

Theory Talks

Presents

THEORY TALK #41

MARK DUFFIELD ON HUMAN (IN)SECURITY, LIBERAL INTERVENTIONISM AND AID COMPOUNDS

Theory Talks

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MARK DUFFIELD ON HUMAN (IN)SECURITY, LIBERAL INTERVENTIONISM AND FORTIFIED AID COMPOUNDS



How can we explain that Western aid, which goes back as far as the colonial ‘civilizing mission’ in Africa, has not led to substantial development? Is Western aid really beneficial for those targeted by it? How can we understand the shifting relationship between aid and security governance? Is development aid about bettering peoples’ lives or about governing them? Mark Duffield has long taken issue with the changing nature of liberal interventionism, provoking those concerned with development and global governance to think critically about good intentions and western interventions. Pivotal in his work has been the ‘security-development nexus’, that is, a focus on the uncomfortable tensions that accompany the contemporary aid industry and Western presence at large in the ‘Global South’. In this *Talk*, Duffield, amongst others, discusses how neoliberal

thinking has affected how we view human security, sustainable development and the connection between Northern accumulation of wealth and Southern poverty. A long-time expert on the Sudan, Duffield also discusses future prospects for the newly formed Republic of South Sudan.

What is, according to you, the central challenge or principal debate in global studies? And what is your position regarding this challenge/in this debate?

I think the biggest challenge is to see the world as a purposefully interconnected system.

This may sound odd—given that we are always hearing about how the world is radically interconnected. This particular imaginary however comes from network theory and tends to see the globe as interconnected through the randomness of events. It’s the imaginary of the butterfly that flaps its wings in Australia—or wherever—and causes a hurricane in America. This view underpins our contemporary understanding of global insecurity—for example—drought deepens poverty which increases conflict which, in turn, encourages economic criminalization and international displacement. Our understanding of dangerous climate change falls directly within this imaginary—climate change acts upon poverty as a force—multiply having the potential to deepen global insecurity through the radical connectivity of events.

It is this type imaginary of random global interconnectedness that we need to challenge. It feeds directly, for example, into current conceptions of national security, which elevate the principle of uncertainty to centre-stage. Security specialists would have us believe, for example, that the world today is a much more uncertain and volatile than it was during the Cold War. So uncertain, in fact, that we cannot fully understand or protect ourselves against the multiple and emerging

threats that we face. Security today is about adapting and preparing ourselves for a life of constant uncertainty. Key to this constant adaptation is the idea of resilience—the ability not only to rebound after shocks but also to maintain system functionality in the face of permanently changing threats.

My view of resilience is that it represents the exhaustion of the liberal project. Liberalism is no longer concerned with changing the world. Ideas of progress have been displaced by the need to simply adapt to an international terrain that policy makers tell us they no longer fully understand and at every turn, they find threatening. Resilience is about the collapse of the liberal frontier and a retreat—as it were—from the external world. Rather than expansion, a more apt term would be bunkerization.

In trying to address this impasse we have to restore a more dialectical as opposed to networked understanding of international relations. Back in the 1970s, we still held such beliefs. In particular, that the way capitalism created wealth and advantage for some, was directly implicated in the dispossession and impoverishment of others. Growing vulnerability—and the disproportionate toll that disasters were taking in the so-called underdeveloped world, was widely understood as an effect of uneven capital accumulation. The neoliberal crusade and the current wave of globalization have broken this connection. We now see the poor themselves as responsible for their own poverty and exposure. Through their own ignorance, they have made the wrong choices in life—that's the main problem.

Where do I stand regarding this debate? First, I'd like to think that it was a debate—that the Arab Spring—with its call for material and political advancement—reflects a wider movement for real advancement in the global South. And second, that I can help in some way to change the world and make it a better place.

How did you arrive at where you currently are in your thinking about global studies?

This question is as much about life history as it is about moments of intellectual discovery. If I had to mention just one event it was my work as Oxfam's Country Representative for Sudan during the latter half of the 1980s. During the mid 1970s, I completed the fieldwork for my PhD in northern Sudan. I was looking at the growth of agrarian capitalism. In common with most of my academic peers and Sudanese colleagues at the time, I adopted a neo-Marxist approach that was concerned to map the material basis of peasant life and the nature of agrarian class struggle.

However, when I returned to Sudan as Oxfam's Country Representative a decade later, the ideological landscape had radically changed. Critical Sudanese academics had either been politically marginalized or had left the country. At the same time, the aid invasion of the mid-1980s had completely changed the collective worldview. Rather than class struggle, we were now concerned with the peasant—no longer as a peasant—but as a member of a generic caste of rural poor. We were no longer interested in the wider relations of inequality and exploitation that characterized—and still define—Sudan. We were only concerned with the behavior and attitudes of the poor as individual agents. Our efforts went into trying to make the poor somehow self-reliant while leaving the structural conditions of their poverty and vulnerability intact. Since this is impossible—twenty-five years later—Oxfam is still there trying to pull off the same old trick.

This was a formative period as it taught me a lot about how the aid industry works and the wider changes international relations that fed into the post-Cold War period. Despite the altruism and

professionalism of aid workers in Sudan in the 1980s—many of whom I count as friends—I always felt that we were part of something bigger, something that could only be glimpsed at the edges. Moreover, this something—which involved the changing nature of North-South relations—could not be found in the day-to-day work of saving lives and bettering others.

What would a student need to become a specialist in global studies or understand the world in a global way?

Given the changes in academic funding—in the UK at least—the short answer to this question would be ‘a lot of money’. More seriously however, I am a great believer in fieldwork, involvement, exposure—getting mud on your shoes—or whatever you want to call it. Moreover, languages are vital in getting this exposure to other countries and cultures. Today, there is a growing instrumentalization of PhD research. Helped by increasing risk-aversion, fieldwork periods are shortening, the time devoted to methodology is increasing, and fewer students are learning languages. In many respects, our knowledge and experience of the underdeveloped world seems to be contracting. This is the paradox of the information age. The more information there is in circulation, the more ignorant of actual conditions on the ground we seem to become. How else could the current national security policies of liberal states come to resemble—as they have—exercises in national paranoia?

Foreign aid is commonly seen as something good, somewhat removed from politics and reflecting the will to help. You take issue with that line of thinking.

Liberal regimes of development, of which foreign aid is part, have always (at least since the nineteenth century) experienced the country or person to be developed or improved as somehow lacking in something. This could be access to resources, lack of skilled personnel, inappropriate economic policies or, at an individual level, the absence of health, environmental or gender awareness. There is always something missing that is stopping that country or person achieving maturity and leading a full and independent life. Development has always functioned as a moral trusteeship. It is a relation of external tutelage and educational direction aimed at making what is incomplete—and as such, potentially dangerous to itself and others—whole and functional.

There is a strong element of paternalism in development: even the NGO battle-cry of ‘putting the last first’ requires an external moral agency to sort out who is last, and then to ensure that they are put first. Moreover, making the object of development complete and whole usually requires the adoption of desired behavior patterns and attitudes. In other words, development functions as a means of governing others.

Today, a strong neoliberal ethic underpins Western foreign aid. Development seeks to make people whole and safe by integrating them into local and international markets, ideally as small-scale entrepreneurs responsible for their own self-reproduction. To see foreign aid simply as good-in-itself is to miss its real importance. It is a strategic tool through which the West is restructuring North-South relations and, more immediately, attempting to manage the collapsing liberal frontier.

Your work hinges crucially on the now current term ‘security-development nexus’. Could you explain a little about that term? And why does it seem essentially contested?

The idea of the development-security nexus, in its present form, emerged during the 1990s. It emerged out of debates within humanitarianism around the alleged role of international assistance in prolonging civil wars. This was the time in which Mary Anderson’s book *Do No Harm* became influential. (See an interview with Anderson on a related project [here](#).) The flip side of the *Do No Harm* debate was that if humanitarian assistance can prolong civil war then, if properly managed, it could also do the opposite: it could be used to selectively alter the balance of power between social groups in the interests of peace. The 1990s was a time of rapid expansion for the aid industry. At the same time, the *Do No Harm* thesis enabled international aid to rediscover itself as a strategic tool of conflict management and prevention. During the mid 1990s, at the time of the break-up of the former Yugoslavia, many NGOs reinvented themselves as conflict resolution agencies and donor governments redefined their aid programs accordingly.

Based on this groundwork by NGOs, by the end of the 1990s—beginning clearly with the intervention in Kosovo—donor governments had begun to consciously define international assistance, including humanitarian aid, as legitimate tool of foreign policy. This was reflected in the debate around the ‘new humanitarianism’ and, especially, donor calls for greater ‘coherence’ between aid, trade and politics in securing desired international outcomes. It was around this time that the idea of the ‘development-security nexus’—as a new and innovative departure—entered the popular debate. This is reflected in the often repeated policy slogan that you “cannot have development without security and security without development is impossible”—or something to that effect.

This self-reinforcing and seemingly benign and enlightened interconnection between development and security can be contested at many levels. For example, while its exponents often present the nexus as somehow a new discovery, the connection between development and security is not only long-standing, it is intrinsic to liberal regimes of development. During the Cold War, for example, the fear that increasing global poverty would alienate peasants and increase the drift to urban slums, thus increasing the pool of potential converts to communism, was a powerful factor driving Western aid. Although it operated differently compared to today—through states rather than the UN system and NGOs—the development-security nexus was alive and well.

Perhaps the main point of contention surrounding the development-security nexus, however, is that, in its present form, the role of aid as a relation of governance and tool of foreign policy is clearly revealed. Within the development-security nexus, foreign aid is far from being removed from politics, as an earlier question suggested.

I have already mentioned that, during the 1990s, NGOs reinvented themselves through the *Do No Harm* debate as strategic actors able to manage and resolve conflict. Since the end of the 1990s, especially in Iraq and Afghanistan, this strategic role accorded aid has morphed into counterinsurgency. Foreign aid is now an essential tool for ‘winning hearts and minds’ in contested political environments. While this has caused NGOs much consternation, and one often hears the claim that aid has been politicized, I think it’s more the case that militaries have adopted the techniques of conflict management that NGOs had been developing since the mid-1990s. The blurring of identities between military and aid actors is more than the former handing out humanitarian assistance or electric generators; it’s about the military taking over technologies of governance that were themselves pioneered by NGOs.

I think we can be safe to assume that there are more Europeans and Americans in Africa than there were at any time during colonialism. How much of that would you see as continuity, and what are the major elements of change?

This is an interesting question. You say that it's "safe to assume" that there are more international workers in Africa than during the colonial period—I would agree but stress that it is an assumption. The aid industry is notoriously bad at keeping comprehensive personnel data. Studies have shown that it's impossible to give an accurate figure, even for the number of international humanitarian workers that are currently deployed both globally, and even within particular complex emergencies. This is aside from the total number of aid-related workers worldwide.

In this respect, it should be pointed out that estimates suggest that around 90% of all aid workers are locally recruited. In terms of its workforce, since the 1980s, the Western aid industry has been largely indigenized. Given the lack of data I have just mentioned however, in terms of numbers of people both directly and indirectly employed (both international and local), we don't really know how big the aid industry is. In the underdeveloped world, the aid industry could easily be one of the biggest global employers. Certainly, in many African countries—outside the capital city—the aid industry is probably the biggest non-traditional employer. Indeed, I tend to think that it's this ancillary feature of international aid (the direct and indirect employment and economic opportunities that it has created) that is the most concrete and material of its effects.

However, to come back to the spirit of your question—can we see the material and spatial growth of the aid industry as a continuity with colonialism? While the Western ideologies and moral frameworks continue to dominate, there is a break with how these ideologies and frameworks are being operationalized.

If we can talk about development in during the colonial period, especially late colonialism, it had a strong modernist inflection. That is, using the state to build public and economic infrastructure. This modernist approach to development and economic catch-up with the West was carried over into the early post-independence decades. Since the 1980s, however—as I mentioned in my opening comments—we have moved away from modernism and broken any meaningful connection between the accumulation of wealth, on the one hand, and the appearance of poverty, on the other.

This paradigmatic shift, which now focuses on changing the behavior and widening the choices of the poor, coincided with and helped facilitate the current expansion of the NGO movement. The growth and indigenization of the aid industry, together with all the employment it has created, is largely made up of an army of local aid workers trying to change the behavior and widen choices at the community level. Colonialism never had this vast, therapeutic structure geared to trying to change attitudes.

What is biopolitics, and how does it help us to understand the nature of human security?

In describing the preoccupation of the aid industry with changing behavior and attitudes, we have already been talking about biopolitics. At its most simple, if geopolitics is about security seen through the lens of inter-state relations, then biopolitics is security seen in relation to the

capacities, deficiencies and potentialities of the people living within states. Biopolitics divides populations according to such capacities and potentialities—it seeks to learn from these differences—not only to enhance the life and productivity of people, but to also manage them better in the interests of security. Liberal development—as I’ve described it so far—is a paradigmatic example of biopolitics. Human security—with its focus on the security individuals rather than states, is axiomatic of the contemporary biopolitical turn in international development.

Mary Kaldor ([Theory Talk # 30](#)) suggests that your idea of human (in)security is overly negative. She argues that human security represents a middle position between imperial intervention and global revolution. Is human security a wholly coercive or negative concept?

In answering this question, it is instructive to look at the wider political context in which the concept of human security emerges. Human security as a term enters policy discourse in the early-to-mid 1990s. It does so in the early years of the post-Cold War era, following the initial ‘humanitarian war’ phase of liberal interventionism. Compared to the Cold War—in which security was essentially an inter-state affair—for the first time since the colonial period Western governments found themselves with a responsibility (both direct and indirect) for the welfare of peoples living within the global South’s weak and failed states. It was a time of optimism regarding the possibility of a ‘new world order’ and human security emerged as a way of problematizing this new responsibility.

If human security is a midpoint between imperialism and revolution—which I’m not sure it is—it’s a compromise position. Human security builds on earlier ideas of sustainable development and self-management. Today, sustainable development reflects the neoliberal ideal of integrating the poor into international markets as local entrepreneurs responsible for managing their own social reproduction. Having its origins in sustainable development, human security as a regime of social reproduction does not move beyond the idea basic needs in health, education, water and nutrition that the West deems affordable and appropriate for the underdeveloped world.

Since human security concerns the various social, economic and political conditions that can threaten or damage self-management, it also functions as a way of mobilizing the aid industry and creating the necessary divisions of labor to provide the necessary support. At the same time, it offers a blueprint of the minimal state functions that would be required to deliver human security. Basically, human security is a vision or ideology of global governance that emerged in the early years of post-Cold War period. In practice, the amount of hot air and deforestation produced by human security outweighs its effects on the ground. The War on Terror, for example, has undermined the more comprehensive plan of global poverty management that human security embodies.

My main concern with human security—as a vision of global governance—is the poverty of its aims. It’s not about significantly reducing the life-chance divide between the global North and South. With its emphasis on sustainability, basic needs and self-management, it’s more a plan for stabilizing and managing poverty beyond the walls of Fortress Europe (or Fortress America, or Fortress Australia for that matter). We’re back to the starting point of this discussion—liberal development as a moral trusteeship for the ‘rest’.

In this respect, I think the demands for genuine material and political progress emerging in the South, go beyond the limited governmental vision of human security and liberal development. People in the South want to live in the type of houses we do, drive our cars, have similar jobs and access the sort of health care and pensions we can, and move around the world just like us. We cannot assume otherwise.

In *Global Governance and the New Wars* you mention that most donor governments and aid agencies view conflict as a form of social regression. If this is wrong, then how can we view conflict, as you suggest, as systems of social transformation?

The social regression view of conflict provides an essential and enduring moral justification of liberal interventionism. Conflict, however—as we know from our own World Wars—is more complex and formative, both in terms of technological and socio-political developments. The World Wars developed productive systems and had a powerful emancipatory effect, including hastening decolonization. Since the end of the Cold War, however, we now see ‘their’ wars as different, as wholly destructive, as irrational and the opposite of development. At a structural level, internal wars have all the characteristics of emergent and adaptive socio-political systems. This is why many of them continue for so long. They continually rejuvenate themselves, drawing in new players and accessing and developing new means of provisioning. They often become sites of experimentation in the art of survival beyond states and the aid industry. That is, sites of ‘actually existing development’. The point that I have always tried to make in this respect is empirical rather than theoretical. Once one begins to actually scratch the surface of warlord entities or shadow economies, you soon discover how adaptive and innovative they can be.

What do fortified aid compounds tell us about North-South power relations?

The development-security nexus is now in crisis. Buoyed by ideas of human security, the rediscovery of the interconnection between development and security in the mid 1990s was a time of optimism and expansion within the aid industry. However, this began to sour with redefinition of aid as a tool of Western foreign policy and, since 9/11, its morphing into counterinsurgency.

Since the end of the 1990s, the number of aid workers deliberately attacked or killed has been growing. Apart from the spread of field security training and the growth of risk aversion, within the UN system and among the larger international NGOs, growing insecurity has also led to the appearance of the fortified aid compound. Protected by double walls, razor wire and often armed guards—enclosing office, residential space or combining both—the fortified aid compound has become the signature architecture of post-interventionary societies. Even in locations that are more secure or stable than others, because of insurance requirements, fears over litigation and the spread of risk aversion, the international aid industry is becoming increasingly bunkerized.

However, I think that it’s important to put this into its wider context. Since the 1980s, there has been a growing global phenomenon of what some have called ‘neoliberal urbanization’. That is, the gentrification of parts of cities, the emergence of gated communities, exclusive shopping malls, the growth of private security, and so on. Urban space is fragmenting and polarizing between privileged private space as opposed to degraded public space. This global phenomenon is also apparent in post-interventionary cities such as Baghdad, Kabul, Khartoum and even Juba

in South Sudan. Within so-called ‘complex emergencies’ the aid industry is an important player in the process of urban fragmentation. It has massively contributed to the inflation of urban real-estate prices and, in competition with local elites, it’s expanding demand for gated-communities, segregated living and private security.

Aid as a contributor to urban fragmentation is under-researched. The spatial implications for the aid industry of such fragmentation, however, are significant. In Kabul, for example, international aid workers live and work within a protected archipelago of international space made up, basically, of a series of fortified aid compounds and guarded amenities linked by secure transport corridors. An urban dystopia that—but for its overt militarization—is comparable to the fragmentation and privileging and protection of elite modes of life in other global cities. Rarely able to move outside these secure bunkers, aid workers in Kabul use remote management techniques to communicate with local aid workers on the other side of the wire. I have already mentioned that, since the overwhelming majority of aid workers are locally recruited, since the 1980s international aid has become indigenized. That is, through its operational dependence on local staff and communities, it has been absorbed into the local employment and community fabric. It has become part of the economic basis of the societies involved. Attempting to manage such aid at a distance to produce security outcomes has proved difficult. While Afghanistan is an extreme, it would be wrong to see it as an exception. The urban and spatial patterns that can be discerned there are more widely applicable.

What does the fortified aid compounds tell us of North-South relations? I think they are a visible symptom of the exhaustion of the liberal project. They do not radiate confidence and a conviction of being to make the world a better place. They reflect a security mentality that now sees everything as a potential threat. Fortified aid compounds are defensive structures reflecting both a retreat from the world and the need to shore up a collapsing liberal frontier.

What does mass consumer society have to do with security and development on the ‘global borderland’? And how is this part of a broader global civil war?

Unlike during the colonial period, the West no longer manufactures the cheap shoes, clothes, household goods, personal items and means of transport that people in the global South are increasingly demanding. This demand is being met by Asian capitalism. Even in Britain, we are dependent upon the emerging economies for most of the goods and food we consume and for debt-financing to enable us to do this. Much of what’s left of our diminished manufacturing industry assembles components produced elsewhere. Like much of the West, we are a post-industrial consumer economy and have yet to fully understand the global implications of this.

At the start of the discussion, I mentioned the need to move beyond the dominant national security perspective which is framed by uncertainty and seeing everything as a potentially interconnected threat. I think this is, essentially, the vision of a consumer society: a society that produces little of its own and is therefore dependent upon distant economies, markets and supply chains, and is vulnerable to the changing conditions that can affect these distant sites. This is why, I believe, the need to protect critical infrastructure now plays an important role in the liberal security imaginary. Its critical urban infrastructure that supports the circuits of human, energy, information and commodity circulation—both local and global—upon which consumer societies are dependent. Unlike civil defense during the Cold War, national security is no longer really concerned with protecting sites of production because they have been hollowed out. I think

consumer society, its needs and vulnerabilities, give us a context in which we can at least locate liberal interventionism.

At the same time, the non-material basis of development—with its emphasis on changing behavior and attitudes, and producing new forms of self-management within the confines of basic needs—is an essential component of the global dispensation that consumer society seeks to impose. Continued consumption for some is dependent upon abstinence and reduced expectations among the many. As I've said, neoliberalism breaks the connection between the production of wealth and the existence of poverty. Reconnecting that dialectic, and accepting some order in place of unconnected randomness, gives us a different view as to the likely success of this liberal dispensation. At the same time, it suggests that the global rebalancing that is taking place as production moves east has serious implications for the long-term sustainability of consumer society.

I'd like to illustrate some of these tensions by mentioning a trip I recently made to the village on the Blue Nile in Sudan where I did my PhD fieldwork in the mid 1970s. This was the first time in 35 years that I'd been back. Back then, apart from the few houses of the rich, the village lacked electricity. Most of the 250 mile journey from Khartoum was on unsurfaced roads that became impassable at times during the rains. Water was drawn straight from the river and, again, excepting the rich, no one had TV sets or refrigerators.

In the intervening years, this village—like its neighbors—has changed dramatically. A surfaced road now connects it to Khartoum and it has grown in size. It even has its India-style rickshaw scooters for local transport. Like much of northern Sudan's central region, most compounds now draw 24 hour electricity from the grid. While mud is still the major building material, within many households TV sets, refrigerators and even washing machines are common. Water comes from artesian wells and, as with the rest of Africa, everyone seems to have a mobile telephone. Compared to 35 years ago, the increase in the material standard of living is evident and striking.

The first point that I would like is that little—if any—of this material improvement has come from Western development assistance. Its main driver has been the Sudanese state and Asian capitalism that has brought a whole range of cheap consumer goods within the reach of even low-income Sudanese. This material improvement has also changed social attitudes. In Khartoum, for example, compared to the past, the offices are full of working women—at least half of all university students in the capital are women. In order that the emerging middle class can become part of the consumer culture, men and women must now work. To accommodate this trend even women's fashions have changed. The elegant if ungainly one-piece 'tobe' has been replaced—Egyptian style—by the more practical fitted skirt, blouse and head scarf.

These cultural changes are also beginning to feed into politics and growing secularism within the Islamist state. I think the Arab Spring is symptomatic of these material changes and the emergence of new class forces and, importantly, aspirations for material and political progress. At every level—political and environmental—post-industrial consumer societies sit uneasily with these demands. If there is a global civil war, these are some of its contours. Certainly, as the demands for material improvement grow in the global South—and this is a big pent up demand—it will be Asian capitalism that will be supplying it. In contrast, the West seems most adept at exporting violence. At the same time, the Western model of development is increasingly confined to disaster zones and fragile states—and even there, as the phenomenon of the fortified compound suggests—it is going through a crisis of acceptance.

In your work, there is a real mixture of approaches. You apply concepts across the national-international divide, also incorporating historical and philosophical perspectives. Can you tell a little about how you see theory and levels of analysis?

While I began with Marxism, I've increasingly come to borrow from Foucault and other post-structuralist writers. However, looking back I've always, almost instinctively, applied a genealogical approach to my work. That is, not taking conventional wisdom or policy frameworks—like human security—at their face value. That is, as reflecting real conditions or realities. Few things are how they seem. Instead, I've always favored trying to look for the social and political conditions that allow those statements and pronouncements to attain the status of 'truth' and 'common sense'. In this respect, I try to let pronouncements speak for themselves and, in so doing, give away their own secrets and hidden power effects. This has meant adopting a variety of approaches, including giving due attention to history.

With regard to levels of analysis, I'm a great believer of it not being important where you begin. Many students researching disasters, for example, want to look at the most recent, or the biggest, or the one that's been most controversial. I don't think these things are that important. Any disaster, even relatively minor or forgotten, will reveal similar assumptions, relations of governance and forms of objectification. Even seemingly trivial customs or relations can be deconstructed to reveal their power effects.

Last question: South Sudan is becoming independent soon, and most people interpret this in line of a positive teleological narrative. Yet the country-in-becoming has a serious addiction to both oil (98% of regime budget) and to aid (90% of service delivery). Given your extensive experience in the Sudan, what does common analysis miss, and what are some of the scenarios you envision?

South Sudan has always been a zone of exception. During the nineteenth century it was a slave raiding area and under colonialism, it became a closed district. On the eve of independence in 1956 the first civil war began. When this finished in 1972, it again became an exception. Pleading poverty, the northern government took the unprecedented step—for the early 70s at least—of inviting the UN and international NGOs to help reconstruct and develop the south. This externally supplied 'peace dividend' was part of the [Addis Ababa Agreement](#). At the same time, however, given the state-led welfare provision then existing in the north, it was tantamount to the government turning what was then its own citizens living in the south into refugees in their own country.

This invitation to the aid industry began what is now a forty-year history of international aid in South Sudan. During the second civil war—from 1983 to 2005—and continuing this theme of exceptionalism, South Sudan became one of the first of the UN's post-Cold War 'negotiated access' humanitarian operations. Effectively, this meant the northern government ceding its sovereignty over the South to the UN system. During the war years the aid industry played a formative role in the development of the nascent welfare organs or the rebel movement. At the same time, it monopolized the provision of health and welfare services.

This close, almost symbiotic relationship, was maintained during the period of the [Comprehensive Peace Agreement](#) (CPA) which will expire this coming July with the formal separation of South Sudan. At the same time, the CPA gave the new Government of South

Sudan, access to half of the revenues from the oil that been discovered in the 1990s. Since most of these reserves lie the South, following formal independence, the Southern government will increase its share of these revenues.

The independence of South Sudan will see the emergence of a socio-economic entity that has few international comparisons. Highly dependent on the aid industry for basic services and administrative capacity, and lacking few readily exploitable resources, yet it has inherited a functioning set of oil wells. At the same time, lacking a strong modern sector of its own, for consumer goods, food, construction services and skilled labor, the South has become a dependent part of the regional economies of Uganda and Kenya.

Given that land laws have yet to be codified, despite impending independence, the South is attracting a lot of outside speculators and carpetbaggers. At the same time, as the aid industry has to relocate to Juba, a real-estate boom and already described process of urban fragmentation and bunkerization is in underway. As with the North, the effects of the long civil war have been to militarize southern society. Responding to the growing demands for security services that these developments have created, one important local growth industry, staffed largely by demobilized soldiers, has been the growth of elite controlled private security companies.

In many respects, South Sudan has all the appearance of a ‘plural society’ as first described by Furnivall in relation to colonial Burma. (See a review on Furnivall’s plural society [here](#).) That is, a society relying on a mix of outside ethnic groups to supply all the essential construction, administrative, economic and welfare functions—all living separately and only meeting in the market place—while the ordinary Burmese, excluded from these plural structures, just had the role of onlookers. For Furnivall, only Burmese nationalism could provide a solution. In the case of South Sudan—given the hype and expectations surrounding independence—there is a lot of room for disappointment. Tensions are already rising over the current regime’s unwillingness to share resources more widely.

Rather than yet another aid fix—which deepens pluralism—perhaps the answer lies in a Southern nationalism of sorts. If we can see the struggle against colonialism as the first generation of independence struggles, then the effective re-colonization that has taken place as a result of the present phase of globalization is, in effect, producing a new generation of independence struggles. This time, however, the stakes seem higher and the objectives more difficult. Whereas the anti-colonial struggles had to remove the colonial state—today’s struggles for independence and material progress have to compete with the demands of Western consumerism and the needs of an international aid industry that has grown fat on the back of global poverty.

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Related Links

- [Duffield's Faculty Profile at the University of Bristol](#)
- Read Duffield's *Risk-Management and the Fortified Aid Compound: Everyday Life in Post-Interventionary Society* (Intervention and Statebuilding, 2010(4)) [here](#) (pdf)
- Read Duffield's *Global civil war: The non-insured, international containment and post-interventionary society* (Refugee Studies, 2008(21,2)) [here](#) (pdf)
- Read Duffield's *Human Security: Linking Development and Security in an Age of Terror* (European Association of Development Research & Training Institutes, 2005) [here](#) (pdf)
- Read Duffield's *War as a Network Enterprise: The New Security Terrain and its Implications* (Cultural Values, 2002) [here](#) (pdf)