

## Between internationalism and empire: Ireland, the ‘like-minded’ group, and the search for a new international order, 1974-82

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### Abstract

This article examines the response of a group of small and medium-sized states to the global South’s demands for a new international economic order in the 1970s and early 1980s. Reading that experience through the eyes of the group’s smallest state, Ireland, it describes the rise of a loosely organised collective whose support for economic justice was based on three pillars: social democracy, Christian justice, and a broadly held (if variously defined) anti-colonialism. Internationalism, and in particular support for the institutions of the United Nations, became another distinguishing feature of ‘like-minded’ action, and was an attempt by those states to carve out a space for independent action in the Cold War. *Détente* and the decline of American hegemony helped in that respect, by encouraging a more globalist reading of the world order. Once the United States resumed its interventionist policies in the late 1970s, the room for ‘like-minded’ initiatives declined. Yet the actions of the ‘like-minded’ states should not be understood solely in terms of the changing dynamics of the Cold War. This article concludes by arguing for the prominence of empire, decolonisation, and the enduring North-South binary in shaping international relations in a postcolonial world.

### Introduction

Jan Pronk had just arrived in Geneva and already he was being asked to explain himself. In August 1980 the newly appointed Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) sat down with Altaf Gauhar, the editor of *Third World Quarterly*, to outline his vision for international economic and political reform. They began with idealism: Pronk’s early career as an academic and his involvement with the Dutch New Left made him eager to ‘live up to the ideas which I had advocated’, not least a strong sense of identification with ‘the underprivileged’.<sup>1</sup> Then came pragmatism: global change, Pronk argued, could only be achieved through co-operation with the major powers and by convincing the global North of the necessity of wide-ranging reform. But when the debate turned to the question of Northern recalcitrance, Gauhar grew increasingly agitated. The World Bank’s influential ‘basic human needs’ approach replaced structural change with ‘some concessional programme’, he argued. The concept of interdependence – so favoured by progressive elements in the North – was equally ‘based on a fallacious concept of mutuality of interest’. By supporting those ideas Pronk merely perpetuated the Northern interventionist regime.<sup>2</sup>

Pronk had heard it all before, of course. As Dutch minister for development co-operation (1973-77), at the United Nations (UN), and as a member of the Independent Commission on International Development Issues (better known by the surname of its chair, former West German chancellor Willy Brandt), Pronk had spent much of the 1970s trying to affect global change. But it was through the ‘like-minded’ group (LMG) of small and middling-sized

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<sup>1</sup> J. Pronk and A. Gauhar, ‘North-South Dialogue: Jan Pronk’, *Third World Quarterly*, iii (1981), 189, 192.

<sup>2</sup> Pronk and Gauhar, ‘North-South Dialogue’, 206-7.

Northern states, formed in response to the global South's calls for a New International Economic Order (NIEO) in 1974, that he found the strongest collective expression of his vision for reform.<sup>3</sup> The group's founding members – Britain, Canada, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden – shared Pronk's commitment to equality, internationalism, and the aim of bridging the gap between Southern realities and Northern (particularly American) intransigence on trade. They also suggested a specific role for the LMG in the international order: Pronk, for example, actively courted countries like Ireland that shared a similar 'philosophical approach to Third World problems'.<sup>4</sup> By 1982 the group's meetings had expanded to include representatives from Australia, Belgium, Finland, France, and Ireland (British participation ended in 1975). Being 'like-minded' became a badge of identity, of independence (from the protagonists of the Cold War), and of belonging (to a particular peer group). But the LMG, like Pronk, also found it difficult to escape its roots in a Northern-dominated world order. The 'bridge-building activities' that he ascribed to small states proved too little to translate 'support' into 'solidarity' with the global South.<sup>5</sup>

This article explores the aims, actions, and impact of the LMG through the eyes of the group's smallest state, Ireland. It uses the prism of 'like-mindedness' to explore the policies, politics, and identity assumed by successive Irish governments in this period, and what they can tell us about international society in a postcolonial world. The article begins at an important intersection in the post-war era: between the diplomatic muscle of the great powers and the increasingly vocal demands of the South. The grim realities of life after decolonisation generated an energetic debate on economic justice and political reform. The LMG brought a particular Northern voice to that discussion, building on the ideas that had drawn its members together at the League of Nations, the UN, and beyond. But what did it mean to be 'like-minded'? How did the group's members define themselves against the outside world? And why did states like Ireland wish to identify themselves with the 'like-minded' group? The answer presented here is two-fold. LMG's commitment to interdependence, internationalism, and equitable trade staked out the ground for a distinctly 'like-minded' approach to reform. But those beliefs were, in turn, built from some shared traits of their own: social democracy, Christian justice, and a strongly-held (if broadly defined) anti-colonialism.

From those foundations, this article makes two claims about the role of the LMG – and, by extension, small Western states like Ireland – in the post-war order. The first is to see 'like-mindedness' as a product of circumstance, namely, a lull in the Cold War. *Détente*, the end of US hegemony, and a growing interest in concepts like 'interdependence' and 'globalism' allowed the LMG to present itself as an alternative to the major industrial powers (particularly Britain, West Germany, and the United States). By distancing themselves from that capitalist core, states like Ireland hoped to construct an alternative diplomatic space that was, to borrow from Gerard McCann's reading of the Indian case, 'in the Cold War, but not

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<sup>3</sup> For an introduction to the LMG, see A. J. Dolman, 'The Like-Minded Countries and the New International Order: Past, Present and Future Prospects', *Cooperation and Conflict*, xiv (1979), 57-85; and Asbjørn Løvbræk, 'International Reform and the Like-Minded Countries in the North-South Dialogue, 1975-1985' in Cranford Pratt (ed), *Middle Power Internationalism: The North-South Dimension* (Kingston, ON: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990), 25-68.

<sup>4</sup> Note by Connolly of a meeting with the Dutch Ambassador, 22 Apr. 1977, [National Archives of Ireland, Dublin], D[epartment of] F[oreign] A[ffairs Files] 2008/79/2893.

<sup>5</sup> Pronk and Gauhar, 'North-South Dialogue', 193-4.

of it'.<sup>6</sup> In that they succeeded – but only to a point. The return of American interventionism in the late 1970s rendered 'like-minded' voices less and less important.

Once we exchange that 'Cold War lens' for a North-South one, however, the story becomes more complicated.<sup>7</sup> The 'like-minded' states engaged progressive moral interests in a manner that went beyond any easy description of power in a bipolar world. They spoke about justice, equality, and the importance of the UN agencies in the pursuit of the NIEO. But their support for international institutions by implication identified them with a particular worldview. However much Ireland wished to present itself as a 'bridge' between the North and the postcolonial South, it could not escape its origins in a world culture built on a liberal internationalism that shaped their understanding of the international order. Understanding that relationship, and its consequences, provides us with an important window on the inherent power structures of the international community in the postcolonial world. The various hats that the 'like-minded' states assumed in their role as advocates for economic justice, and the places they wore them (the European Community (EC), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the UN) conditioned them to act simultaneously as advocates of Northern progressivism and as belonging to a particular world order. By unravelling the meaning behind that process we can test how that vision was re-packaged and sublimated within even the most outwardly sympathetic of visions of a new international order.

### **The birth of the 'like-minded' group**

The LMG was born into a global development environment transformed.<sup>8</sup> The story began with the creation of UNCTAD – 'the economic arm of the Third World' – in 1964, with Argentine economist Raul Prebisch at its helm.<sup>9</sup> UNCTAD's concern with fair commodity pricing, equitable trade, and the control of primary goods stimulated a growing debate about the structures of the postcolonial world order. The run-up to its first meeting in Geneva spawned the Group of 77 (G77) states, an outspoken advocate for radical reform. But UNCTAD also provided the catalyst for Northern engagement with the question of economic and political justice. At its second conference, in New Delhi in 1968, Nordic and Dutch interests coalesced around the question of global inequality. Four years later, those same states found that their common voting patterns at the Santiago UNCTAD, along with their willingness to listen to the South's demands, marked them out as the most advanced among

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<sup>6</sup> G. McCann, 'From Diaspora to Third Worldism and the United Nations: India and the Politics of Decolonising Africa', *Past and Present*, suppl. viii (2013), 260.

<sup>7</sup> M. Connelly, 'Taking Off the Cold War Lens: Visions of North-South Conflict During the Algerian War for Independence', *American Historical Review*, cv (2000), 739-69. On the need to think beyond the Cold War, see also E. Manela, 'A Pox on your Narrative: Writing Disease Control into Cold War History', *Diplomatic History*, xxxiv (2010), 299-323.

<sup>8</sup> For a history of foreign aid, humanitarianism, and development in the post-1945 period, see M. Barnett, *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011); C. Lancaster, *Foreign Aid: Diplomacy, Development, Domestic Politics* (London: Chicago University Press, 2007); D. Lumsdaine, *Moral Vision in International Politics: The Foreign Aid Regime, 1949-1989* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993); T. B. Olesen, H. Pharo, and K. Paaskesen (eds), *Saints and Sinners: Official Development Aid and its Dynamics in a Historical and Comparative Perspective* (Oslo: Akademika Forlag, 2013); H. Pharo and M. P. Fraser (eds), *The Aid Rush: Aid Regimes in Northern Europe During the Cold War* (Oslo: Oslo Academic Press, 2008); and G. Rist, *The History of Development: From Western Origins to Global Faith* (3rd ed., London: Zed Books, 2011).

<sup>9</sup> V. Prashad, *The Poorer Nations: A Possible History of the Global South* (London: Verso, 2012), 2.

their Northern peers. By then, however, they were no longer on their own. The Canadian government, for example, had ‘endorsed many of [the G77’s] demands’ by 1971.<sup>10</sup>

Co-operation among the Nordic states, and between those countries and their wider peer group, was nothing new, of course. At the League of Nations and in the first two decades of the UN, those countries worked behind the scenes to converse, collaborate and informally exchange information and views. In the late 1950s and early 1960s that circle extended to include Ireland, which had recently arrived at the UN (it joined in 1955), and Canada – both equally outspoken advocates for justice, peace and collective security. It was a formative period for the Irish state. Successive Irish governments made great virtue of what Ben Tonra termed the state’s ‘global citizen’ identity: committed to peacekeeping, collective security, the UN institutions, and international law.<sup>11</sup> The Third World played an important role in that process. In the late 1950s and early 1960s Irish support for decolonisation became an expression of the state’s independence (from the great powers) and its anti-colonial roots. The rise of the Afro-Asian bloc tempered that influence in the following decade, but the Irish, like their future partners in the LMG, found new ways to express their ‘progressiveness’ on the world stage. In the corridors and committees of New York that informal ‘fire brigade’ – a term bestowed upon the group by UN watchers – became known for its internationalism and its outspokenness on decolonisation, peacekeeping, apartheid and, later, foreign aid.<sup>12</sup>

A growing awareness of the difficulties faced by the South strengthened that commitment still further. In 1969 the World Bank Commission on International Development published *Partners in Development*, an attempt to take stock of economic ‘progress’ in a post-imperial world. The results were not good. More than two decades of foreign aid had failed to produce the sought-after benefits for the South. Support for the concept in the North had also begun to flag: ‘In some of the rich countries its feasibility, even its very purpose, is in question. The climate surrounding foreign aid programmes is heavy with disillusion and distrust ... we have reached a point of crisis.’<sup>13</sup> Yet the stark reality of the Commission’s findings meant that the South’s problems could no longer be so readily ignored. Foreign aid programmes grew larger, more ‘professionalised’, and more institutionalised in its aftermath. The World Bank’s ‘basic human needs’ programme, initiated in 1973, shaped a new vogue for poverty-focussed development.<sup>14</sup> The EC also stepped up its commitments, citing an increased awareness of ‘its responsibilities towards all developing countries’.<sup>15</sup> Added to those trends was an

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<sup>10</sup> D. Morrison, *Aid and Ebb Tide: A History of CIDA and Canadian Development Assistance* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier Press, 1998), 104.

<sup>11</sup> B. Tonra, *Global Citizen and European Republic: Irish Foreign Policy in Transition* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012). See also N. Dorr, *Ireland at the United Nations: Memories of the Early Years* (Dublin: Institute of Public Administration, 2010); M. Kennedy and D. McMahon (eds), *Obligations and Responsibilities: Ireland and the United Nations, 1955-2005* (Dublin: Institute of Public Administration, 2005); and J. M. Skelly, *Irish Diplomacy at the United Nations 1945-1965: National Interests and the International Order* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1997).

<sup>12</sup> See K. O’Sullivan, *Ireland, Africa and the End of Empire: Small State Identity in the Cold War, 1955-75* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012); and K. O’Sullivan, “‘Ah, Ireland. The Caring Nation’”: Foreign Aid and Irish State Identity in the Long 1970s’, *Irish Historical Studies*, xxxviii (2013), 476-91.

<sup>13</sup> World Bank. Commission on International Development, *Partners in Development: Report of the Commission on International Development* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1969), 4.

<sup>14</sup> For an introduction to the World Bank and the norm of ‘basic needs’, see M. Finnemore, *National Interests in International Society* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), 89-127.

<sup>15</sup> Commission of the European Communities, *Memorandum on a Community Policy on Development Co-operation* (Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 1972), 15.

explosion in non-governmental activity that drew Northern publics ever more closely into the world of development aid.<sup>16</sup>

The backdrop to this re-orientation of Northern responsibilities was the increased fragility of the prevailing international order. A meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement (whose membership overlapped considerably with the G77) at Algiers in 1973 declared the Second UN Development Decade a failure and called for a Special Session of the General Assembly to deal with the growing difficulties faced by the South. They got their wish. Convened in spring of the following year, the Assembly voted to adopt the G77's proposals for an NIEO: a more equitable spread of trade, wealth and welfare; major structural reforms in both political and economic spheres; the restructuring of raw materials flows and prices; and the re-distribution of power at international financial institutions like the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.<sup>17</sup> Those demands were non-binding. But they nonetheless marked a high-point in the Southern challenge to the postcolonial world order. Their impact was enhanced by the fall-out from the oil crisis in the North. In Northern Europe and North America, and particularly in the more vulnerable economies of small and medium-sized states, economic malaise was transformed from a national or regional ailment to a global one – and one that needed to be attended to in that light. In May 1975, for example, Irish minister for foreign affairs Garret FitzGerald told an OECD Ministerial Council meeting that '[o]ur problem now is to come to grips with the need to replace belatedly this one-sided situation by a balanced and equitable relationship, freely negotiated with our partner trading countries of the developing world'.<sup>18</sup> By then the Finnish government had also come out in support of the NIEO.<sup>19</sup>

Jan Pronk immediately capitalised on that combination of the G77's stridency and growing Northern concern. By the mid-1970s the Dutch minister for development co-operation had become increasingly convinced that the preconditions were in place for a fundamental shift in the global order. The economic crisis had generated four broadly-held realisations, he argued: that change was already underway; that new guidelines were needed on global trade; that direct negotiations were necessary between the North and the South; and that questions should be asked immediately at all levels (local, national, regional, and global) of the international system.<sup>20</sup> In 1974 Pronk organised a meeting to discuss those issues on the fringes of the Sixth Special Session of the UN. The following spring he took that initiative a step further, inviting representatives from Britain, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden to The Hague to seek out a common platform on the question of global economic reform. That first meeting of the LMG was informal and its atmosphere exploratory, but it was based on a set of broadly held objectives: what Pronk later termed the need for greater political will, less

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<sup>16</sup> See, for example, the pattern in Britain, where increased spending on NGOs mirrored increased public interest in disaster relief: M. Hilton, N. Crowson, J-F. Mouhot, and J. McKay, *A Historical Guide to NGOs in Britain: Charities, Civil Society and the Voluntary Sector Since 1945* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 49-50.

<sup>17</sup> For an introduction to the NIEO, see V. Ogle, 'State Rights Against Private Capital: The "New International Economic Order" and the Struggle Over Aid, Trade, and Foreign Investment, 1962-1981', *Humanity*, v (2014), 211-34; and the recent special issue of *Humanity* on that subject: *Humanity*, vi (2015).

<sup>18</sup> 'Text of Statement by Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dr Garret FitzGerald T.D. Delivered at the OECD Ministerial Council Meeting in Paris on 28th May, 1975', NAI, DFA 2007/111/1005.

<sup>19</sup> K. Kiljunen, 'Finnish Development Cooperation: Policy and Performance' in O. Stokke (ed), *European Development Assistance: Volume I – Policies and Performance* (Oslo: Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, 1984), 156.

<sup>20</sup> M. Dierikx, 'Developing Policy on Development: The Hague, 1945-1977', in Pharo and Fraser (eds), *Aid Rush*, 244.

short-sightedness, and a recognition of the need for change within the North.<sup>21</sup> It also set a precedent for the expanded discussions to come. When the group met again on the margins of the Seventh Special Session in September 1975 the incremental advances won by the reformists convinced Pronk and his Norwegian counterpart Thorvald Stoltenberg to find a regular space for conversation and (they hoped) co-ordination of their approach.

The Swedish government obliged, inviting the group's members, along with Canada, to continue their discussions at a meeting in Stockholm in November 1975. It was the last time the British government was formally invited – prompting a sigh of relief from some of its officials who had always been suspicious of the 'wilder ideas' of the Dutch and the Swedish governments – but it also marked the real consolidation of the LMG as part of the international diplomatic calendar.<sup>22</sup> In September 1976 officials from Belgium, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden met in Oslo to discuss areas of common concern in the unfolding global crisis. Over the following six years the group's membership expanded to include representation from Austria, Canada (back in the fold) and Ireland (1977), Australia (1980), and – following the election of a Socialist-led government – France (1981). Its programme changed too, to reflect the shifting priorities of the G77 and the North-South Dialogue. The group even extended its remit on two occasions – both hosted by Norway, in April 1981 and October 1982 – to include wide-ranging discussions with representatives from the G77, the United Nations (UN) and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). What remained, however, was the LMG's informal, open-ended form. Discussions were short (generally lasting only one day) and deliberately 'seminar-like and inconclusive'.<sup>23</sup> The group's conclusions were equally non-binding, and any attempt to develop 'like-minded' position papers, or to evolve into a functioning pressure group, was rejected out of hand by the collective's more moderate members (Ireland among them). In May 1982, for example, a Dutch attempt to bring 'like-minded' representatives in Paris together prior to an OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) debate on the future of the UN Development Programme met with failure. Nine months later the group's regular meeting in The Hague underlined its preference for a more flexible approach: 'Defining our mandate would be "like trying to grasp rainbows" and our mediating role would be diminished.'<sup>24</sup>

### **The roots of 'like-mindedness'**

That niggling reluctance to conform offered a strong reminder that the LMG was a broad church. But it was one, nonetheless, that had a common ethos at its core. From the moment the Nordic states and the Netherlands found common ground in New Delhi in 1968, it became abundantly evident that they shared a distinct approach to economic reform. That worldview was captured succinctly in the guiding principle of the LMG: 'moral commitment to Third World development and, as a corollary, a positive approach to the creation of a more just and equitable world economic order'.<sup>25</sup> It was also visible in the Jan Pronk-led expansion of the group in the mid-1970s. Dutch efforts to persuade Garret FitzGerald and the Irish

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<sup>21</sup> Pronk and Gauhar, 'North-South Dialogue', 200-1.

<sup>22</sup> Young to Williams, 22 Sept. 1975, [Kew, United Kingdom National Archives], O[verseas] D[evelopment Ministry Files] 33/168.

<sup>23</sup> 'The Common Fund', undated note [1978?], NAI, DFA 2009/120/1595.

<sup>24</sup> The Swedish delegate to the LMG, paraphrased in 'Meeting of Like-Minded Countries, The Hague, 23/24 February 1983', NAI, DFA 2013/27/999.

<sup>25</sup> DFA note, 'Question of Irish Attendance at an Informal Meeting on International Development Co-operation to be held at Copenhagen on 31st August 1977', NAI, DFA 2008/79/2893.

government to join the LMG in 1977 turned on the argument that ‘Ireland should not be lost ... Pronk was convinced that in [its] philosophical approach to Third World problems [Ireland was] in a unique position among developed countries and had therefore a vital moral role to play’.<sup>26</sup> The Irish could certainly lay claim to support the LMG’s goals. Although the state’s official aid programme was created only in 1974, the country had a growing non-governmental sector (with a longer Christian missionary heritage to back it up) and had been an active supporter of decolonisation, anti-apartheid and human rights since the late 1950s. It had also developed a strong track record on the question of economic reform. In September 1975 FitzGerald told the Seventh Special Session of the UN of his disdain for global economic practices in the post-independence era: resources had increasingly been transferred ‘in the wrong direction, not from the rich towards the poor but from the poor towards the rich’.<sup>27</sup> At the EC he was equally forthright in stressing the ‘disastrous effect’ the global economic crisis had on the poorest countries of the global South.<sup>28</sup> And those views were common across the political spectrum. Speaking at a public meeting in Dublin in September 1977, FitzGerald’s successor (and political opponent) Michael O’Kennedy underlined his government’s recognition of ‘the just and realistic demands of the Third World’.<sup>29</sup>

On its own that openness to economic reform might have been enough to distinguish the LMG from its counterparts in the North. But what separated it in international terms – from the G77, for example, or from the Eastern bloc – were the three pillars on which ‘like-mindedness’ was based: social democracy, Christianity, and anti-colonialism. They were not evenly shared – the Irish relied more on the language of Christian justice and a disdain for empire, for example, than interventionism born of the welfare state – but together they help to explain the LMG’s deep-rooted commitment to global reform. The first pillar, a welfare-inspired vision of equality and the re-distribution of wealth on a global scale, was closest to the hearts of the group’s founding member states. When Jan Pronk outlined his worldview to Altaf Gauhar in 1980, he did so by referring directly to a group of progressive, centre-left politicians that had driven the social democratic agenda in Northern Europe in the previous decade, including Olof Palme (Swedish prime minister, 1969-76) and Pronk’s personal friend Judith Hart (British minister for Overseas Development, 1974-75, 1977-79).<sup>30</sup> To them he might easily have added the ‘like-minded’ collaborators who shared his vision of a socially responsible redistribution of wealth and a complete re-articulation of the global order. Sympathy for the NIEO and economic equality followed a well-documented pattern, in which belief in the welfare state translated directly into spending on foreign aid.<sup>31</sup> As Norwegian

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<sup>26</sup> Note by Declan Connolly of a meeting with the Dutch Ambassador, Dublin, 22 Apr. 1977, NAI, DFA 2008/79/2893.

<sup>27</sup> ‘Text of Address by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dr Garret FitzGerald, T.D., at the Seventh United Nations Special General Assembly Devoted to Development and International Economic Co-operation, 4th September, 1975’, NAI, DFA 2009/120/427.

<sup>28</sup> ‘European Council 1-2 December 1975. Speaking Note on Item 7 – Aid to Developing Countries: Harmonisation on [sic] Community and National Policies’, NAI, DFA 2007/111/1706.

<sup>29</sup> ‘Speech Made by the Minister for Foreign Affairs Mr Michael O’Kennedy, T.D., at the Comhlámh Open Forum, on 5 September, 1977, at the John Player Theatre’, NAI, DFA 2008/79/2937.

<sup>30</sup> Pronk singled them out as examples of ‘politicians who have a longer-term view’ (Palme) and ‘political will’ (Hart); Pronk and Gauhar, ‘North-South Dialogue’, 200.

<sup>31</sup> See, for example, A. Noël and J-P. Thérien, ‘From Domestic to International Justice: The Welfare State and Foreign Aid’, *International Organization*, xlix (1995), 523-53; T. B. Olesen, H. Pharo, and K. Paaskesen, ‘Conclusion: Aid Norms, Foreign Policy and the Domestic Context’ in Olesen, Pharo, and Paaskesen (eds), *Saints and Sinners*, 329-66; and O. Stokke, ‘The Determinants of Aid Policies: Some Propositions Emerging from a Comparative Analysis’ in O. Stokke (ed), *Western Middle Powers and Global Poverty: The*

State Secretary Johan Jørgen Holst told an expanded LMG meeting in April 1981, '[t]he values to which we subscribe as Norwegians we must also subscribe to as citizens of the world, and as human beings. True solidarity cannot be confined to one nation or one region. It must encompass all, particularly those who suffer injustice and domination.'<sup>32</sup>

That social democratic commitment was less distant from the second pillar of the LMG approach – its Christian worldview – than it might initially appear. The Nordic aid programmes that grew up in the 1950s followed the paths of missionaries in their choice of recipients. Much of the non-governmental sector in Northern Europe was also faith-based or at least had religious-inspired roots. But it was through the language of justice that the Catholic and Protestant churches provided the most enduring contribution to the debate on reform. Inspired by UNCTAD and the growing debate on the international economic order, from the mid-1960s the Catholic Church began to emphasise the virtues of solidarity with the South.<sup>33</sup> Pope Paul VI's 1967 encyclical *Populorum Progressio* (on 'human development'), the creation of the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in the same year, and the rise of liberation theology, were all evidence of a more rigorous engagement with reform. A parallel move within the Protestant churches – what Michael Taylor later described as the belief that the poor 'have a right to something more than condescending gifts provided from a surplus to which the wealthy often have little right' – added additional weight to that discourse, not least through the umbrella World Council of Churches.<sup>34</sup>

The cumulative effect was to widen the discursive space on global reform. That shift was particularly important in a country like Ireland – with little or no social democratic tradition to speak of. John Kelly, the minister in charge of development policy, told a conference in Dublin in 1976 that Irish attitudes to economic reform had their foundations in 'the dictates of Christian charity and human fellow-feeling'.<sup>35</sup> The country's influential non-governmental sector reinforced that understanding in popular discourse. When Trócaire (the official aid agency of the Irish Catholic hierarchy) spoke of the potential benefits to Ireland of 'a more truly liberal approach to the negotiations between rich and poor', it borrowed directly from the language of Pope Paul VI and the Catholic Synod of Bishops' 1971 document, *Justice in the World*.<sup>36</sup> The same sensibilities were visible in the country's more secular non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Gorta, for example, channelled approximately 80 per cent of its resources to projects run by missionaries – Catholic and Protestant – and framed its approach in a manner familiar in the Irish context: 'if we remember we are Christian, we

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*Determinants of the Aid Policies of Canada, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden* (Uppsala: Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1989), 275-322.

<sup>32</sup> 'Meeting of "Like-Minded" Developed and Developing Countries at Bolkesjø Hotel, 4-6 April 1981: Opening Statement by State Secretary Johan Jørgen Holst', NAI, DFA 2012/59/1455.

<sup>33</sup> For a discussion of Catholic concepts of development, see I. Linden, 'The Language of Development: What are International Development Agencies Talking About?' in G. Clarke and M. Jennings (eds), *Development, Civil Society and Faith-Based Organisations: Bridging the Sacred and the Secular* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 72-93.

<sup>34</sup> M. Taylor, *Not Angels But Agencies: The Ecumenical Response to Poverty – A Primer* (London: SCM Press, 1995), 48.

<sup>35</sup> 'John Kelly T.D., Parliamentary Secretary to the Taoiseach and to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Speaking at a Day Conference on the Third World; Holy Ghost Missionary College, Kimmage Manor, Dublin; Wednesday 26 May, 1976, 9 pm', NAI, DFA 2007/111/1005.

<sup>36</sup> 'Common Fund: A Fair Deal For All Fund', *One World*, Christmas 1977.



would recognise that it is our duty and privilege to be able to go and help those in the Third World'.<sup>37</sup>

The pursuit of justice was not enough, however, to differentiate the LMG's members from their counterparts elsewhere in the North. The development sectors in Britain and the United States, for example, were equally indebted to a faith-based vision of reform. Nor was social democracy the sole preserve of the 'like-minded' states: West Germany had a strong commitment to social democracy but little interest in conceding to the NIEO. What distinguished the LMG instead was the combination of social democratic and/or Christian justice with the third pillar of 'like-mindedness': anti-colonialism. That concept again had deep roots. The 'fire brigade' spent much of the 1950s and 1960s promoting the right to self-determination, particularly at the Fourth Committee of the UN, before turning their attentions to foreign aid. By the early 1970s the Dutch and Nordic governments were providing increasing support – metaphorical and material – to liberation movements in southern Africa in the form of humanitarian aid.<sup>38</sup> Those sentiments translated easily into the rejection of neo-colonial dominance that was at the heart of the NIEO.

Anti-colonialism was taken a step further in the Irish case. While the Nordic states and Canada made much of their 'special role' as non-imperial powers (conveniently sidestepping questions about the minorities within their own borders), the Irish proudly wore the badge of common experience to emphasise their connection with the South. Not only had they 'no colonial interests to defend', they contended, 'our own development has been of recent origin'.<sup>39</sup> The decolonisation process in the 1950s and 1960s brought that identity to the forefront, leading successive Irish governments to define their country's world role according to its own experience of colonial rule. In the 1970s it was re-articulated in support for the principle of economic reform. Garret FitzGerald, both in his background – his father had fought in the Irish War of Independence and was Ireland's first minister for external affairs, while FitzGerald himself had been actively involved with anti-apartheid and a variety of other causes – and in his politics, exemplified that approach. His address to the Seventh Special Session spoke not only of 'neo-colonial exploitation' but also in terms of the empathy that the Irish government and its people felt for the plight of the South: 'it is only within the past forty years that we ourselves have achieved a measure of industrialisation, still unfortunately inadequate to meet our full economic needs and to provide employment for all our people'.<sup>40</sup> The theme of empathy remained a constant in the Irish response to the North-South Dialogue. David Andrews, the minister in charge of development policy, told the UNCTAD meeting in Manila in May 1979 that the Irish knew 'only too well from our own

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<sup>37</sup> Gorta chief executive Ronald Smiley, quoted in Ray Comiskey, 'Ronald Smiley', *The Irish Times*, 28 Aug. 1982.

<sup>38</sup> For an introduction to Nordic support for southern Africa, see the Nordic Africa Institute series of publications on that subject: T. L. Eriksen (ed), *Norway and National Liberation in Southern Africa* (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2000); C. M. Morgenstjerne, *Denmark and National Liberation in Southern Africa: A Flexible Response* (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2003); T. Sellström, *Sweden and National Liberation in Southern Africa: Volume I – Formation of a Popular Opinion (1950-1970)* (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 1999); T. Sellström, *Sweden and National Liberation in Southern Africa: Volume II – Solidarity and Assistance (1970-1994)* (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2002); and I. Soiri and P. Peltola, *Finland and National Liberation in Southern Africa* (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 1999).

<sup>39</sup> 'Address by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Taoiseach and to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dr John Kelly, T.D., to the Confederation of Irish Industry, Thursday, 11 March 1976', NAI, DFA 2008/79/2836.

<sup>40</sup> 'Text of Address by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dr Garret FitzGerald, T.D., at the Seventh United Nations Special General Assembly Devoted to Development and International Economic Co-operation, 4th September, 1975', NAI, DFA 2009/120/427.

relatively recent development the problems faced by developing countries largely reliant upon the export of primary commodities'.<sup>41</sup> The country's NGOs were equally insistent on Ireland's anti-colonial credentials: 'Ireland is respected by the developing countries as having to a certain extent shared similar problems of development because of colonial domination in the past.'<sup>42</sup>

Describing the LMG in terms of those three pillars allows us to understand the diversity of approaches that led to the same, 'like-minded' goal. But it also reminds us of the dangers of ascribing too great a unity to the group. The different ways in which its members understood and articulated their approach was most obviously expressed in the gap between the radicalism of the Dutch/Nordic core, and those with more moderate views of global reform. Irish officials, for example, were quick to admit in private that 'notwithstanding our goodwill towards the developing countries, we cannot always support certain policies which the Netherlands seems to be able to pursue in a relatively single-minded manner'.<sup>43</sup> The Austrian, Belgian and Canadian governments were equally sceptical of Dutch and Nordic interventionism, preferring to fall back on their more 'conservative' model of the welfare state.<sup>44</sup> The attitudes of Pronk, his successors, and their colleagues in the Nordic states, did not help matters. Those countries were often happy to organise meetings among themselves on the periphery of international conferences, leading outsiders to conclude that 'like-mindedness' was predominantly Dutch/Nordic in form. One contemporary study of the LMG even went so far as to focus its attention solely on that core, 'whose positions have been consistently closer to those of the developing countries and without whom it would be impossible for the group to function'.<sup>45</sup>

### **The LMG and co-operation in the Cold War**

Yet to focus attention exclusively on that Nordic/Dutch spine misses out on both the diversity and the clearly-defined boundaries of 'like-mindedness'. In theory, the definition of what it meant to be 'like-minded' should have opened up its meetings to any state that held a similar approach. In practice, participation was more selective than those broad conditions for entry suggested. Eyebrows were raised when British officials took part in the meeting in Stockholm in January 1978 (at their own behest). Five years later an Italian request to participate was rejected because the group's members were unsure 'whether it was like-minded enough'.<sup>46</sup> In both cases the response hinted (though did not speak) at disquiet at the protagonists' close relationship with an American-led capitalist world order. More than moral imperatives, more than some broad commitment to social democratic or Christian principles of aid (which even the British and Italians shared, to a greater or lesser degree), and more, even, than any attempt at neutrality in the Cold War (a number of 'like-minded' states were, remember, also members of NATO, while the Irish remained staunchly anti-communist outside the alliance framework), the LMG consisted of states that attempted to pursue their interests, and their own identities, outside the world of superpower politics. In the mid-1970s

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<sup>41</sup> 'Text of address delivered by the Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs, Mr David Andrews, T.D., to the General Debate at UNCTAD V, in Manila, May 10th 1979', NAI, DFA 2009/120/725.

<sup>42</sup> 'UNCTAD 4: Confrontation or Conciliation?', *One World*, spring 1976.

<sup>43</sup> O'Connor to assistant sec., DFA, 9 May 1977, NAI, DFA 2008/79/2893.

<sup>44</sup> Noël and Thérien, 'Domestic to International Justice', 541-2.

<sup>45</sup> Dolman, 'The Like-Minded Countries', 57.

<sup>46</sup> 'Meeting of Like-Minded Countries, The Hague, 23/24 February 1983', NAI, DFA 2013/27/999.

for example, several members of the LMG – including Ireland – collaborated in voicing their support for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament.<sup>47</sup>

The context was important. In the late 1950s and early 1960s the United States had stepped back from active engagement at the UN, leaving space for the ‘fire brigade’ states to explore their vision of a co-operative international order. The period of *détente* and the end of US hegemony in the Northern sphere had a similar effect a decade later. The loosening of the ideological certainty of the East-West conflict, and the reduction of the United States’ dominance of international economic institutions following the collapse of Bretton Woods, brought new opportunities for co-operation, collaboration, and a re-shaping of the international order. The Trilateral Commission, a non-governmental initiative founded by David Rockefeller in 1973 to encourage dialogue between the US, Japan and Western Europe, was just one example. The NIEO prompted more. The Conference on International Economic Co-operation (CIEC), which met in Paris between 1975 and 1977, focussed attention on the idea of an open dialogue between North and South. It was followed by the creation of a UN Committee of the Whole in December 1977 and a growing conversation about the ‘shock of the global’.<sup>48</sup> That ‘shock’ changed the way that Northern commentators and politicians thought about the world. At the OECD’s influential Development Assistance Committee (DAC), debates on development co-operation were framed in the context of ‘world economic interdependence’ and, by the early 1980s, ‘a stark and worrying world economic situation’.<sup>49</sup> In 1980 the Independent Commission on International Development Issues described global inequality as ‘the great social challenge of our time’.<sup>50</sup>

Irish internationalism thrived in that context. At the UN the Irish government’s policies had built on the understanding that small and middling powers had much to gain from pooling resources in the international organisation. Support for decolonisation, for example, was in fact support for *successful* decolonisation and the creation of stable, economically viable, and politically independent states. Peacekeeping (in which many ‘like-minded’ states actively participated) offered a practical way of expressing support for a UN-led global order. The birth of the Irish foreign aid programme in 1974 (echoing earlier developments in the Nordic countries and the Netherlands) was equally wrapped up in the promotion of a more stable world environment that would preclude, or at least stem, the flow of Cold War conflict. What bound Ireland and the rest of the LMG’s members together was a sense not only of what the UN could do for them, but also what they could gain from their support for the UN. Increased North-South co-operation, the re-alignment of international trade, and the shift towards a more equitable international economic order were held up as solutions that would benefit all. It was readily evident (and a source of no little worry) that support for producers in the global South had the potential to add to the economic woes of small, open economies. But those fears were over-ridden by the depth of the crisis and the sense that only global solutions would suffice. Prosperity elsewhere in the world, the ‘like-minded’ states argued, would lead

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<sup>47</sup> M. O’Driscoll and J. Walsh, ‘Ireland and the 1975 NPT Review Conference: Norm-Building and the Role of Small States’, *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, xxv (2014), 101-116.

<sup>48</sup> This phrase is borrowed from N. Ferguson, C. S. Maier, E. Manela and D. J. Sargent (eds), *The Shock of the Global: The 1970s in Perspective* (London: Harvard University Press, 2010).

<sup>49</sup> ‘Development Assistance Committee: Record of the 306th Meeting, held at the Château de la Muette, Paris, 27th-28th October, 1976’, O[rganisation for] E[conomic] C[operation and] D[evelopment Archives] DAC/M(76)9; ‘Development Assistance Committee: Summary Record of the 19th High Level Meeting held at the Château de la Muette, Paris, 24th-25th November, 1980’, 5 Dec. 1980, OECD, DAC/M(80)11.

<sup>50</sup> Independent Commission on International Development Issues, *North-South: A Programme for Survival* (London: Pan Books, 1980), 7.

to increased demand for goods produced in the North. And they appeared to genuinely believe in that approach: participants at the ‘like-minded’ meeting in Dublin in June 1981 bemoaned the fact that some countries in the global North (the United States prominent among them) ‘still did not appreciate sufficiently well that North-South cooperation was in their own interests’.<sup>51</sup>

That realisation led the ‘like-minded’ states to equate their own interests with the creation of a more just international order. Irish efforts to influence policy at EC level, for example, were described in terms of ‘our overall long-term economic and political interests, while at the same time safeguarding any essential short-term national interests which may be involved’.<sup>52</sup> At the fifth UNCTAD in Manila in 1979 David Andrews argued that ‘[t]o be effective and lasting, cooperation for mutual benefit must of necessity reflect and do justice to the reality of interdependence’.<sup>53</sup> International institutions were viewed as one of the best ways of achieving that. The ‘like-minded’ members of the DAC spoke of the ‘central importance’ of the global negotiations and of ‘using the global framework for pushing partial, pragmatic initiatives’.<sup>54</sup> And the role they afforded to the CIEC and UNCTAD in previous years was part of the same pattern: emphasising the importance of global solutions and international collaboration.

Once we begin to think about the LMG in these terms, it becomes clear that its support for economic justice was based on something much more complex than the pursuit of what Olav Stokke termed ‘humane internationalism’.<sup>55</sup> It was an attempt to assert an independent identity in a Cold War-dominated world. The Irish response to the G77’s growing demands for economic reform at the UN, for example, emphasised the state’s own history of underdevelopment, exploitation, unemployment, and the memory of famine and emigration. It constructed a very particular role for the state, as a member of the EC, as a good Northern citizen, but also as a neutral state with empathy and understanding of the needs of the global South. In international negotiations, and particularly within the EC, that positive neutrality gave Ireland a particular role as a ‘bridge’ between the North and the global South. But the assertion of that neutrality – broadly defined – was also achieved in terms of what the ‘like-minded’ states were not. Finnish attitudes to development co-operation, for example, were held to underline the country’s independence, its ‘Westernness’ and its distance from its neighbour, the Soviet Union.<sup>56</sup> Dutch ‘like-mindedness’, or so British officials believed, also owed much to that country’s attempt to find a new role in a post-imperial world: ‘the Dutch have had to trim their sails to the prevailing winds in many seas. They therefore feel the need to exert themselves all the more where they still have a distinctive role to play’.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> ‘Report of Meeting: Like Minded Group – Dublin 26 June 1981’, NAI, DFA 2012/59/1455.

<sup>52</sup> M. Guilfoyle, C. Gallagher and D. Gallagher, ‘Working Group on Development Aid and Co-operation’, undated report [1978?], NAI, DFA 2008/79/1636.

<sup>53</sup> ‘Text of Address Delivered by the Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs, Mr David Andrews, TD, to the General Debate at UNCTAD V, in Manila, May 10th 1979’, NAI, DFA 2009/120/725.

<sup>54</sup> ‘Development Assistance Committee: Summary Record of the 19th High Level Meeting Held at the Château de la Muette, Paris, 24th-25th November, 1980’, OECD, DAC/M(80)11.

<sup>55</sup> Stokke, ‘Determinants of Aid’, 278.

<sup>56</sup> J. Koponen with L. Siitonen, ‘Finland: Aid and Identity’ in P. Hoebink and O. Stokke (eds), *Perspectives on European Development Co-operation: Policy and Performance of Individual Donor Countries and the EU* (London: Routledge, 2005), 239.

<sup>57</sup> ‘Netherlands Aid Policy’, 7 Jul. 1976, UKNA, F[oreign and] C[ommonwealth] O[ffice Files], 98/2. See also Dierikx, ‘Developing Policy on Development’, 244-9.

The pursuit of those individual identities was what brought the ‘like-minded’ countries together in the first instance. Once engaged, however, the group generated a socialising logic of its own. Pondering the question of continued involvement in the ‘like-minded’ meetings in August 1977, Irish officials concluded that ‘a refusal to participate in a meeting with a group of countries in which development policy “front-liners” are no longer in the majority could be interpreted as signifying a shift on our part to a rather lukewarm policy on Third World questions’.<sup>58</sup> In the competitive world of superpower politics that independence came to mean a great deal. As early as 1974 Irish officials made it clear to their American counterparts that they were ‘not wed to any whole-hearted commitment to free enterprise in the American manner’ and would approach the NIEO accordingly.<sup>59</sup> They maintained that approach as a member of the ‘like-minded’ group. But this was not simply a case of expressing some deeply held moral beliefs. It also helped to define the ‘like-minded’ states as acting apart from the dominant sources of Northern power. And, by cultivating the image of ‘like-minded’ mediation, progressivism, and independence of action, it attempted to carve out a particularly ‘like-minded’ space in the emerging global order.

There were limits, of course, to how much the LMG could escape the boundaries of the Cold War. Like-minded efforts to persuade their fellow members of the Group B (industrialised) states at UNCTAD of the need for reform were circumscribed by the intransigence of Britain, West Germany, and the United States. In the mid-1970s, while British officials hoped that the more moderate members of the LMG might be used ‘to neutralise some of the Scandinavian Trojan horse activities’ at UNCTAD, the Americans remained largely aloof.<sup>60</sup> Once the era of *détente* came to end, however, the re-assertion of American interest (and interventionism) in the world outside brought with it the diminution of the powers of ‘like-minded’ reform. Political changes in the North sealed the transition. The election of Ronald Reagan as president of the United States, his staunch defence of liberal economic policies at the International Meeting for Co-operation and Development at Cancun in October 1981, and the Latin American debt crisis the following year, effectively swept away all chances of radical reform. In its place came a restatement of Northern control and what Mark Mazower termed the ‘real’ new international economic order (neo-liberalism).<sup>61</sup>

### **Empire, internationalism and the North-South divide**

The evidence presented here reveals the important role of actors like Ireland and the ‘like-minded’ states in shaping the language of a new international order. But how do we unpack that narrative to describe the kind of power they exercised and the kind of world they created? How should we interpret their attempts to win the South over to their vision of economic reform? The ‘like-minded’ contribution to the political economy of the Cold War is important simply because those states were so successful in creating an alternative voice in the debate on global reform. The group’s establishment as a neutral, collaborative space depended on its ability to operate (and have influence) beyond the parameters of the Cold War. Which, in many ways, it did. ‘Like-minded’ interventions at the UN, the EC, the OECD, and within the context of the UNCTAD, as well as through initiatives like the meetings hosted by Norway in 1981 and 1982, confirmed the group as an important actor in

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<sup>58</sup> ‘Question of Irish Attendance at an Informal Meeting on International Development Cooperation to be Held in Copenhagen on 31st August 1977’, NAI, DFA 2008/79/2893.

<sup>59</sup> ‘Declaration of Principles’, note prepared by DFA on the G77 working paper on the establishment of an NIEO, ahead of an EC Development Council meeting on 30 Apr. 1974, NAI, DFA 2005/145/1762.

<sup>60</sup> Williams to Young, 23 Sept. 1975, UKNA, OD 33/168.

<sup>61</sup> M. Mazower, *Governing the World: The History of an Idea* (London: Allen Lane, 2012), chapter 12.

international society. Their influence was located less in the realm of high politics – Irish officials admitted in 1977 that ‘in economic terms ... the like-minded countries have little real power’ – but it nonetheless made an important contribution in shaping the very nature of international dialogue.<sup>62</sup>

The key to understanding that approach lies in the group’s efforts to act as a ‘bridge’ between the North and the South. The desire to ‘cajole the US into a positive frame of mind’ was matched by attempts to persuade the G77 of their responsibilities, and to ‘strengthen the institutional system to cope with forthcoming negotiations and the greater involvement of political leaders in the process’.<sup>63</sup> Preparations for a new international development strategy (IDS) and the proposed round of global negotiations on economic reform at the end of the 1970s and beginning of the 1980s provided an excellent example of that approach in action. The ‘like-minded’ search for ‘whom we should support at the G77’ was part of a strategy that viewed the North-South Dialogue, as the Danes put it, ‘not only in terms of concessions, but also in terms of getting a better world economy’.<sup>64</sup> The two expanded meetings hosted by Norway in 1981 and 1982 echoed that attempt to steer the G77 towards a more ‘like-minded’ frame of action. They brought together the ‘like-minded’ states, representatives of the UN, and officials from a variety of G77 countries. Recognising that small states ‘are dependent on international cooperation and international rules’, they attempted to ‘establish communication across the lines separating the Group of 77 from the OECD world ... before compromises crystallise and positions harden’.<sup>65</sup> They sparked a considerable degree of consensus between the delegates present. Yet they also left the ‘like-minded’ states with a sizeable dilemma, one that was emblematic of the group’s wider approach: ‘how to bring the US along with the rest of the developed world without triggering an over-reaction on the part of the G77 which would force the entire developed world to close ranks’?<sup>66</sup>

The answer, more often than not, lay in the institutions of the UN. The belated hope, expressed at the group’s meeting in Copenhagen in 1982, that compromise ‘might help to draw the USA and the G77 out of their frozen positions towards some form of understanding and agreement’ was more indicative of their desire for a negotiated settlement.<sup>67</sup> Their rhetoric made clear, too, that they viewed those policies in terms of explicit support for a system in which, by the late 1970s, the majority of the UN’s debates and actions were focussed on questions of economic or social development. ‘Like-minded’ eyes were directed first towards the UNCTAD and its potential as a negotiating ground. Once the influence of that institution waned, that emphasis shifted again, to the Committee of the Whole, the IDS and the global negotiations. At each step, the group was defined by its assertion that ‘a growing interdependence among nations has made it more evident than ever that co-ordinated international action is required’.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> ‘Meeting with the Irish Commission for Justice and Peace’, note prepared by DFA, 26 Sept. 1977, NAI, DFA 2008/79/1628.

<sup>63</sup> ‘Report of Meeting: Like Minded Group – Dublin 26 June 1981’, NAI, DFA 2012/59/1455.

<sup>64</sup> ‘Meeting of the “Like-Minded” Group of Countries, The Hague – 29 October, 1979’, NAI, DFA 2010/19/1487.

<sup>65</sup> ‘Meeting of “Like-Minded” Developed and Developing Countries at Bolkesjø Hotel, 4-6 April 1981: Opening Statement by State Secretary Johan Jørgen Holst’, NAI, DFA 2012/59/1455.

<sup>66</sup> ‘Report on the Holmenkollen Meeting, Oslo 9-10 October 1982’, NAI, DFA 2012/59/1455.

<sup>67</sup> ‘Like-Minded Meeting – Copenhagen – 26 February 1982’, NAI, DFA 2012/59/1455.

<sup>68</sup> ‘How to Break the Stalemate in the North/South Dialogue?’, note by Norwegian ministry for foreign affairs, 25 March 1981, NAI, DFA 2012/59/1455.

Reading the ‘like-minded’ story in terms of their role in supporting a UN-led international order, however, should also lead us to question how that order was constituted, and for whose ends. Much has been written on the emergence of a world culture in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, built on an internationally shared set of principles, and grounded in a ‘rationalised modernity’ that shaped our understanding of the nation-state.<sup>69</sup> In an international context these underlying assumptions of how the world should work were both conditioned by, and helped to condition, the actions of states. The UN, for example, created historically unprecedented opportunities for linking concern for national interests with international order. But that organisation was also the latest instalment in a long narrative of global governance structures, originating in the early nineteenth century, and closely linked to Northern values and the exercise of Great Power influence.<sup>70</sup> Even when the UN spoke on the most human of topics (including health, humanitarianism, and rights), it did so in a language that was recognisably Northern: one of progress, development, and scientific rationalism.

There are important implications in that narrative for our understanding of the LMG’s – and, by extension, Ireland’s – role in sustaining a system of liberal global governance. Its members were not pawns of the North. On the contrary, they deliberately attempted to carve out their own space and to exert their own influence on world politics. But their support for economic reform should nonetheless be read as part of a broader attempt to condition the errant South into a Northern-shaped new order. Just as Irish NGOs were drawn into a humanitarian system that was dominated by the language and aims of Western internationalism, so the Irish state apparatus was employed in pursuit of a particular vision of the outside world.<sup>71</sup> Belgium, Denmark, Ireland and the Netherlands were members of an EC whose approach to development was to see the South as ‘a young man. To develop it needs money, but mostly it needs training and access for its production, so that it can develop by its own means, promote production, and plan its development with a guarantee of access.’<sup>72</sup> Talk of an interdependent or globalised world economy merely extended that interventionist narrative into the realm of international economic relations. As Thorsten Olesen put it, ‘accepting that the world was interdependent also meant that the rich countries could legitimately demand change and transformation from the developing countries’.<sup>73</sup> Behind the rhetoric of solidarity, globalism and collaboration, in other words, lay a more fundamental assumption: of an unspoken hierarchy and a right to interfere in the South from states that knew better.

That language was matched by an unspoken ‘othering’ of the G77 that manifested itself in the LMG’s fear of disorder in the South. When one Irish government minister spoke in 1976 about ‘a certain unease’ that had ‘entered our consciousness in relation to the underdeveloped

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<sup>69</sup> See J. Boli and G. M. Thomas (eds), *Constructing World Culture: International Nongovernmental Organisations Since 1875* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999); J. W. Meyer, J. Boli, G. M. Thomas and F. O. Ramirez, ‘World Society and the Nation State’, *American Journal of Sociology*, ciii (1997), 144-81; and J. W. Meyer, D. J. Frank, A. Hironaka, E. Schofer, and N. B. Tuma, ‘The Structuring of a World Environmental Regime, 1870-1990’, *International Organization*, liv (1997), 623-51.

<sup>70</sup> See, for example, Mazower, *Governing the World*.

<sup>71</sup> See K. O’Sullivan, ‘Humanitarian Encounters: Biafra, NGOs and Imaginings of the Third World in Britain and Ireland, 1967-70’, *Journal of Genocide Research*, xvi (2014), 299-315; and K. O’Sullivan, ‘The Search for Justice: NGOs in Britain and Ireland and the New International Economic Order, 1968-82’, *Humanity*, vi (2015), 173-87.

<sup>72</sup> C. Cheysson, ‘Europe and the Third World After Lomé’, *The World Today*, xxxi (1979), 233.

<sup>73</sup> T. B. Olesen, ‘Between Words and Deeds: Denmark and the NIEO Agenda, 1974-1982’, in Pharo and Fraser (eds), *Aid Rush*, 153.

world', it was no surprise to see him also admit that 'for many people the phrase "Third World" has an obscurely threatening ring'.<sup>74</sup> Economic reconciliation, Irish minister for industry and commerce Justin Keating told UNCTAD delegates in Nairobi in 1976, was 'literally a matter of the survival of our own grandchildren'.<sup>75</sup> This was self-interested altruism in action, a combination of projecting and protecting national interests, and an unconscious 'othering' of the very group that they purported to support. The same pattern could be observed in the protective economic policies of other 'like-minded' states. Finnish policy-makers were cognisant of the need to balance a positive response to the problems of the global South with their recognition of the country's standing on the economic periphery of the North.<sup>76</sup> Canada's humanitarian motives for foreign aid were combined with the promotion of the state's economic interests abroad.<sup>77</sup> In Denmark policy-makers exhibited a clear reluctance to challenge the Common Agricultural Policy and the barriers that restricted open trade with the global South.<sup>78</sup>

And there was one other, if less immediately obvious, way in which the 'like-minded' group became integrated into the apparatus of liberal global governance: the concept of 'basic human needs'. The popularity of the World Bank's programme from the mid-1970s drew those states into a language and practice of development that Gilbert Rist described as 'political counter-fire' in the global economic crisis.<sup>79</sup> The split was fundamental: 'basic human needs' emphasised ground level action to raise productivity and transform the poor into economic actors while the NIEO emphasised fundamental structural reform. By placing the onus on governments in the global South to meet growth targets (economic, social and health-related) it extended the interventionist streak implied by talk of global economic 'interdependence'. It also put its supporters into a quandary when describing their support for a new international order. At the DAC the 'like-minded' states were to the forefront of those who argued that 'basic needs' was 'not a substitute for the NIEO'.<sup>80</sup> Ireland (which joined the DAC later, in 1985) was no different. Away from the first flushes of enthusiasm that greeted the G77's proposals, however, it became clear that Irish support for justice and rights did not translate into a radical re-working of the prevailing world system. Moderation remained the key: avoiding economic collapse, preserving international stability, and preventing the disintegration of the global political order. And that meant seeking out the voices in the G77 that might be persuaded to take up the LMG's cause. As the oxymoronic title of the broad discussions organised by Norway in 1981 and 1982 suggested, the 'Meeting of "like-minded" developed and developing countries' had a built-in hierarchical order.

## Conclusion

'Political scientists note many differences between countries, North, South, East, West, developed and developing', Jan Pronk told his interrogator Altaf Gauhar in 1980, 'but there is one difference which is very often overlooked, and that is the difference in size; there are big

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<sup>74</sup> 'John Kelly T.D., Parliamentary Secretary to the Taoiseach and to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Speaking at a Day Conference on the Third World, Holy Ghost Missionary College, Kimmage Manor, Dublin, Wednesday 26th May, 1976, 9 pm', NAI, DFA 2007/111/1005.

<sup>75</sup> Quoted in Pauline Eccles, 'Keating Warns on Third World Role: Speech at UN Conference in Nairobi', *Irish Press*, 14 May 1976.

<sup>76</sup> Kiljunen, 'Finnish Development Cooperation', 174.

<sup>77</sup> See Stokke, 'Determinants of Aid'; and Morrison, *Aid and Ebb Tide*.

<sup>78</sup> For a discussion of Danish policies on economic reform, see Olesen, 'Denmark and the NIEO'.

<sup>79</sup> Rist, *History of Development*, 162.

<sup>80</sup> 'Development Assistance Committee: Record of the 16th High Level Meeting, Held at the Château de la Muette, Paris, 26th-27th October, 1977', OECD, DAC/M(77)8.



countries and small countries, and that very much explains why they follow different policies'. Big countries were driven by the pursuit of power; small countries, by contrast, had few instruments to do so, and had to content themselves with finding alternative methods of exerting their influence on the world stage.<sup>81</sup> Pronk was being reductivist, but he had a point. The 'like-minded' experience of global crisis, which he had witnessed from the inside, was one of adaptation and mediation: between the ideals of economic justice and the *realpolitik*-ing of a superpower world. LMG support for the NIEO reflected its members' social democratic, Christian, and anti-colonial values. Those identities were in turn closely intertwined with support for a UN-led international order. The abating of Cold War tensions and the rise of a globalist discourse created the opportunities for their expression on the world stage. They did not disappear with the re-assertion of an American-led international order from the late 1970s, but they were certainly severely circumscribed.

In constructing that argument, this article has echoed Matthew Connelly and Erez Manela in reading the Cold War not simply in East-West terms but as a manifestation of a Northern world order.<sup>82</sup> But by following that narrative to states like Ireland, it broadens our understanding of that process in important new directions. At its core the rise of 'like-mindedness' suggests a complex system of international governance that extended far beyond the parameters of the global superpowers. Membership of the LMG blurred the lines between Ireland's domestic and international values. It emphasised the complex role of moral principles in shaping the agenda of international relations. And it highlighted the importance of collaboration and group identity on the international stage. Order in international society, its story suggests, was sustained not solely through displays of diplomatic or military power, but through a much more complex web of interests, influences, and unwritten rules.<sup>83</sup> Taking that narrative a step further, however, once we recognise the 'like-minded' states as key actors in socialising and sublimating the norms of a Northern-led international society – as we should, not least since those states have been among the leading donors of foreign aid since the 1970s – then we must take more seriously what kind of vision of the South they put forward.

Writing in 2010, Patricia Clavin suggested that '[f]ollowing the transnational and international pathways of Europe's smaller countries in a European and/or global frame can go some way to off-setting the dominance of Europe's great powers in the writing and teaching of history'.<sup>84</sup> There is much still to learn of how ideas and norms flowed from the centres of the Cold War to states like Ireland, between those places, and from them on to the global South. The story of 'like-minded' collaboration provides us with the opportunity to test the depth and reach of that Northern world order. But its conclusions suggest that we need to think more deeply about the language and vision of those states, how they were constructed and how they were shaped, as well as unravelling their involvement in issues of international politics. We need to look not only to states, but also to the NGOs and

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<sup>81</sup> Pronk and Gauhar, 'North-South Dialogue', 193-4.

<sup>82</sup> Connelly, 'Cold War Lens'; M. Connelly, *Fatal Misconception: The Struggle to Control World Population* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008); and Manela, 'Pox on Your Narrative'

<sup>83</sup> This topic has been the subject of extensive discussion in the field of international relations theory, particularly by scholars of institutionalist and constructivist persuasions. See, for example, Finnemore, *National Interests*; C. Reus-Smit, *The Moral Purpose of the State: Culture, Social Identity, and Institutional Rationality in International Relations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999); and A. Wendt, 'Anarchy is What States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics', *International Organization*, xlvi (1992), 391-425.

<sup>84</sup> P. Clavin, 'Time, Manner, Place: Writing Modern European History in Global, Transnational and International Contexts', *European History Quarterly*, xl (2010), 634.

transnational civil society groups that constituted those pathways. And we need to better understand how ideas formulated in states and international organisations passed over and through those states and how they were absorbed, rejected and re-articulated once they reached the South.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> That process has begun in earnest in a number of areas. To give just a few examples, see the work of the Nordic Africa Institute at Uppsala; the on-going ‘Moral Economy of Global Civil Society: A History of Voluntary Food Aid’ project at Södertörn University; the Nordic collaborative project that produced Olesen, Pharo, and Paaskesen (eds), *Saints and Sinners* (Oslo: Akademika Forlag, 2013); the ‘Neutrals and Non-Aligned in the Global Cold War, 1949-1989’ conference at the University of Lausanne (March 2014); and the Canadian network on humanitarian history, based at Carleton University, and formed in 2014.