

HPG Working Paper

# Neutrality and solidarity in Nordic humanitarian action

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## About the author

Carl Marklund is a Stockholm-based researcher in history and political science. He has published widely on Nordic welfare state policies, public diplomacy and global outreach, especially during the Cold War era.

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# Acronyms

<b>ABF</b>	Workers' Educational Association/ Arbetarnas Bildningsförbund (Sweden)	<b>FRELIMO</b>	Mozambique Liberation Front/Frente de Libertação de Moçambique
<b>AGS</b>	Africa Groups of Sweden/ Afrikagrupperna	<b>FUNK</b>	National United Front of Kampuchea/Front uni national du Kampuchéa
<b>ANC</b>	African National Congress	<b>GDP</b>	Gross domestic product
<b>BMGF</b>	Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation	<b>GNI</b>	Gross national income
<b>CAF</b>	Charities Aid Foundation	<b>HCR</b>	High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>CK</b>	Central Committee for Swedish Technical Assistance to Less- Developed Areas/Centralkommittén för Svenskt Tekniskt Bistånd	<b>HKO</b>	Help the Victims of War/Hjälp krigetets offer (Sweden)
<b>CSM</b>	Church of Sweden Mission	<b>ICEIDA</b>	Icelandic International Development Agency
<b>CSO(s)</b>	Civil society organisation(s)	<b>ICRC</b>	International Committee of the Red Cross
<b>CSR</b>	Corporate Social Responsibility	<b>ICRR</b>	International Committee for Russian Relief
<b>DA</b>	Danish Friends of Armenians/Danske Armeniervenner	<b>IDMC</b>	Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (Norway)
<b>DAC</b>	Development Assistance Committee	<b>ICFTU</b>	International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
<b>Danida</b>	Danish International Development Agency	<b>ILRS</b>	International League of Religious Socialists
<b>DDV</b>	Danish Vietnam Committees/De Danske Vietnamkomiteer	<b>INP</b>	Indo-Norwegian Fisheries Project
<b>DFFG</b>	United FNL Groups/De Förenade FNL-grupperna (Sweden)	<b>ISAK</b>	Isolate South Africa Committee/ Isolera Sydafrika-Kommittén (Sweden)
<b>DRV</b>	Democratic Republic of Vietnam	<b>KEPA</b>	Service Centre for Development Cooperation/Kehitysyhteistyön palvelukeskus (Finland)
<b>EC</b>	European Community	<b>KVT</b>	Finnish Branch of Service Civil International/Kansainvälinen Vapaaehtoinen Työleirijärjestö
<b>ECCO</b>	Emergency Committee of Christian Organisations	<b>LKS</b>	Students for Medicine/Lääketi- teenkandidaattiseura (Finland)
<b>EDF</b>	European Development Fund	<b>LO</b>	Swedish Trade Union Confederation/ Landsorganisationen i Sverige
<b>EPTA</b>	Expanded Programme for Technical Assistance		
<b>EU</b>	European Union		
<b>FINNIDA</b>	Finnish International Development Agency		
<b>FNL</b>	National Liberation Front/Front National pour la Libération du Sud Viêt Nam		

<b>MDGs</b>	Millennium Development Goals	<b>SCI</b>	Service Civil International
<b>MPLA</b>	People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola/Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola	<b>SDGs</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>MS</b>	Danish Association for International Co-operation/Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke	<b>SEK</b>	Swedish krona
<b>NAMA</b>	Norwegian Action against Apartheid/Norsk Aksjon mot apartheid	<b>SFS</b>	National Union of Students/Sveriges Förenade Studentkårer
<b>NATO</b>	North Atlantic Treaty Organization	<b>SIDA/Sida</b>	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency/Styrelsen för internationellt utvecklingsarbete
<b>NGO(s)</b>	Non-governmental organisation(s)	<b>SIH</b>	Swedish Committee for International Relief/Svenska kommittén för internationell hjälpverksamhet
<b>NIB</b>	Swedish Agency for International Assistance/Nämnden för Bistånd	<b>Solkom</b>	Norwegian Solidarity Committee for Vietnam/Solidaritetskomiteen for Vietnam
<b>NORAD</b>	Norwegian Agency for International Development	<b>SPLA</b>	Sudan People's Liberation Army
<b>NORCAP</b>	Norwegian Capacity	<b>SRRA</b>	Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Agency
<b>Nordkors</b>	Nordic Red Crosses Committee and Working Committee/De nordiska röda korsens kommitté och arbetsutskott	<b>SUL</b>	National Council of Swedish Youth/Sverigers Ungdomsorganisationers Landsråd
<b>NPA</b>	Norwegian People's Aid/Norsk Folkehjelp	<b>SWAPO</b>	South West Africa People's Organisation
<b>NUNW</b>	National Union of Namibian Workers	<b>TCO</b>	Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees/Tjänstemännens central organisation
<b>ODA</b>	Official development assistance	<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development	<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>PAIGC</b>	African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde/Partido Africano da Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde	<b>UNRRA</b>	United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration
<b>POW</b>	prisoner of war	<b>WGI</b>	World Giving Index
<b>SAF</b>	Swedish Employers Association/Svenska Arbetsgivareföreningen	<b>WJC</b>	World Jewish Congress
<b>SAK</b>	Central Organisation of Finnish Trade Unions/Suomen Ammattiliittojen Keskusjärjestö	<b>WRB</b>	War Refugee Board
		<b>YMCA</b>	Young Men's Christian Association
		<b>ZANU</b>	Zimbabwe African National Union
		<b>ZAPU</b>	Zimbabwean African People's Union

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# 1 An introduction to Nordic humanitarian action

In spring 2014, Bill Gates, chairman of the largest private foundation in the world, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, thanked the government and people of Sweden for their longstanding generosity in providing humanitarian aid in response to conflicts and disasters abroad. Above all, Gates argued that Sweden's commitment to allocating 1% of its national income to official development assistance (ODA) – a distinction it shares with a few other countries, notably fellow Nordic states Denmark and Norway – has made a significant contribution towards improving the quality of life for the world's poor and alleviating human suffering (Gates, cited in Torén Björling, 2014).

In the Nordic countries, Gates' statement landed in the midst of an ongoing debate on the scope of development aid, humanitarian action and refugee policy. On the one hand, the ongoing European refugee crisis has generated considerable and possibly unprecedented expressions of solidarity across the Nordic countries, especially from the latter half of 2015. At the time of writing, Sweden had received more asylum-seekers and refugees per capita than comparable European countries, primarily from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan. On the other hand, with increased criticism of ODA, declining membership in civil society organisations (CSOs) and rising right-wing populism across all the Nordic countries, the Nordic tradition of humanitarian engagement abroad and at home has come under both financial and political pressure in all the Nordic countries.

To put these contemporary developments into historical context, this HPG Working Paper analyses international humanitarian engagement by the Nordic countries from the First World War to today, focusing on the issues of neutrality and solidarity. The aim and purpose of the Working Paper is to show how Nordic humanitarian aid differs from humanitarian assistance originating in other countries and regions. Recognising the importance of neutrality to the international standing of the Nordic countries, the Working Paper examines its impact on their humanitarian action. It

considers humanitarian initiatives by states or state-sponsored actors, ranging from official aid agencies to Red Cross societies, missionaries, solidarity movements, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and individuals. Despite the centrality of solidarity and the 'Nordic welfare state model' in the domestic politics of Nordic countries, and whilst acknowledging the relevance of this philosophy for action to alleviate suffering overseas, the Working Paper focuses on international engagement (Noel and Therien, 1995; Bergman Rosamond, 2007; Lundsgaarde, 2013). Although it does not explicitly seek to answer the question why several of the Nordic countries devote a larger share of their national wealth to ODA than almost any other major donor, the Working Paper provides a historical context for this phenomenon, reflects on particular regional specificities and explores how attitudes towards neutrality and solidarity have influenced Nordic humanitarian action.

The five Nordic countries – Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden – are often seen as punching above their weight internationally, both individually and as a group, in terms of norm entrepreneurship, progressive values and their reputation as 'good societies' (Ingebritsen, Neumann, Gsthöhl and Beyer, 2006; Lee and Smith, 2010).<sup>1</sup> With 25 million inhabitants and a combined gross domestic product (GDP) of \$1,500 billion per year, the Nordic countries also represent considerable economic and social capacity in international society, even if they are individually small by global comparison (Schouenburg, 2013).

This small state profile has a strong historical precedent. During the Cold War, for example, Nordic governments frequently championed development

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1 While internationally, 'Scandinavia' is often used as a synonym for the five 'Nordic countries' Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and Finland, this term traditionally excludes Finland. In this Working Paper, the former term is used when referring to the three then sovereign Nordic countries in the First World War years, while the latter is preferred for the interwar and post-war years.

aid, disarmament, environmental protection, gender equality, humanitarian action and peacebuilding efforts as elements of a broader strategy of ‘small state solidarity’ amid the bipolar confrontation between the superpowers. In particular, the Nordic states have been committed to ‘Third World’ solidarity,<sup>2</sup> together with other so-called ‘like-minded states’, including Canada, Ireland and the Netherlands (Pratt and Södersten, 1989; Olesen, Pharo and Paaskesen, 2013a; 2013b; O’Sullivan, 2015). In view of this commitment, a particular ‘Nordic aid model’ has emerged within this group, reflecting the welfare state corporatism of the Nordic countries, characterised by a relatively high degree of representation of NGOs in domestic policymaking and implementation, and a lower degree of coordination between business interests and development aid than in most other donor countries. There has been remarkably broad and consistent public support for and popular engagement with both ODA and humanitarian activism across the Nordic countries. As such, active humanitarianism has become part of Nordic transregional self-identity as well as national narratives, in particular in Norway and Sweden (Odén, 2011).

This longstanding humanitarian commitment on the part of the Nordic countries has typically been explained as largely motivated by a broadly defined sense of solidarity or even altruism. It has been explicitly connected to the interwar neutrality of the Scandinavian countries as well as Nordic attempts at East–West and North–South bridge-building and peacemaking during the Cold War (Pharo, 2008a; 2008b; Pharo and Pohle Fraser, 2008). Although only Finland and Sweden maintained official non-alignment during the Cold War, as members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) Denmark, Iceland and Norway adopted a cautious stance during the Cold War, cooperating closely with neutral Finland and Sweden in promoting a non-confrontational geopolitical regime, regionally known as the ‘Nordic balance’. While this security arrangement allowed few opportunities for regional policy positioning, it did not preclude high-profile advocacy in favour of decolonisation, democracy and development in the Third World, including a commitment to international humanitarian aid and generous ODA.

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2 The concept of the ‘Third World’ is contentious, and is here primarily used as it frequently occurs in the cited material.

The close links between state aid and humanitarian efforts were partly forged in the varying combinations of neutrality, small state identity and regional security balance which have shaped Nordic foreign policies since the First World War. They have also followed from welfare state corporatism, understood as a political culture and system conditioned by close cooperation and deep integration between civil society organisations and policy-making processes. The explicitly humanitarian motivations of Nordic state aid since its inception in the 1950s and 1960s have further strengthened this link between state policies and civil society humanitarian work, as evidenced by the high level of budgetary, discursive and institutional coordination and mutual dependence between state aid and humanitarian action. For this reason, while this Working Paper is primarily concerned with humanitarian assistance, it directs considerable attention towards Nordic ODA as well as human rights advocacy. As such, it also addresses, not only actions that may fall under any ex-post definition of humanitarian action, but also actions historically motivated by humanitarian concerns.

Given the wide scope of cooperation between governments and NGOs in the field of Nordic humanitarian action, the Working Paper cannot be comprehensive, nor can it address beneficiaries’ experiences of Nordic humanitarian action, and how, in their eyes, it may differ from that of other donors. Here, much basic research remains to be done. It is not the purpose of this Working Paper to assess the effectiveness or success of humanitarian actions, or to study Nordic experiences of post-conflict management or peacekeeping, despite their significance in overall public engagement with humanitarian action. Due to the specific place of neutrality and solidarity in explaining Nordic humanitarian action, the Swedish experience is treated in greater detail than that of its neighbours, as Sweden has been neutral throughout the period covered by this study and has consistently allocated more funds to ODA than Finland, the other Nordic country that has also been neutral during most of this period.

## 1.1 Outline

Following this introduction, Chapter 2 addresses Nordic humanitarian action during and between the world wars. Although neutral at the outset of the Second World War, the Nordic countries – with the notable exception of Sweden – suffered to varying

degrees from external aggression and occupation.

The chapter problematises the complex relationship between neutrality and solidarity in this context, and the importance of immediate post-war relief efforts as a precedent for later Nordic humanitarian action. Chapter 3 addresses the emergence of post-war aid frameworks and government structures for humanitarian assistance and ODA from the early 1950s onwards. In particular, the chapter discusses how government ministries and funding mechanisms evolved in response to UN imperatives, international trends, security interests, ideological convictions and domestic public opinion.

Chapter 4 looks at how traditional humanitarian concerns fused with the wider public engagement with decolonisation in the Nordic countries, within traditional popular movements as well as new CSOs across the political spectrum, including the labour movement, churches and solidarity

movements. In particular, it analyses the close links between humanitarian concerns and notions of development in official and public Nordic support for national liberation movements in Southern Africa and Southeast Asia, above all in South Africa and Vietnam. Chapter 5 looks at how Nordic understandings of humanitarian action have expanded to include conflict prevention and post-transformation initiatives, at the same time as democracy, gender equality, health and human rights have evolved as important objectives within the global humanitarian discourse. In conclusion, Chapter 6 summarises the Nordic specificity in the current humanitarian landscape, and discusses why Nordic development aid has been so consistently ambitious. In particular, it addresses the changing relationship between state and civil society actors in explaining the past and present specificities of Nordic humanitarian action.



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# 2 Humanitarian action and the world wars

War, civil conflict and political turmoil were the obvious and most direct causes of early expressions of Nordic humanitarian outreach in and near Europe. The Nordic states provided refuge for small numbers of persecuted minority groups from the Russian Empire, including Poles, Jews and Armenians. The plight of the Armenians in particular made a lasting impression on Scandinavian Christians, not least within growing missionary movements. Danish support groups were established during the genocide against Ottoman Armenians; Karen Jeppe, a Danish relief worker and missionary based in the Ottoman Empire, worked closely with one of these groups, the Danish Friends of Armenians (Danske Armeniervenner, DA). Arguably, Jeppe and her associates were able to negotiate access to the victims of the genocide thanks to their origins in a small, neutral and distant country. This gave them an advantage over other 'Christian' groups seen by the Ottomans as too closely associated with the imperialist ambitions of their countries of origin (Bjørnlund, 2008).

Nordic Red Cross societies also benefited from this perceived neutrality, in particular during the First World War. A framework for cooperation – the Nordic Red Crosses Committee and Working Committee (De nordiska röda korsens kommitté och arbetsutskott, Nordkors) – was formed to organise a series of prisoner of war (POW) exchanges (Sundby, 2010), and relief committees were set up in the Nordic countries to provide care for POWs while in transit. Norwegian polar explorer, scientist and diplomat Fridtjof Nansen led the repatriation of POWs from Russia (Huntford, 2001; Jaeger, 2001).<sup>3</sup> At the end of hostilities, several Nordic countries provided temporary refuge for orphaned and malnourished so-called 'war children' from Austria and Germany, while Nordic Red Cross societies organised ambulances in Finland and supplied medical aid to Poland, as well as food aid, medical assistance and humanitarian aid to Austria and Germany (Janfelt, 1998).<sup>4</sup>

Nordic Red Cross societies were also active in the response to the Russian famine of 1921, in close cooperation with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), which also set up the International Committee for Russian Relief (ICRR), with Nansen as its High Commissioner. Although the main contributors were American and British, a large number of Nordic nationals also worked for the ICRR in Russia. Nordic Red Cross societies coordinated these efforts by establishing the Bureau for Aid in Russia (Byrån för hjälpverksamhet i Ryssland) in 1921, and organised a joint humanitarian expedition to Samara in 1919–24 (Patenaude, 2002).

In 1921 Nansen accepted the newly created League of Nations post of High Commissioner for Refugees (HCR), while Jeppe was appointed the League's Commissioner for the Protection of Women and Children in the Middle East (Bjørnlund, 2008). Both were chosen for their proven experience of large-scale humanitarian efforts. Nansen's most notable achievement as High Commissioner was his securing of official international recognition of the 'Nansen passport', an international travel document which allowed 'stateless persons' to travel and settle, greatly improving HCR's ability to provide assistance, education and employment opportunities for refugees. Nansen's work also contributed to the development of a draft treaty on refugees' rights in 1933.

Aside from Danish and Norwegian shipping and whaling, outside Europe Nordic humanitarian organisations typically did not have access to the same well-developed commercial contacts and communications that humanitarian organisations based out of the colonial powers could draw on. Nordic missionary work was thus disproportionately important for early Nordic humanitarian action beyond Europe (Nielssen, Okkenhaug and Hestad Skeie, 2011). The Italian attack on Ethiopia in 1935 – including the use of chemical weapons – generated widespread public protest in the Nordic countries, in part due to long-standing missionary contacts and links between the Ethiopian

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3 Swedish National Archives. Svenska Röda Korsets arkiv I, De nordiska röda korsens kommitté och arbetsutskott (Nordkors).

4 Swedish National Archives. Svenska Röda Korsets arkiv I.

and Scandinavian royal courts.<sup>5</sup> Public support led to the provision of ambulance services to the Ethiopians under the aegis of the Swedish Red Cross (Agge, 1936; Zalewski, 1999). Scandinavian labour organisations were also active in providing humanitarian support to the Republican side during the Spanish Civil War of 1936–39; the Swedish support committee, for example, collected nearly 10% of the international funds channelled to the Republicans (Jändel, 1996; Sellström, 1999). Nordic Red Cross societies and individual philanthropists, such as Swedish banker Olof Aschberg, funded care for orphaned children from Spain (Aschberg, 1961; Myklebust and Lloris, 2009).

## 2.1 Humanitarian action during and after the Second World War

The Soviet attack on Finland in November 1939 created a global outpouring of sympathy for the Finns. The country received considerable humanitarian support, in particular from its Nordic neighbours and, above all, from Sweden. These aid efforts brought together trade unions, businesses, Red Cross societies, religious organisations and private initiatives. In Sweden, this broad and very diverse engagement for Finland was organised through a central body, *Centrala Finlandshjälpen*, which in time was given official sanction and re-established as a royal committee (Carlquist, 1971: 18, 71).

Pre-war persecution in Germany caused many German Jews to seek refuge abroad. However, in the early years of the war Sweden took a very cautious line with regard to its refugee policy. A law on foreigners passed in 1937 did not consider those suffering from persecution on account of their ‘race’ as ‘political refugees’, and hence entitled to asylum (Svanberg and Tydén, 1992: 275–76). This restrictive policy was modified in 1942 following the deportation of almost half of occupied Norway’s Jewish population – a few hundred individuals – to Germany; most of the remainder managed to escape, primarily to Sweden. The following year the Danish resistance movement transferred almost all Danish Jews, more than 7,000 people, to Sweden (Torell, 1973: 36).

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5 In particular, the links between Red Cross societies and the Scandinavian royal courts were often close. For example, Prince Carl of Sweden served as chairman of the Swedish Red Cross between 1906 and 1945 (Sundby and Almström Blom, 2010).

Tens of thousands of non-Jewish Norwegian and Danish refugees also arrived in Sweden during the war, along with 30,000 Balts fleeing the advancing Red Army across the Baltic Sea in 1944–45 (Svanberg and Tydén, 1992: 284–287; Byström and Frohnert, 2013). Another 170,000 refugees and evacuees arrived in Sweden from Finland (SOU, 1945:1: 56), which in its turn took in half a million Karelians in the largest refugee caseload ever faced by any of the Nordic states up to that point.

The arrival of refugees in Sweden required an extensive organisation for administering their reception. The Ministry of Health and Social Affairs provided refugees with housing, education and employment in an operation requiring collaboration between government agencies, humanitarian organisations and institutions established by the refugees themselves, coordinated by the National Board of Refugees (*Nationella flyktingnämnden*). Key organisations included the labour movement’s Refugee Council (*Flyktingrådet*), funded by Swedish trade unions, the so-called Red Help (*Röda hjälpen*) and the Mosaic Congregation’s Refugee Committee (*Mosaiska församlingens flyktingkommitté*). Danish and Norwegian refugees were also provided with military training – nominally ‘police training’ – in anticipation of the liberation of their countries from German occupation (Johansson, 2005; Rudberg, 2013).

Its neutrality and intact economy and infrastructure allowed Sweden to provide critical humanitarian assistance in war-torn Northern Europe at a time when few other countries could do so – a capability it exercised restrictively at first, but expanded as the war drew to a close (Hägglöf, 1960; Lindholm, 2009; Salmon, 2011). The Swedish organisation Help the Victims of War (*Hjälp krigets offer*, HKO), established in 1938, provided assistance to refugees and POWs in countries affected by war and occupation (Carlquist, 1971: 62ff; Wangel, 1982). Inspired by the international Emergency Committee of Christian Organisations (ECCO), almost all of Sweden’s organised churches supported HKO, which was administratively linked with the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA). Together with its Swiss sister organisation, the Swedish Red Cross supplied food aid to German-occupied Greece in 1942, having secured special permission to bypass the Allied blockade directed against the Axis powers (Ehrenstråle, 1945; George, 1992; Clogg, 2008; Mauzy, 2008). As citizens and representatives of

a neutral and still independent European country, Swedish businessmen, diplomats, priests and other private individuals living abroad were in some cases able to report on the atrocities committed by the Nazis in Germany and across occupied Europe. For example, Swedish priest Birger Forell in Berlin and the small Swedish colony in Warsaw sought to provide assistance and means of escape for victims of Nazi persecution (Loscher, 1993; Lindholm, 2009; Thorsell, 2014).

Neutrality was not an entirely unambiguous position from which to provide humanitarian assistance. When the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) was formed in November 1943, for example, it became clear to Swedish diplomats that the organisation would be used by the Allies as ‘a first rate political weapon in the struggle for the souls and bellies’. While the British had originally asked Sweden to extend aid beyond its Nordic neighbours to South-East Europe, Swedish representatives feared that UNRRA would be too closely tied to the Allied war effort. While Iceland and the Norwegian government-in-exile joined the organisation, the Swedes opted for their own semi-official humanitarian organisation under the auspices of the Swedish Red Cross, eventually forming the Swedish Committee for International Relief (Svenska kommittén för internationell hjälpverksamhet, SIH) in 1944. Again, the Nordic link proved essential as the SIH initiated cooperation with other Nordic Red Cross societies through the Coordination Committee for Relief in the Nordic Region (Samarbetskommittén för nordiskt hjälparbete) (Böhme, 1994; Norberg, 1994; Nehlin, 2009).

The Nordic Red Cross societies also played a prominent role in the rescue of concentration camp inmates in areas under Nazi control at the close of the war. The primary operation, known as the ‘White Buses’<sup>6</sup> (originally an initiative of the Danish government-in-exile but eventually headed by Count Folke Bernadotte, vice-chairman of the Swedish Red Cross), was initially tasked with saving citizens of Scandinavian countries. Although both the Swedish Red Cross and Bernadotte prioritised the release and transport of Scandinavian prisoners (Lomfors, 2005; see also Thor Tureby, 2015), and some 8,000

Scandinavians (Koblik, 1985; Persson, 2000; Thor Tureby, 2015: 279) were brought to Sweden, around 7,500 non-Scandinavians, mostly French and Polish ex-prisoners from the women’s concentration camp at Ravensbrück, were also rescued.

In conjunction with the preparations for the White Buses, the World Jewish Congress (WJC) in London and its Swedish representatives Norbert Masur and Gile Storch contacted Count Bernadotte to investigate using private Swedish channels to Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler (Masur, 1945; Koblik, 1985; Leifland, 1992: 42; Palmer, 1994; Lindholm, 2009). While these negotiations eventually proved unsuccessful, perhaps the best-known Nordic humanitarian action followed from the efforts of Raoul Wallenberg and other Swedish diplomats in preventing Hungarian Jews from being deported from the Budapest Ghetto to Auschwitz in 1944–45 (Carlberg, 2012; Jangfeldt, 2012; Levine, 2013; Wetterberg, 2014). Wallenberg’s activities were initiated by the US War Refugee Board (WRB), which had been approached by Jewish representatives in spring 1944, in cooperation with the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. While Wallenberg was made a Swedish diplomat, his instructions were drafted by the WRB as the definition of the project shifted from ‘an action of Swedish Government’ to an ‘American program’ during the course of June 1944. Wallenberg’s recruitment was not to be made public so as not to reveal his mission’s US links as Sweden remained formally neutral, and Nazi Germany still controlled occupied Hungary (SOU, 2003:18: 104–105, 123–124, 146). On site in Budapest, Wallenberg immediately organised ‘a humanitarian department’ at the Swedish legation, handing out protective passports (Schutzpass) with official Swedish insignia. Together with representatives of other neutral states as well as the Red Cross, Wallenberg and his associates managed to rescue several thousand people. Wallenberg was arrested by the Soviets in January 1945 (SOU 2003:18: 128, 174).

## 2.2 Post-war relief

As the Second World War came to a close the so-called ‘Swedish Committee’ was established as the precursor to later development cooperation organisations (Gyllensvärd and Sandberg, 1989: 18). In an illustration of the close coordination of governmental policies and civil society engagement typical of Nordic humanitarian action during wartime, the initiative for the Committee came from popular

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5 On the Danish side, Admiral Carl Hammerich had secret plans for an expedition code-named Jyllandskorps to save Danish and Norwegian prisoners from the German camps.

movements, trade unions, employers and religious and humanitarian organisations, and was funded by the Swedish government. The Committee organised the ‘Help Norway’ and ‘Help Europe’ campaigns after the war (Onsander, 2007). Throughout the period, women’s organisations – both faith-based and secular – were particularly active in fundraising and popular mobilisation, as well as launching initiatives including Help Ethiopia’s Leper Children (Hjälp Etiopiens spetälska barn), For Israel’s Children (För Israels barn) and We Help (Vi hjälper).<sup>7</sup> Swedish voluntary agencies and the Swedish government were also involved in providing relief to post-war Germany in what was effectively Sweden’s first experience as a long-term aid donor (Lindner, 1989; Stern, 2008).

Danish and Norwegian humanitarian organisations also increased their activity as the grip of German

occupation weakened. In Denmark, for example, activists established the Friends of Peace Relief Organisation (Fredsvennernes hjælpearbejde) in 1944, while Denmark was still under occupation, inspired by the Swiss NGO Service Civil International (SCI).<sup>8</sup> The following year the first group of Danish volunteers travelled to northern Norway to assist Norwegian humanitarian organisations in providing care for Soviet and Yugoslav POWs imprisoned in Norway by the Germans during the war, and who were now being repatriated through Sweden. In 1949, Fredsvennernes hjælpearbejde was renamed the Danish Association for International Cooperation (Mellemlfolkeligt Samvirke, MS) (Juul, 2002). Initially MS concentrated its work in Europe, but soon extended its activities to the Third World, initiating projects in Ghana and India (Christensen, 2002; Wohlgemuth, 2002; see also Chapter 4).

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7 In 1953 these initiatives were reorganised as Selma Arnheim’s Foundation for National and International Aid Activity (Selma Arnheims stiftelse för nationell och internationell hjälperksamhet), named after Selma Arnheim, a prominent philanthropist and women’s rights activist (Gothenburg University Library. Selma Arnheims stiftelses arkiv).

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8 The Norwegian equivalent, Internasjonal Dugnad, was started in 1939, while the Swedish organisation was formed in 1943, followed by the 1947 establishment in Finland of the Finnish Branch of Service Civil International (Kansainvälinen Vapaaehtoinen Työleirijärjestö, KVT). In all the Nordic countries, Quakers were central in supporting these initiatives.

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# 3 Post-war aid frameworks and government structures

The need for immediate relief at the end of the war made the expansion of official Nordic humanitarian action beyond Europe a widely accepted moral obligation in the post-war years, even if the funds allocated remained modest until the mid-1960s. The establishment of the UN and the proclamation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights provided an internationally accepted legal framework for this ambition. Gradually the Nordic countries would come to play a more prominent role in the activities of the UN, channelling much of their extra-European humanitarian assistance through the multilateral UN system (Götz, 2011: 10; Odén, 2011: 18).

The attraction of the UN for the Nordic countries in the post-war years derived from their relatively small size, their pre-war traditions of neutrality, their wartime experiences and their vulnerable geopolitical position in the emerging Cold War. Of the five Nordic states, Finland and Sweden remained formally neutral during the Cold War, with Finland concluding a treaty with the Soviet Union in 1948, while Denmark, Iceland and Norway opted for NATO membership in 1949. Despite these individually different security arrangements, the Nordic countries established a framework for closer regional cooperation through the Nordic Council in 1952, in addition to developing a more informal security regime known as the 'Nordic balance'. The Nordic balance implied that the Nordic NATO members took a particularly cautious approach while neighbouring Finland and Sweden maintained open contacts with both East and West, with the common ambition of defusing security tensions in the region. As a result, the Nordic countries were usually considered as acceptable to both sides in the Cold War, as well as by most emerging Third World countries, especially since they were small and mostly lacked either any significant colonial experiences (outside of the Arctics) or strong economic interests in the former colonies. Above all, the Nordic countries began to view themselves as sharing common interests with other small states joining the

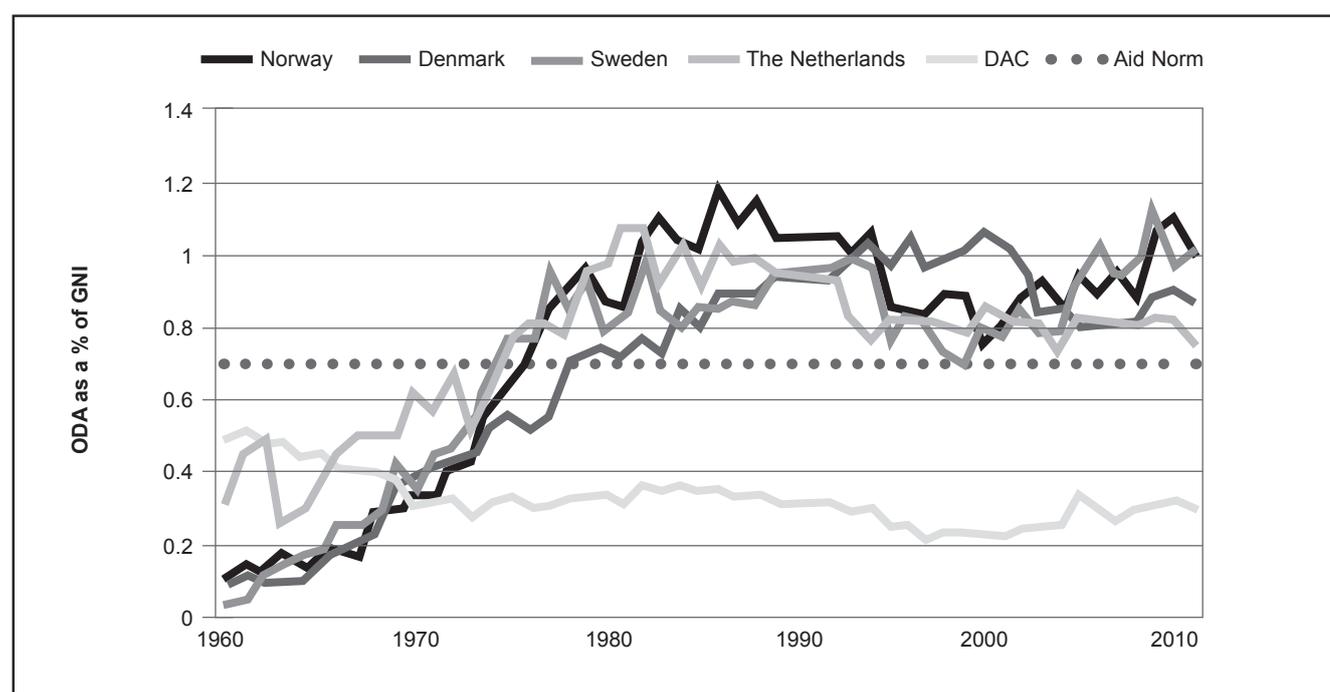
UN as a result of decolonisation, frequently seeking to bypass Cold War bipolarity through active Third World outreach.

More specifically, this meant that the Nordic countries took on prominent roles in various UN activities. Beginning with the Suez Crisis in 1956, the Nordic countries were often called upon to participate in UN mediating efforts, monitoring missions and peacekeeping operations. Being active UN members became part of Nordic self-identity during the 1950s, not least as a consequence of Norwegian Trygve Lie's tenure as Secretary-General of the UN (1946–53), followed by Sweden's Dag Hammarskjöld (1953–61). Over time, a certain degree of coordination of Nordic policy positions also evolved within the UN General Assembly (Götz, 2013: 47). A key example of the Nordic desire to match UN recommendations is the early adoption of the UN norm of providing 0.7% of gross national income (GNI) for ODA by Denmark, Norway and Sweden, eventually surpassing this goal by setting aside 1%, an objective these countries have maintained, usually surpassing the other members of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (Ekengren and Götz, 2013; see Figure 1).

With increasing superpower tension during the Cold War, the human suffering the decolonisation process entailed became evident not only to the Nordic governments, but also entered the homes of ordinary citizens through new media such as television. Increased awareness of the conflicts and poverty in former colonies was an important impetus for more ambitious development policies, resulting in a steady growth of Nordic ODA allocation (Olesen, Pharo and Paaskesen, 2013a).

In line with the cooperation already established between the Nordic countries in a number of policy fields, joint Nordic projects were also considered informally (Friis Bach, Olesen, Kaur-Pedersen and Pedersen, 2008). A key argument

**Figure 1: Net ODA disbursement of GNI from 1960 to 2011 for Norway, Denmark, Sweden, The Netherlands and the OECD/DAC countries combined (ODA as a % of GNI).**



Source: Pharo, 2013: 69.

in favour of coordinated Nordic efforts was that individual Nordic countries were too small and too inexperienced to engage in successful development cooperation bilaterally, and several shared projects and programmes were launched – in South Korea in 1958, in Tanzania in 1963 and in Mozambique in 1978.

### 3.1 Government ministries and funding mechanisms

During this period the Nordic governments – especially Denmark, Norway and Sweden – also developed their own national institutions for disbursing ODA. Norway took the lead in bilateral development assistance. In 1949, Norwegian politicians began to take an active interest in development aid with the launch of the UN's Expanded Programme for Technical Assistance (EPTA). In 1952, the Labour Party (Arbeiderpartiet) government of Oscar Torp concluded a tripartite agreement with India and the UN setting up the Indo-Norwegian Fisheries Project (INP) in Kerala. Widespread public enthusiasm for the initiative culminated in a nationwide fundraising campaign in 1953 – People's Action for India (Folkeaksjonen for India) – which rivalled Norwegian support for Finland during the Winter War with the Soviet Union (Pharo, 2008b).

The Norwegians also pioneered assistance in the (latterly controversial) field of population control, which became a common Nordic aid speciality in the 1960s, preparing the way for later engagement on women's rights and gender equality (Engh, 2008). The institutional machinery to administer Norwegian bilateral aid was established in 1962, and six years later was reorganised into a directorate, the Norwegian Agency for International Development (NORAD), which soon expanded its activities in fulfilment of the Norwegian government's gradually more ambitious goals for its aid policy (Engh, 2009).

Although Sweden established an international fellowship programme through the Swedish Institute's Department of Technical Assistance, created in 1946, official Swedish state funding of development assistance also began with contributions to the UN EPTA programme from 1951 (Åkerlund, 2014). The semi-official Central Committee for Swedish Technical Assistance to Less-Developed Areas (Centralkommittén för Svenskt Tekniskt Bistånd, CK) was formed the following year as a foundation for more than 40 NGOs, including trade unions, employers' organisations, student councils and organisations in industry, trade and commerce, consumer and producer cooperatives and major missionary societies, in addition to representatives of

the government.<sup>9</sup> The Social Democratic government invited missionary societies to help shape Sweden's international development policies, including humanitarian assistance (Sellström, 1999).

CK's first aid recipients were Ethiopia and Pakistan, with projects financed by the Swedish government (Gyllensvärd and Sandberg, 1989: 18; Onsander, 2007). Funding was however on a small scale. Partly in response to mounting pressure from student and youth organisations, the government took a stronger interest in international development issues from the mid-1950s. A designated Minister for Development Assistance, Ulla Lindström, was appointed in 1954, and national fundraising campaigns under the slogan 'Sweden Helps' (Sverige Hjälper) were organised by the CK annually from 1955 (Sellström, 1999: 63; Öhman, 2010). However, by the end of the decade interest had waned, in part due to these recurring combined information and fundraising campaigns (Onsander, 2007: 8), and the CK was dissolved in 1962 and replaced by the Swedish Agency for International Assistance (Nämnden för Bistånd, NIB), which in its turn was re-formed into the Swedish International Development Authority (Styrelsen för internationell utveckling, SIDA) in 1965.<sup>10</sup> The basic objective of Swedish aid as established in Proposition 1962:100 – frequently referred to as the 'bible' of Swedish development cooperation – was to improve the living standards of the poor. In order to achieve this goal, assistance was also intended to contribute to the development of democracy and social equality (Proposition 1962:100; Ljunggren, 1986). According to the Proposition, peace, freedom and prosperity were not national concerns, but increasingly universal and interlinked. At the same time, it was clearly stated that development aid and economic assistance required no other justification than moral duty and international solidarity (Proposition 1962:100: 5–6; Odén and Wohlgemuth, 2013).

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9 The organisations involved in this particular context represent a kind of test-chart of the typical key actors usually included in Nordic welfare state corporatism, e.g., the Swedish Trade Union Confederation (Landsorganisationen i Sverige, LO), the Swedish Employers Association (Svenska Arbetsgivareföreningen, SAF), the Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees (Tjänstemännens centralorganisation, TCO), the Workers' Educational Association (Arbetarnas Bildningsförbund, ABF) and other education associations, such as the National Council of Swedish Youth (Sverigers Ungdomsorganisationers Landsråd, SUL), and the National Union of Students (Sveriges Förenade Studentkårer, SFS).

10 SIDA was reorganised in 1995 as the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Styrelsen för internationellt utvecklingssamarbete, Sida).

Sweden's commitment to development aid was closely connected with the so-called 'active foreign policy' of neutrality championed by Social Democratic Prime Minister Olof Palme (1969–76, 1982–86). In July 1965 Palme spoke out against the war in Vietnam in a well-known speech which marked a contrast with the more cautious and highly legalistic interpretation of neutrality which Sweden had largely followed up to that point. In his speech, Palme – then Minister of Education – noted that, beyond denying people equitable social, economic and political conditions as well as the right to self-determination, hunger, poverty, racism and oppression would lead to demands for national liberation and social revolution across the Third World. In alleviating these tensions, Palme identified a 'community of interest' between non-aligned Sweden, liberation movements and newly independent small states, and called for a more active stand in favour of Third World liberation and against colonialism and racism.<sup>11</sup> Although this position caused tension between Sweden and the United States, it was eventually largely adopted by US allies including Denmark and Norway, confirming the continued existence of a 'Nordic bloc' within the UN.

Denmark also increased its development aid efforts. In 1950 the Danish Social Democratic government initiated a project to look into development assistance under the aegis of the UN. The following year, the new liberal-conservative government established a 'government committee for technical assistance under the UN'. Danish Foreign Minister Ole Bjørn Kraft, a leading conservative, explained the necessity of Danish development aid as follows (Kraft cited in Christensen, 2002: 7–8):

*We all know that deprivation and want and the feeling of oppression and despair are the breeding grounds of war. There is a vivid understanding in the West that you do not obtain the goal that we strive for as long as large parts of the world's population live on or under subsistence level.*

One of the most important advocates for a more active Danish aid policy was Prime Minister Viggo Kampmann (1960–62) of the Social Democratic Party (Socialdemokraterne). In 1962, the first Danish law

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11 Palme observed that many liberation movements were not democratic, but concluded that colonialism was the greater evil and would have to be abolished as a first step towards democracy in any case.

on development assistance was enacted, establishing the first overall bilateral development assistance programme for developing countries under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Renamed Danida (the Danish International Development Agency) in 1963, this aid programme expanded considerably during the late 1960s, partly as a result of a widely publicised mismatch between public expectations of Danish aid and the very low levels of actual assistance. The 1965 statistics provided by the DAC showed that Denmark trailed behind most DAC members in aid donorship, in marked contrast to the government's claims. Youth movements, NGOs, aid professionals and politicians joined forces in demanding that Denmark take its moral and humanitarian obligations seriously and increase its aid expenditure accordingly. However, Denmark was also the first among the Nordic countries to experience vocal opposition against the development aid agenda during the course of the 1970s, coming from both the right and the left of the political spectrum. A new ultra-liberal, populist party, the Progress Party (Fremskridtspartiet), opposed aid in any form, while on the left another newcomer, the Left Socialist Party (Venstresocialisterne), criticised Danish development assistance policy for assisting 'reactionary regimes' and promoting the interests of Danish industry (Brunbech, 2008; Brunbech and Olesen, 2013: 96).

Finland was in many ways a latecomer to development aid among the Nordic countries. Its Bureau for Development Assistance – later renamed the Office for Development Cooperation – was established in 1965 with Jaakko Iloniemi as its first director. Seven years later, the Bureau became a department of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, where it was renamed the Finnish International Development Agency (FINNIDA).<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> The Ministry also finances the work of the Service Centre for Development Cooperation (Kehitysyhteistyön palvelukeskus, KEPA) supporting over 200 Finnish NGOs engaged in development cooperation.

The Finno-Soviet Treaty of 1948 meant that Finland's policy elites opted for a very cautious foreign policy line during much of the Cold War. Against this background, humanitarian action and development aid in the Third World could serve as an opportunity to demonstrate Finland's determination to veer neither to the East nor the West by extending support to Third World regimes friendly with both. However, despite broad public support in favour of aid not only from the left but also among liberals and conservatives, economic concerns at home always had priority. Aid budgets were among the lowest in Europe until Finnish economic growth in the 1980s prompted a rapid increase. The UN norm was surpassed in 1991, when aid accounted for 0.8% of the country's GNI, only to fall to around 0.4% in subsequent years as the economy deteriorated again (Ahtisaari, cited in Soiri and Peltola, 1999: 79–80; Koponen and Heinonen, 2002: 23–24). As of 2013, Finnish ODA had reached 0.55%.

Like Finland's official bilateral aid, Icelandic development assistance – since 1981 coordinated by the Icelandic International Development Agency (ICEIDA) – has been less conspicuous than that of the other Nordic countries, mostly due to limited resources. ICEIDA has consistently prioritised cooperation with countries suffering from acute poverty, beginning its work in Cape Verde before expanding to Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia and Uganda during the 1980s. Drawing on its primary export sector and its key national expertise, Icelandic aid has typically concentrated on supporting the development of domestic fisheries in recipient countries, for domestic consumption as well as export. As fishing communities often are poor fringe communities, ICEIDA's fisheries support has been motivated by the classical arguments of the Nordic aid model by explicitly linking immediate humanitarian concerns with long-term development objectives (Sigurdardóttir, 2002: 30–31; Odén, 2011).

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# 4 Engagement with decolonisation during the Cold War

From the outset in the early 1950s, Nordic ODA has been closely connected with the geopolitical position and security concerns of the Nordic countries in the context of the emerging global Cold War. However, this has not been a one-way, top-down endeavour. From the beginning, there was very broad public support in all the Nordic countries in favour of international humanitarian action, in particular in relation to decolonisation. First, opposition to apartheid in South Africa became a hallmark of the foreign policy of the Nordic countries during the Cold War, and remained central until the regime changed in South Africa in the early 1990s (Ekengren and Götz, 2013). Second, the Nordic countries were among the first Western states to openly support national liberation movements, primarily in the wider region of Southern Africa (Sellström, 1999; 2002). Third, all the Nordic countries took a critical stance towards US involvement in Vietnam. In all three contexts, public opinion as well as vocal NGOs and pressure groups played decisive roles in bringing Nordic governments to embrace humanitarian action in the Third World.

The fact that Nordic development aid has been closely connected with the advocacy work, humanitarian action and international engagement of strong popular movements, CSOs and NGOs goes some way in explaining the persistence and success of Nordic NGOs in influencing official policy (Black, 1991: 308, 314; Sellström, 1999). Here, the strong Nordic labour movement and its organisations have been of particular importance for promoting Nordic Third World solidarity. While social democratic governments played a significant role when in power, the labour movement was also instrumental in bridging public and official support in everyday political life. The Nordic social democratic parties themselves maintained close contacts with trade unions and socialist parties in the Third World, as well as in dictatorships such as Greece, Portugal and Spain, in particular through the Socialist International. The mainstay of this engagement was expressed in terms of workers' solidarity as well as humanitarianism.

## 4.1 South Africa

Disapproval of apartheid in South Africa was a key reason for Nordic humanitarian engagement with the Third World. In 1960, Scandinavian trade unions and consumer organisations jointly mounted a temporary boycott of South African goods in response to the killing of anti-apartheid activists at Sharpeville that March (Sellström, 1999). In Sweden the boycott received top-level support from the labour movement, and the traditional May Day march that year for the first time highlighted the liberation struggle in Africa as Prime Minister Tage Erlander (1946–69) was joined by LO chairman Arne Geijer and TCO director Valter Åman in publicly supporting the two major Swedish trade unions in their nationwide campaign 'Hjälp över gränserna' ('Help across the Borders'). Using collection boxes in the shape of miniature globes, the campaign aimed to gather a minimum of 10 Swedish krona (SEK) for each trade union member – equivalent to two hours' average pay at the time. The funds collected were to be donated to the International Solidarity Fund of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU). The information material circulated in conjunction with the campaign underscored the importance of workers' solidarity in the face of poverty and exploitation, but also warned against the dangers of radicalisation of Third World workers and emphasised the mutual benefits of higher living standards for workers across the globe (TAM-Arkiv; see also Nygren, 1973: 100–101).

Combined collection and information campaigns of this kind proved decisive for mobilising public opinion in favour of humanitarian assistance and development aid for the Third World by the early 1960s. Across the Nordic countries, a number of NGOs demanded increased public funding for development cooperation (Gyllensvärd and Sandberg, 1989: 20; Onsander, 2007: 8; Albinson and Åhlström, 1991: 29). Third World issues galvanised the young, as evidenced by the 1962 Afro-Scandinavian Youth Congress organised in Oslo by youth and student organisations in all five Nordic countries. The following year youth organisations in

Norway set up Norwegian Action against Apartheid (Norsk Aksjon mot apartheid, NAMA).

Public opinion against apartheid was reflected in official statements by Nordic governments at the UN. At the UN General Assembly in 1963, for example, Danish Foreign Minister Per Hækkerup promised extended Danish support to the ‘victims of apartheid’, with special emphasis on the education of young South African exiles. As in the other Nordic countries, Danish support was coordinated by an advisory committee, popularly known as the anti-apartheid committee, consisting mainly of NGOs. For its part, the Norwegian government established the Special Committee for Aid to Refugees from Southern Africa (Utvalget for hjelp til flyktninger fra det sørlige Afrika) in 1963, and the Swedish government allocated 1 million SEK – popularly known as the ‘refugee million’ – for refugees from Southern Africa. This marked the beginning of what would evolve into a stable and substantial Nordic commitment in favour of the liberation movements in Southern Africa. As in Denmark, this assistance took the form of education support to young African refugees, drawing on both state and civil society funds and expertise.

NGOs inspired by the New Left proved decisive in raising public awareness through the media as well as through direct action. In 1964, for example, Norwegian NAMA activists protested against a tennis match between South Africa and Norway at Madserud in a much publicised media event that was followed by similar protests in Båstad in Sweden in 1968. Nordic churches and faith-based actors also played a major role in cementing support for the cause of South African anti-apartheid activism. Several influential activists within the Swedish solidarity movement had backgrounds in the church, and some of the most important support organisations – such as the Emmaus’ groups and Bread and Fishes – had a religious origin or base. The strongly anti-apartheid Liberal Party (Folkpartiet) has by tradition a strong religious faction, and the Social Democrats have an important religious branch, the Brotherhood Movement, a member of the International League of Religious Socialists (ILRS).<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Interest in development aid as a means of alleviating human suffering united both Christians and socialists, even if ideas on appropriate sources of funding sometimes differed. In the 1950s, for example, Per Anders Fogelström, a radical writer, suggested that the money from the military budget should be given to development aid instead (Fogelström and Morell, 1958). In the 1960s, the Archbishop of the Church of Sweden, Ruben Josefson, suggested that a percentage of the annual increase in workers’ pay should go to development aid (Ryman, 1997).

As Swedish development assistance expanded in the 1970s, more funds became available for NGOs and a broader range of organisations received government support from the development aid budget as a result (Gyllensvärd and Sandberg, 1989: 21–22). Organisations such as the Africa Groups of Sweden (Afrikagrupperna, AGS), the Church of Sweden Mission (CSM) and the Isolate South Africa Committee (Isolera Sydafrika-Kommittén, ISAK) became major actors, providing support that for political reasons could not come from the government itself (Albinson and Åhlström, 1991; Onsander, 2007: 9–10).

## 4.2 Southern Africa

Apart from South African apartheid, Portuguese colonialism in Angola and Mozambique became an important focal point for Nordic Third World solidarity from the late 1960s and onwards. The Swedish government’s 1969 decision to extend what was explicitly called ‘humanitarian support’ to the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (Partido Africano da Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde, PAIGC) of Guinea-Bissau has been seen as the first time that an industrialised Western country offered direct official assistance to a national liberation movement engaged in armed struggle against another Western state, in this case Portugal. Assistance to the PAIGC mostly consisted of consumer goods and essentials, alongside educational and medical aid (Sellström, 2002: 59ff).

Semi-official Swedish support to liberation movements in Southern Africa began in 1964 with Operation One Day’s Work (Operation Dagsverke), which raised money for the Mozambique Liberation Front (Frente de Libertação de Moçambique, FRELIMO) (Soiri and Peltola, 1999). Later, this commitment expanded to include the People’s Movement for the Liberation of Angola (Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola, MPLA), the South West Africa People’s Organisation (SWAPO) in Namibia, the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) and the Zimbabwean African People’s Union (ZAPU) and the African National Congress (ANC), which all eventually received Swedish ‘humanitarian’ support. These organisations, often viewed as communists and terrorists by other Western governments, were considered governments-in-waiting by Swedish foreign policy officials (Sellström, 1999: 83). Most support came directly from SIDA, although some was channelled via Swedish and international

NGOs. Support mainly consisted of educational aid to refugees, legal aid and humanitarian assistance.

Denmark, Norway and Finland followed Sweden's lead during the early 1970s. As with Sweden, the primary motivation was humanitarian, in the belief that colonialism and racism caused human suffering and violated human rights. In Finland, for example, Students for Medicine (Lääketieteenkandidaattiseura, LKS) collected equipment and medicine for the MPLA, with FINNIDA arranging transport via East Germany, and the Central Organisation of Finnish Trade Unions (Suomen Ammattiliittojen Keskusjärjestö, SAK) provided support to Namibian trade unions affiliated to the National Union of Namibian Workers (NUNW), the trade union wing of SWAPO (Soiri and Peltola, 1999: 108). Later, during its Security Council membership in 1989–90, Finland also played a leading role in finding a resolution to the Namibian question, proposing programmes of assistance and playing a coordinating role for the Nordic states in the country (Soiri and Peltola, 1999: 120).

## 4.3 Vietnam

Nordic states and publics were also vocal critics of the US military engagement in Vietnam. In Denmark, the first demonstration against the war was staged outside the US Embassy in Copenhagen in August 1964. The following year the Norwegian Solidarity Committee for Vietnam (Solidaritetskomiteen for Vietnam, Solkom) was formed,<sup>14</sup> followed by the United FNL Groups (De Förenade FNL-grupperna, DFFG) in Sweden, established in April 1966. In 1966, Danish sympathisers initiated an 'unconditional' collection, meaning that the Vietnamese themselves should decide how the money would be used, including to buy weapons if they so wished. Disagreements on this and related points eventually led the group to split into two organisations: the Danish Vietnam Committees (De Danske Vietnamkomiteer, DDV) and Vietnam 69. Both raised money, circulated petitions and held protest meetings and demonstrations. The movement peaked in 1967–68 and petered out in 1972 (Johansen and Gluud, 2003).

In Sweden, DFFG's radical leadership was strongly opposed to the traditional parties of the Swedish left and even considered the state-sanctioned solidarity

movement with Southern Africa as an 'imperialist' device intended to divert attention from Vietnam, 'the storm centre of the global contradiction' (Sellström, 1999: 344). The group established itself as the primary umbrella organisation of a nationwide federation of sympathisers, and as such exercised significant influence in Swedish politics. In January 1969 Sweden became the first Western country to recognise the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV), largely as a result of DFFG's advocacy and activism (Jerneck, 1983; Schori, 1992; Salomon, 1996; Scott, 2005).

As a consequence of regime recognition, official Swedish development assistance was extended to the government in Hanoi from the early 1970s. At the same time, humanitarian assistance was channelled through the Swedish Red Cross to the National Liberation Front (Front National pour la Libération du Sud Viêt Nam, FNL) which acted militarily in South Vietnam, as well as to the National United Front of Kampuchea (Front uni national du Kampuchéa, FUNK) and the Pathet Lao in Cambodia and Laos, respectively. In the United States, this support was widely considered a violation of Swedish neutrality as it allegedly amounted to interference with the affairs of another state, in this case South Vietnam. In countering this criticism, the Swedish responded that these movements were fighting national liberation wars against colonialism, which had been denounced by the UN in the Colonial Declaration of 1960. Sweden's policy of neutrality did not preclude it from supporting anti-colonialism. Furthermore, as colonialism had been defined by the UN as a crime against humanity and a human rights violation, the Swedes officially maintained that their support to liberation movements was essentially humanitarian in nature. Even so, Swedish support was carefully designed to fit with notions of humanitarianism and neutrality. The Swedes were keen to point out that they provided 'humanitarian', not 'military', aid (Palmlund, 1986: 119; Sellström, 1999).

In these three fields – anti-apartheid work, support for national liberation movements and opposition to the Vietnam War – Nordic engagement with decolonisation was explicitly framed as humanitarian. In Denmark, Norway and Sweden, the labour movement played a key role in bridging the separation between voluntary action and government policy, as well as between civil society humanitarian action and ODA. The corporatist arrangements of the post-war welfare state project greatly facilitated the forging

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<sup>14</sup> The movement later split to form the more radical Norwegian Movement for Vietnam (Vietnambevegelsen i Norge).

of stable alliances between state-level ODA and civil society-level popular mobilisation for Third World solidarity characteristic of Nordic humanitarian action during the Cold War.

The logic of Cold War bipolarity had a considerable impact on the scope of Nordic international humanitarian action. During the course of the post-war period, the Nordic countries' bilateral aid programmes gradually became so similar to each other, and thereby sufficiently different from those of the other Development Assistance Committee (DAC) members, that they were eventually referred to as conforming to a particular 'Nordic aid model' (Odén, 2011). Characterised by a focus on low-income countries, a higher percentage of multilateral aid through UN agencies, greater attention to recipients and a degree of separation between aid financing and export funding, in

addition to – at least in Denmark, Norway and Sweden – overall higher ODA/GNI ratios, this aid model has been notable for its close coordination of humanitarian motivations and long-term development objectives.

The rapid expansion of ODA in these three countries during the 1970s and 1980s also meant that humanitarian NGOs increasingly received government funding, further blurring the distinction between ODA and humanitarian action. In Sweden, for example, the number of NGOs being funded by Sida had by the late 1980s outgrown the agency's own administrative structures, necessitating a novel system of so-called 'frame organisations' for administering NGO assistance within groups of NGOs that were functionally or organisationally linked, such as labour unions, cooperatives and church groups (Albinson and Åhlström, 1991; Onsander, 2007).

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# 5 International engagement since the end of the Cold War

As the Cold War came to an end, the relevance of neutrality, the Nordic balance and the concept of like-minded states decreased. Nordic EU membership (except for Iceland and Norway), as well as a general shift towards more liberal political and economic thinking, internationally as well as regionally within the Nordic aid community, has affected the structure of Nordic aid in important ways (Odén, 2011: 21–22).

Since the 1990s, the Nordic states have increasingly adapted their aid and donorship profile to international trends – ranging from increased attention to aid efficiency, human rights, political and economic conditionality to military participation in coalitions and humanitarian interventions and a new willingness to see both humanitarian action and ODA as foreign policy instruments. Notably, the Nordic countries – including neutral Finland and Sweden – have joined humanitarian interventions conducted by NATO, while the Nordic humanitarian impulse has increasingly come to embody an active refugee policy – primarily exemplified by Norway and Sweden – and a strong commitment to peace negotiations and post-conflict management – particularly by Finland and Norway. Simultaneously, however, ODA has come under increasing pressure in all the Nordic countries, primarily as a result of greater attention to accountability, auditing and efficiency.

These changes have caused some observers to conclude that the so-called Nordic aid model has ‘eroded’ (Odén, 2011: 23). Yet Nordic donorship and humanitarian engagement has remained at relatively high levels. Continued civil society engagement has become all the more important, as demonstrated by the prominent role of CSOs, particularly in Denmark and Norway, in continuing to shape Nordic as well as global humanitarian action since the end of the Cold War, not the least with regard to refugee policies.

## 5.1 The widening scope of humanitarian action

These recent shifts have widened the scope of Nordic humanitarian action, integrating a number of different forms of actors and motivations for action. In this regard, the accessions of Denmark to the European Community (EC) (in 1973) and Finland and Sweden (in 1995) to the European Union (EU) have been decisive. Since accession, Denmark’s development aid policy has to some extent been aligned with the development agenda of the wider EC. Denmark made its aid conditional on respect for human rights in 1987, later than the other ‘like-minded’ states, such as Canada, the Netherlands, Sweden and Norway. Even so, it followed a less restrictive and more flexible interpretation of political conditionality, as did non-EC Nordic countries, emphasising that aid was to be disbursed to ‘people, not states’, in which case acceptance that minor amounts of aid ‘may fall into the wrong hands’ would be tolerable. Danish aid practitioners generally agreed with their Nordic colleagues that it would be counter-productive to make long-term development commitments dependent on the often unstable political situation in many of the world’s least developed countries, where the Nordic countries tended to concentrate their efforts, especially since this instability was often believed to follow precisely from the poverty and human insecurity which development aid sought to tackle in the first place (Midtgaard, 2013: 148–49).

EU membership has also helped make Denmark a frontrunner among the Nordic countries with regard to another prominent international trend which has had a considerable impact on the scope of humanitarian action in the post-Cold War era – aid effectiveness.<sup>15</sup> Within the DAC, donors have

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<sup>15</sup> The Nordic countries’ aid policies have long included explicit and elaborate systems for external and internal accountability, impact evaluation and quality control. But aid effectiveness has not been the overall guiding principle, in contrast to the centrality or even dominance assigned to this objective in contemporary development aid disbursement strategies since the 1990s.

long sought to agree on a common view on how to achieve effective assistance. Danida's 1994 plan, entitled 'A World in Development: Strategy for Danish Development Policy Towards 2000', signalled a desire to connect improved aid effectiveness with a more value-based approach to aid by applying stricter conditions related to good governance, human rights, women's rights and the environment. These aims were to be promoted through democratisation, election supervision and a strengthened judiciary in recipient countries (Danida, 1994; Brunbech and Olesen, 2013: 109; Midtgaard, 2013: 145).

These Danish initiatives were fully in line with the international agenda of best practice which developed in the early 1990s, culminating in the adoption of the UN Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000 and the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness in 2005, both of which have been highly influential for the content and objectives of Nordic development cooperation (Odén and Wohlgemuth, 2013). In the Nordic context, however, critics of development aid have also used the discourses of aid accountability and effectiveness to argue that traditional ODA has been inefficient in terms of reducing poverty, thus challenging the 1% GNI/ODA norm. Aid proponents have warned that the over-zealous application of accountability and effectiveness standards may render timely and appropriate humanitarian aid even more difficult (Lodénius, 2007). For example, an extensive focus on impact evaluation may over time shift the focus of humanitarian action to favour more easily assessable measures, which are often palliative rather than the preventive, and hence more complex and long-term, measures traditionally prioritised by Nordic donors.

Criticism of ODA has increased across all the Nordic countries, primarily from the populist right but also from liberal groups. To the latter, aid is seen as potentially disruptive, resulting in the emergence of an 'aid industry' in donor countries, while generating 'aid dependency' among recipients (Krause, 2007).<sup>16</sup> Notably, this criticism is not directed against humanitarian action as such, but towards the close nexus between state development aid and civil society humanitarian action which has been such a prominent

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<sup>16</sup> Today's neoliberals tend to reiterate the arguments made by Third World representatives during the 1970s that 'trade, not aid' would alleviate inequality between the global North and the global South.

feature of the Nordic aid structure. The most explicit criticism emanating from 'neoliberal' policy circles and think tanks has been voiced against the traditional links between state agencies and solidarity organisations.

Despite this criticism, which has been fanned by a combination of financial constraints and ideological changes in the Nordic countries since the 1990s, most Nordic development aid expenditure has remained at Cold War levels, and Denmark, Norway and Sweden have continued to adhere to the 1% ODA/GNI norm. Partly, however, this continuous commitment reflects a more general reorientation of Nordic foreign policy towards active internationalism and interventionism in the aftermath of the Cold War, implying a more securitised focus for Nordic international engagement. Successive Nordic governments have provided active military support to EU-, NATO- and US-sponsored humanitarian interventions in Iraq (Denmark), the former Yugoslavia (Denmark, Sweden), Afghanistan (Denmark, Norway, Sweden) and Somalia (Denmark, Sweden) (Midtgaard, 2013: 150). These campaigns represent a new phase in Nordic international engagement inasmuch as they tend to follow American policies closely (Brunbech and Olesen, 2013: 123). This has been particularly visible in the case of Denmark, as the end of the Cold War 'produced a window of opportunity to bring the "realpolitik" dimensions of Danish foreign policy in harmony with its long-term ideals of creating a UN-based world order founded on international law, democracy and human rights' (Brunbech and Olesen, 2013: 108–109; Midtgaard, 2013: 148).

## 5.2 The role of CSOs and the evolution of the humanitarian NGO sector in the Nordic countries

Since the end of the Cold War, Nordic development aid policies have expanded to include a broader array of issues, including anti-corruption work, democratisation, good governance, human rights, gender equality and HIV/AIDS. This has opened up the field of humanitarian action to a host of civil society actors and activities that may not necessarily have been considered primarily humanitarian in the past. As a consequence, the role of CSOs has increased. Organisations such as DanChurchAid (Folkekirkens Nødhjælp), the Danish Refugee Council

(Dansk Flygtningehjælp) and the Norwegian Refugee Council (Flyktninghjelpen, NRC) have played prominent roles in shaping both Nordic and global humanitarian action, especially with regard to relief work in complex emergencies (Bergh and Jareg, 1998).

Norwegian People's Aid (Norsk Folkehjelp, NPA) provides an illustrative example. Since its inception in 1939, NPA has evolved from its origins in the Norwegian labour movement's solidarity organisation Workers' Sanitation (Arbeidersaniteten) into an internationally oriented humanitarian organisation. The third-largest humanitarian organisation in Norway, NPA's activities range from anti-racism campaigns, refugee reception centres, volunteer rescue teams and ambulance services in Norway itself, to demining, democratisation, humanitarian relief and support for indigenous rights across 38 countries. However, it differs from most other major humanitarian organisations in that it explicitly states its political standpoint, both with regard to domestic Norwegian debates as well as complex conflicts abroad, for example in Gaza and South Sudan (Viksveen, 2014: 9, 281–305).

With regard to domestic policies, NPA – with its background in the Norwegian labour movement – exemplifies the particular relationship between welfare state responsibilities and volunteer work characteristic of Nordic humanitarian action. During the 1960s and 1970s, NPA channelled its engagement to new tasks and new areas, including abroad. Norwegian ODA was expanding, and NPA began cooperating with Norad, partially as a labour movement 'counterweight or a supplement' to the Norwegian Red Cross (Norges Røde Kors) and Norwegian Church Aid (Kirkens Nødhjelp), which represented 'bourgeois' and 'Christian' Norway, respectively. NPA's strategy as a humanitarian organisation focused on long-term development projects with the aim of gradually

transferring responsibility from NPA to local civil society recipients (Viksveen, 2014: 65, 81–83, 93; see also Mageli, 2014).

With regard to conflicts abroad, NPA's activities have been guided by the conviction that humanitarian relief must not be withheld on grounds of neutrality. When war-ravaged southern Sudan could not be reached by humanitarian aid during the late 1980s without the approval of the Sudanese government, NPA worked with the Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Agency (SRRA), the humanitarian arm of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA). Initially the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs denied NPA's request for funds on the grounds that this could be perceived as siding with the SPLA against the government in Khartoum (funding was eventually approved by Minister of Foreign Affairs Thorvald Stoltenberg). The Sudanese government has repeatedly accused NPA of assisting the SPLA militarily (Viksveen, 2014: 252–54; see also Minear, 1991; Riehl, 2001).

Over time, Norwegian civil society has also created infrastructure and know-how, in close cooperation with state agencies, on the complex problems confronting refugees, migrants and asylum-seekers, including the advocacy networks of the NRC, the tracking systems developed by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC, part of the NRC) and the resource and competence pool established by Norwegian Capacity (NORCAP). The plight of victims of human trafficking and unaccompanied refugee children from war-affected areas in Africa and the Middle East has long elicited support among humanitarian associations in the Nordic countries, and the Nordic tradition of openness and historical precedents of refugee reception during the Second World War and the Cold War are often cited in support of contemporary action in this area.



# 6 Nordic specificity in the contemporary humanitarian landscape

This Working Paper has sought to provide an introduction to international humanitarian engagement by the Nordic countries. Of particular interest in this context are the causes for the comparatively and consistently generous donorship of the Nordic countries, combining state and civil society actors and humanitarian and development aims. This concluding section analyses the Nordic experience from the perspective of two key features explaining the specificities of regional donorship and international humanitarian engagement: neutrality and solidarity on the one hand, and the close connections between state and civil society actors on the other.

## 6.1 Neutrality and solidarity

Scholarly literature has typically provided two distinct explanations for richer countries' donorship and humanitarian assistance to poorer countries. The first underlines the importance of altruism or 'humane internationalism' without any ulterior motive other than 'a systemic interest in peace and international stability and a global regime to maintain this foreign policy interest' (Stokke, 1989: 285; see also Paldam, 1997). The second explanation emphasises the functionality of both aid and humanitarian action as an instrument of 'international realism', understood as promoting the security, political or economic interests of the donor (Pratt and Södersten, 1989; Stokke, 1989; Olesen, Pharo and Paaskesen, 2013b).

Traditionally, Nordic donorship has been characterised as an example of the former. Canadian political scientist Cranford Pratt has argued that policy-makers in these countries were imbued with cosmopolitan values through the influence of religion, the potency of social democracy as a political ideal and the political strength of the labour

movement.<sup>17</sup> There was indeed a strong commitment to a constructive international role among political leaders, senior civil servants and 'active and informed citizens' during the Cold War, partly due to the international prominence of the Nordic labour movement and partly due to the solidarity between the Nordic countries and the newly independent countries of the Third World, many of which also identified themselves as small, peripheral and threatened by great power tension (Pratt and Södersten, 1989; Morrison, 2013: 170).

While the Nordic countries did not pursue a common policy of neutrality during the Cold War, they developed a shared sense of security and solidarity which eventually branched out to encompass their policies towards the emerging Third World. In the case of Finland and Sweden, formal neutrality was reconceptualised as a symbol of international solidarity with other neutral states, positing the special responsibility of relatively small, rich and neutral countries in supporting other neutrals – the very opposite of the 'egotistical' neutrality that Sweden had been accused of adopting during the Second World War. For the three Nordic NATO members, it has been equally important to show to their electorates, notably including strong labour movements, that their dependence on the Western security alliance did not necessarily imply silence and inaction on moral and humanitarian issues.

As a consequence, Nordic humanitarian action and ODA have sometimes been considered primarily motivated by solidarity, and as such more neutral,

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17 One of the most common arguments for Swedish development aid in the 1960s and 1970s has been termed the 'domestic analogy': 'the claim that fundamental values infusing Swedish society, such as social equality and redistribution, were indivisible, and that the notion of solidarity could not simply stop at national borders' (Ekengren and Götz, 2013: 35).

untied and unconditional than that of other donors. Partly, this has been the result of a purposive, if largely informal, ‘arm’s-length principle’ keeping commercial interests out of development and humanitarian aid, particularly prominent in Sweden (Jacoby, 1986; Ekengren and Götz, 2013). Partly, this has followed from the relative lack of interest in Nordic business circles in coordinating their investment policies with foreign policy-oriented development aid, especially since some early attempts did not deliver the expected returns (Olesen, 2008: 147ff; Brunbech and Olesen, 2013).<sup>18</sup>

This supposedly altruistic motivation has sometimes led observers to describe Denmark, Norway and Sweden in terms of ‘humanitarian great powers’ or ‘moral great powers’ (Nilsson, 1991; Østerud, 2007; Brunbech and Olesen, 2013). Similarly, due to their ‘incorporation of attractive causes such as economic aid or peacekeeping into their definition of national interest’, Nordic humanitarian engagement with the Third World has been linked with American political scientist Joseph S. Nye’s concept of ‘soft power’ (Christensen, 2002: 14; Nye, 2002: 10). Yet, being small states, the Nordic countries have consistently prioritised multilateral efforts before bilateral ones, even if they have often held different opinions on global issues. Rather than engaging in individual exercises of soft power, the Nordic countries have since the late 1940s preferred to use the UN as the primary platform for their humanitarian outreach. Over time, a specific form of Nordic ‘UN internationalism’ has evolved, which underscores the basic commonality of Nordic interests and policy goals despite sometimes divergent national priorities. This preference for channelling engagement through the multilateral system is still evident today, for example in the Nordic countries’ enthusiastic support for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

However, according to some observers this commonality has also led to a certain degree of competition between the Nordic countries in ‘being the most progressive, humane and internationalist with the aim of boosting the national position in the moral hierarchy of the Nordic states [which] fuelled a dynamic that was very fruitful for raising aid levels and not least the ODA percentage in all the Nordic

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<sup>18</sup> However, it should also be noted that, in practice, the expansion of commodity import support, credits and loans from the 1980s onwards – common in the Nordic countries as well as among other Western donors – have tended to favour firms in donor countries, even if no formal tying has always been present.

countries’ (Laatikainen, 2003; Brunbech and Olesen, 2013: 117–118; Olesen, Pharo and Paaskesen, 2013b: 336). David H. Lumsdaine, for example, has argued that both Denmark and Finland stepped up their aid programmes ‘partly to feel that they were members of the peer group of nations they used in defining their own identity’ (Lumsdaine, 1993: 25–26; see also O’Sullivan, 2013: 218). In the case of Sweden, it has been suggested that widespread public perceptions that neutrality had hampered Swedish humanitarian action during the Second World War caused the Swedes to feel a strong incentive to act in order to alleviate human suffering in the post-war world (Sellström, 1999: 516). A more practical explanation may be that humanitarian action has simply been easier for small national governments to guide than most other aspects of the complex North–South relationship, such as trade and monetary issues (Brunbech and Olesen, 2013). This intermingling of self-identity, morality and multiple justifications makes it difficult to maintain a separation between altruist and realist causes for Nordic donorship (Ekengren and Götz, 2013: 31, 49; Morrison, 2013: 170).

## 6.2 State and civil society actors

While the causes of Nordic donorship should be sought in the complex interplay between altruism and realism as well as domestic and international forces, there has also been a strong and persistent public mobilisation of civil society pressure groups in favour of Third World solidarity and humanitarian action in several of the Nordic countries. Like many Western countries, the Nordic states experienced strong demands for international solidarity in the 1960s and 1970s, not least among the young and educated. While this public mobilisation drew on longstanding antecedents of humanitarian action, the corporatist arrangements of Nordic post-war welfare states greatly facilitated the forging of stable alliances between state-level ODA and civil society-level popular mobilisation for Third World solidarity.

As a result, civil society humanitarian action, government foreign policy and development aid strategies have emerged in exceptionally close symbiosis in the Nordic countries. The key characteristic of Nordic humanitarian action has precisely been this close integration between development aid and humanitarian action, between civil society actors and government policies and

agencies and between the driving forces of neutralism and solidarity. This high degree of integration has also been the single most important factor for the longstanding popular support for and deep commitment to international humanitarian action in the Nordic countries through public participation in NGOs and CSOs.

The underlying causes for these distinguishing features have been similar across the Nordic countries: institutional and economic (welfare state corporatism), geopolitical (Nordic neutrality before 1939/40, Nordic balance after 1945) as well as ethical, ideological and political (strong labour movements and free churches). Yet the specific preconditions for state–civil society humanitarian alliances have differed from country to country. In Denmark, for example, the prevalence of minority governments has contributed significantly to making development aid – a high-profile policy issue for several of the minor parties on the left and centre – a stable component of Danish foreign policy for several decades. In Norway, proponents of development aid early on noted the possibility of using an ambitious aid policy as a means of deflecting domestic criticism by radicals of Norway’s otherwise mostly Western-oriented security policy. In the Swedish case, such alliances have been instrumental in aligning foreign policy goals, not only with domestic public opinion but also with national self-identity (Olesen, Pharo and Paasikesen, 2013b: 362).

These alliances continue to shape Nordic humanitarian action today. However, several of the factors which have made Nordic humanitarian action internationally distinct in the past have become less prominent, to some degree reducing Nordic specificity. Primarily, these changes have resulted from new development aid policies on the part of Nordic governments, following international recommendations. In addition, membership for solidarity movements, political organisations and international NGOs has been in decline across the Nordic countries since the early 1990s. This has prompted CSOs and NGOs to channel more resources into campaigning and fundraising, and may indicate a weakened link between civil society and public opinion (Vogel, Amnå, Munck and Häll, 2003).

## 6.3 Conclusion

While individually small, the Nordic countries have made more larger contributions to international

humanitarian action over the past century than might have been expected from this group of minor states. The unifying theme and foremost Nordic specificity in the field of development aid and humanitarian action has been the traditionally close relationship between state-driven agendas and civil society engagement on the one hand, and neutrality and solidarity on the other. State-sponsored and civil society-level humanitarian engagements have been closely interwoven in terms of motivations, objectives, funding mechanisms, institutionalisation and practices in the Nordic countries. On all these levels, Nordic international engagement has integrated long-term development aid and immediate humanitarian action with a strong commitment to human rights. Top-down policy-making and bottom-up popular mobilisation have largely been mutually reinforcing. This link has provided a nexus between public opinion and public administration, which has been remarkably stable over time in the Nordic countries, partly due to their corporatist set-up and partly due to their specific combination of economic resources and political inclinations, as well as geopolitical concerns and security interests.

This close relationship between ODA, foreign policy and civil society engagement in the Nordic states challenges the classic distinction between state and non-state actors in humanitarian action. It also complicates the separation between humanitarian assistance and ODA. While internationally these two spheres of action are often viewed as distinct, due to the different purposes and particular legal frameworks which support them, they have evolved in tandem and become deeply integrated in the Nordic countries. In the Nordic context, development aid, human rights and support for national liberation movements, as well as Third World solidarity more generally, have all been explicitly motivated by humanitarian concerns and widely understood as a basic form of humanitarian assistance. Taking stock of the Nordic experience of humanitarian action thus requires a nuancing of the separation between state and non-state international engagement on the one hand, and between humanitarian action and development aid on the other.

The decisive factor in the long-standing commitment to development aid and transnational humanitarian action in the Nordic countries has been the allotment of considerable economic resources, as manifested in the 1% norm (Griffiths, 2008; Ekengren and Götz, 2013). However, the successful application of these

resources in alleviating human suffering has been ultimately dependent upon continued public support for and popular engagement with international humanitarianism (Ahtisaari cited in Soiri and Peltola, 1999: 183). As such, the Nordic historical experience

of humanitarian action during the twentieth century provides an example of deep and far-ranging civil society cooperation and public-private partnership within the specific framework of Nordic welfare state corporatism.

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Cover photo: A Swedish Red Cross vehicle at the railway station in Padborg, Denmark, April 1945. It was there to escort the buses transporting liberated prisoners from the Nazi concentration camps (the well-known 'White Buses' rescue operation).

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