

Title: Challenging the Liberal World Order: The Global South and the United Nations, 1955-1981.

Abstract:

This paper investigates how the UN developed in parallel with the rise of the Global South (sometimes referred to as the Developing World or the Third World) as a group that sought to remake the world order from 1955-1981. It examines how two countries from the Global South, specifically Ghana and India, changed the UN by creating new committees and adapting others such as the General Assembly Fourth Committee (the Special Political and Decolonization Committee) to address the problems rendered by decolonization. From 1955-1981, Global South states used the UN to expand the meaning of decolonization from the right to self-determination and recognition of sovereignty, to a wider range of human rights and a campaign for economic reform. In the process, they activated the agency of UN officials, creating new rules and procedures and co-opting NGOs, thereby permanently altering the system of global governance. Implicit in these developments, was a critique of the status quo which has historically been cast as a binary North-South struggle. However, this paper will analyze the dynamics of North-South and South-South interaction at the UN during the early years of the campaign against colonialism from 1955-1965. Far from being ineffective actors, countries from the Global South are revealed to be lively innovators, who activated UN channels and mechanisms and created communities of influence to realize the potential of the Charter and the normative power of the organization. As part of this movement, they presented a variety of visions of world order, but managed to supersede their internal divisions in order to manifest as a powerful force within the UN environment. In revitalizing the UN, they succeeded in forcing countries such as the United States to change their thinking on the implications of decolonization for the post-colonial world order. Thereby, it is argued that Global South countries successfully challenged the liberal world order established by the great powers in 1945.

Alanna O'Malley (George Washington University)