-independence development. These countries were also themselves internally divided over where this course should take them.

In Chapters 6 and 7, I argue that European and German attitudes toward Africa and the national liberation struggles there cannot be

understood apart from contemporary debates over European identity. Health and hygiene were central to the master narrative of East German socialist modernity, and Chapter 6 shows how the East German government used medical assistance programs to enhance its political legitimacy at home and gain recognition abroad. Once it became clear that the two German states were not going to be reunited in the foreseeable future and that it would have to go head to head with the Federal Republic to prove the superiority of its own system, East Germany embraced this new policy with particular verve, and medical assistance programs quickly became one of the most important tools of East German cultural diplomacy. The East Germans expected that hygiene exhibitions, along with the trade fairs with which they were often connected, would demonstrate to the Third World how science and socialism together had the potential to master nature, overcome underdevelopment, and, ultimately, transform the human condition itself. However, I argue that East Germany's attempts to sell its vision of socialist modernity were often cast in a language of civilizational difference, which limited their appeal in the Third World.

In Chapter 7, I analyze the evolution of West German development aid policy. West German policies toward Africa were inseparably bound up with the process of European integration, and they were based on the hope that the two continents could be joined in a shared Eurafrican space, in which White Europeans would take the lead in developing the human and natural resources of the underdeveloped South. The problem was that Africa and the Africans never fit without symbolic remainder into the geopolitical worldview of the West Germans, and from the mid-1950s through the early 1960s West German debates over development aid and humanitarian assistance were driven by the need to manage this discursive slippage and limit its consequences for the country's position as a stalwart member of the Western Alliance. Although West Germany sought to counter East German initiatives in Africa through propaganda safaris and exhibitions of its own, these exhibitions quickly proved to be a public relations disaster and were quietly discontinued. More important, while East Germany used humanitarian, medical, and development aid programs to circumvent and undermine the Hallstein doctrine, the West Germans sought to use development aid to enforce it. The fact that Third World countries could accept development aid from East Germany without running afoul of the Hallstein doctrine, which was narrowly focused on formal diplomatic recognition, involved West Germany in an elaborate dance with both East Germany and nonaligned beneficiary countries.

While the reputation of West Germans suffered as a result of their failure to distance themselves from white minority governments in the South, the establishment of closer relations – bordering on the verge of formal diplomatic recognition – between Egypt and East Germany set in motion a far-reaching reconsideration of both the Hallstein doctrine and the use of development aid to enforce its policy of nonrecognition.

Long before 1968, the Third World was physically present in the two German states, and in the final part of Chapter 6 and again in Chapter 8 I examine the experiences of those people from Asia and Africa who went to East and West Germany for study, training, and work. Chapter 8 focuses on those women from South Korea, India, and the Philippines who migrated to West Germany to provide the caring labor required by the country's expanding welfare system. I argue here that the employment arrangements under which these women worked, and thus the terms under which they were integrated into the global labor market, were jointly determined by forces at both ends of this global care chain. I also argue that, in addition to the economic interests of both the West German and South Korean states, global flows of female migrant labor in the postwar decades were also shaped by discourses of race and gender, which helped naturalize and legitimize the unequal power relations that were condensed in the conditions under which these women were forced to labor.

The problems encountered by people of color in East Germany were not dissimilar to those faced by Korean nurses in West Germany. Although East German programs for foreign students and trainees of color were touted as models of international anticolonial solidarity, in Chapter 6 I argue that they often proved to be counterproductive. The training provided to these persons was frequently impaired by both the problems of state socialism and the coded racism that they encountered. These trainees were further alienated by the pervasive state oversight and political education to which they, like the East German population, were subjected.

In southeast Africa, decolonization set in motion a dynamic in which the use of military force to preserve white minority governments in Angola, Mozambique, South Africa, and Rhodesia led to increasingly radical responses, both political and military, by national liberation movements. The intensity of these conflicts reached a new peak in the mid-1960s. When the revolution broke out in Zanzibar in January 1964, East Germany saw Zanzibar as a potential laboratory of German socialist modernity, while the West saw the specter of another Cuba in East Africa.

In this context, both the conception of South–South solidarity set out by the Chinese, who were becoming increasingly active in the region, and their doctrine of permanent revolution had greater appeal to the more radical leaders of revolutionary movements in the region than did the more stodgy, bureaucratic approach of the Soviets and the East Germans. As a result, by 1970 the Chinese had displaced the East Germans from the field of medical aid both on Zanzibar island and in mainland Tanganyika.