

Pat Gibbons, Brigitte Piquard (eds.)

# Working in Conflict - Working on Conflict

Humanitarian Dilemmas and Challenges



**HumanitarianNet**

Thematic Network on Humanitarian  
Development Studies



# Working in Conflict - Working on Conflict

Humanitarian Dilemmas  
and Challenges



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## Humanitarian Dilemmas and Challenges

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2006  
University of Deusto  
Bilbao

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Publication printed on ecological paper

Illustration of front page: Agencia EFE

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Apartado 1 - 48080 Bilbao

I.S.B.N.: 978-84-9830-518-0

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## Acronyms

AAA	Action Agro Allemande
ACTED	Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development
ACBAR	Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief
AIA	Afghan Interim Authority
AOR	Area of Responsibility
ATNUSO	Administration Transitoire des Nations Unies pour la Slavoinie
BAAG	British Agency Afghanistan Group
BELBOS	Belgians in Bosnia
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
CIMIC	Civil Military Cooperation
CMTF	Civil Military Co-operation Task force
CORDAID	Catholic Organisation for Relief and Development Aid
DHA	Department of Humanitarian Affairs
DFID	Department for International Development
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
ECHO	European Commission Humanitarian Aid Office <sup>1</sup>
EP	European Parliament
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FORPRONU	Force de Protection des Nations Unies
FPA	Framework Partnership Agreement
FSA	Field Safety Advisor
FSO	Field Security Officer
HA	Humanitarian Assistance
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ICVA	International Council of Voluntary Agencies
IDP	internally Displaced Person

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<sup>1</sup> In 2005, the European Commission Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO) became a Directorate-General, that is, the European Commission's Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid (DG ECHO).

IFOR	International Fellowship of Reconciliation
IHL	International Humanitarian Law
ISC	International Social Conflict
IRC	International Rescue Committee
JRS	Jesuit Relief Services
JRT	Joint Regional Teams
LRRD	Linking Relief to Rehabilitation and Development
MCDA	Military and Civil Defense Assets
MONUC	The UN Observation Mission in Congo
MSF	Médicins Sans Frontières
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NGO	Non- Governmental Organisation
NOHA	Network on Humanitarian Action
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Teams
QUIPS	Quick Impact Projects
RSO	Regional Security Officer
SCHR	Standing Committee of Humanitarian Response
SFOR	Stabilisation Force in Bosnia Herzegovina
TCT	Tactical CIMIC Teams
UN	United Nations
UNAMA	United Nations Mission in Afghanistan
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNMIK	United National Mission In Kosovo
UNSECOORD	United Nations Security Coordination Office
URD	Urgence-Réhabilitation-Développement
VOICE	Voluntary Organisations in Cooperation in Emergencies
WFP	World Food Programme

## Editorial - Humanitarianism: Meaning, Actors, and Scope

Pat Gibbons and Brigitte Piquard

The intensification and multiplicity of protracted conflicts, the blurring of traditional distinctions between warring and tranquillity zones, together with increased difficulties in distinguishing between belligerents and civilian population have all served to complicate contemporary conflicts. Actions in armed conflicts whether driven by ideals governed by humanitarianism, peacekeeping, or conflict transformation, have become more complex and dangerous. The multiplicity of actors that claim space under the humanitarian banner (military, journalists, governmental agents, NGOs or private companies) are guided by varying principles of humanitarianism or employ different interpretations of a small number of acknowledged humanitarian principles. There is evidence that this new humanitarian context is impacting both positively and negatively depending on many factors including: accessibility to local populations; ability to maintain an exclusively humanitarian mandate and not to become embroiled in the conflict; and ability to establish and maintain respect for inherent cultural sensitivities.

In September 2003, challenged by those reflections, the Network on Humanitarian Assistance (NOHA), with the support of the European Union through the European Commission Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO)<sup>1</sup> and Directorate-General for Education and Culture (DEAC) convened its tenth annual intensive programme in Louvain-la-Neuve (Belgium). Researchers, academics, and practitioners joined with 150 postgraduate students embarking on the NOHA postgraduate programme to analyse some of the aforementioned challenges. This ten

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<sup>1</sup> In 2005, the European Commission Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO) became a Directorate-General, that is, the European Commission's Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid (DG ECHO).

day intensive programme provided the forum for presentations, debates, and working groups to explore several spheres of actions in armed conflict.

This book presents a selection of papers from this conference hosted by NOHA. It is presented in three sections. The first explores the meaning of the «humanitarian» concept, the second analyses the evolving mandates of humanitarian actors under a number of broad groupings and finally, the third examines the scope of the humanitarian business and the relationship between humanitarian action and conflict transformation - hence the title of this book «working in conflict/ working on conflict».

### **Meaning: What is humanitarianism?**

Humanitarianism, in its purity, is described as «saving lives, alleviating suffering and maintaining human dignity». Bizimana, Zeebroek and Grünewald *et al.* (Chapters 2, 3 and 4) interrogate the changing understanding of the humanitarian concept. Bizimana (Chapter 2) describes the principles governing the delivery of humanitarian assistance namely: humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. However, since the end of the Cold War these principles have been increasingly challenged. It is debateable whether these challenges are the result of lessons learned/ experiences of high profile conflicts like Somalia, Rwanda, the Balkans, Afghanistan and Iraq, etc.; or the result of manipulation by political, military, and other actors to adopt the humanitarian label for their own ends.

Two recent events are frequently cited as milestones in shaping contemporary humanitarian action. The first of these, the end of the Cold War, brought an abrupt end to the geopolitical dominance of the superpowers. Conflicts in the Cold War period were largely manipulated by the superpowers that invariably sided with one party to the conflict, leaving space for the humanitarian community to access those in need. In the aftermath of the Cold War, the UN and its extended family played a leading role in intervening in conflicts to promote conflict resolution and peace. Zeebroek (Chapter 3) shows how, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the UN plays a central role in the political/ diplomatic, military as well as the humanitarian aspects of the conflict. The enhanced role of the UN, with its uncertain/ unclear relationship with state and NGO partners served to blur the boundaries between relief and development actors, complicated the meaning of humanitarianism and its governing principles, and en-

croached in that space that was heretofore occupied by humanitarians<sup>2</sup>.

The context of conflicts in the 1990s was very different to those of the Cold War period. Grünewald and De Geoffroy (Chapter 4) describe the new complexity that emerged following the proliferation of actors: state, military as well as private. These emergencies were different in that belligerents could no longer source funding from Northern allies and many turned to black market activities such as drugs, people trafficking, money laundering, etc., to fund their cause(s). These activities increasingly raised global security issues for Northern states whose capacity to influence conflict was limited in this post Cold War era. Bizimana (Chapter 2) describes how the manipulation of aid by belligerents set in train the concept of «new humanitarianism». This new humanitarianism requires actors to assess the negative and positive impacts of their actions before intervening. It is rights based i.e. new humanitarianism requires that aid be judged on how it contributes to the promotion/respect for human rights rather than classic humanitarianism which focuses on relieving suffering and meeting basic needs. New humanitarianism requires humanitarian actors to address the root cause of the crises and views classical humanitarianism as naïve, frequently counterproductive and a contributor to protracted crises. Classical humanitarians, on the other hand, challenge new humanitarianism on the basis that it fails to prioritise the needs of victims, encourages the instrumentalisation of aid to meet the political and military needs of donors; it creates barriers between humanitarians and the population they serve; and it places aid workers in a compromise position forcing them to deal with political issues beyond their capacity and authority.

The second milestone that triggered major changes in the humanitarian community was the tragedies of September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001, in New York. It resulted in the acceleration of new humanitarian trends. Grünewald *et al.* (Chapter 4) identifies four «agendas» that emanated from September 11<sup>th</sup>, namely:

- Reinforcing the coherence agenda which advocated closer alliance between political, development, and humanitarian interests;

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<sup>2</sup> Humanitarians here refer to organisations and agencies whose primary goals are in keeping with the aforementioned humanitarian concept in its purest sense i.e. saving lives, alleviating suffering and maintaining human dignity'

- Promoting a collective security agenda that encourages states to take a more proactive approach to preventing, mediating, and even forcefully interfering in conflicts to influence its course;
- Igniting the war on terror that promotes Manichean thinking and encourages taking side between the «good guys» and bad/evil guys», fundamentally breaching the humanitarian principles of independence and impartiality; and
- Strengthening the civil-military agenda that is now employed by the vast majority of the world's armies.

So what is humanitarianism? Humanitarianism will always be concerned with saving lives, alleviating suffering and maintaining human dignity. The question is: should it be described in minimalist terms, as in the case of classical humanitarianism that aims to do no harm while delivering relief or should it adopt the maximalist approach that sees humanitarian action as part of an ambitious strategy to transform conflict? On balance it would appear that both approaches have their strengths and limitations. Political, military, development and humanitarian actors all have roles to play in contemporary complex emergencies. A constant theme across the chapters in this book is the need for improved co-ordination that provides for clear role delineation, professionalism among all actors (knowing one's mandate and living by that mandate), and the need to respect international law as it applies to each specific context. There is general consensus on the need to retain the humanitarian principles. However, humanitarians need greater ingenuity to realise their goal and not to be manipulated by belligerents, political actors, the media, and other parties to modern day conflicts.

## External Actors in Contemporary Crises

Grünewald *et al*, Smets, Schick and Marthoz (Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7) present the role of state, military, NGO networks and the media as they relate to humanitarianism. These chapters examine the roles of their respective actors and forward ways to improve coordination with humanitarian actors.

### *State Humanitarianism*

What is the role of the state in humanitarianism? Grünewald *et al*. (Chapter 4) forward three widely held views on this issue. The first firmly rejects the notion of state humanitarianism on the premise that

states, and their governments, are primarily answerable to their own constituency and they are driven by economic, political, and media objectives, which are at odds with the selflessness, impartiality, and humanity central to humanitarianism. The second view fully subscribes to the concept of state humanitarianism believing that the state has resources in the form of its military and emergency service that should be employed in emergencies. Finally, the third view acknowledges the legal obligations of all states that are signatories to the various laws and conventions and which requires states to respect humanity and support populations in need.

The problems/ fears associated with state humanitarianism, based on the experiences of the post-Cold War era include;

- the tendency for states to look to the military to address issues that are based on human need. This can lead to the use of military methods to meet humanitarian need or what has on occasion been termed «just wars»;
- States can use humanitarianism as an excuse to renege on their political obligations. Many would argue that the cause of conflict is firmly embedded in global inequalities, bad governance and/ or poverty. They concur that a real impact will only be reached when states live up to their international obligations; and
- Finally, there is the fear that state humanitarianism is little more than political -humanitarianism on the basis that states invariably require a return from their investment. This requires them to prioritise those crises with a geo-strategic or economic significance; resulting in what Grünewald *et al.* (Chapter 4) refers to as a two-speed humanitarianism.

To overcome these fears and problems it is suggested that:

- States wishing to develop a humanitarian brief need to live by the humanitarian principles. This requires that states employ the Geneva Conventions, which in its first four articles details the responsibilities of the international community in times of crises. States are also obliged to encourage other state and non state actors to apply the conventions;
- States as donors should adopt a normative approach as opposed to a supply driven approach to meeting humanitarian need. The mandate for intervention and the context provide the basis on which operational complementarities can be established; and

- State humanitarianism should not be undertaken at the exclusion of its diplomatic responsibilities, which often requires a state to participate in prevention, mediation and/ or bring an end to crises.

States can play very important roles in crises through political action, providing protection to victims and even offering economic opportunities etc. While these may be real needs they are not necessarily «humanitarian» and they should not be confused with humanitarian actions; i.e. those that are aimed at saving lives, alleviating suffering and carried out in line with the principles of humanity, impartiality and independence. While Grünewald *et al.* (Chapter 4) concurs with the thesis that actions need to be co-ordinated, he stresses the need for mutuality and respect in this process i.e. «co-ordinated with» and not «co-ordinated by».

### *Military Humanitarianism*

Zeebroek and Smets (Chapters 3 and 5) deal with the role of the military in humanitarianism. Military association with humanitarianism has its origins in the 1990s when NATO sought to address the poor relations between peacekeepers and local populations by «winning their hearts and minds». In security jargon they sought an acceptance strategy rather than the protection or deterrence approach for which they are more commonly associated. This approach, which is also known as Civil Military Co-operation (CIMIC), is defined by Smets (Chapter 5) as the overall means by which the military commander can establish formal relationships with the local authorities, the local population, and international and non-governmental organisations in his/her area of responsibility.

CIMIC can be presented in three stages namely:

- Pre-operational-which consists of introducing troops to the political/institutional, environmental and physical, social and cultural, and economic context of the crises;
- Mid-operations -establishing partnerships and networks with humanitarian actors, local authorities and civil society organisations. Also implementing projects on the ground with local communities; and
- Post-operational - handing over CIMIC governed initiatives to local community.

The role of CIMIC is to enhance the image of the mission and thereby improve the security for the contingent and the local popu-



lation. It prides itself with being transparent and it is not designed to provide information or gather intelligence for military purpose, however it does serve to identify populations most in need.

This increasing proximity/ liaison between military and NGOs, especially expatriate staff, can result in confusion and problems as indicated by Zeebroek (Chapter 3) in the DRC case. The UN's peacekeeping programme in DRC has established a civil division that is developed and active, and holds considerable influence over the relationships between the peacekeeping mission and the humanitarian organisations, be they governmental or private. This division was specifically established to assist the UN humanitarian division, OCHA and NGOs. Its stated mandate includes «to help save lives». The close relationship between the military and NGOs serves to blur the boundaries between military and humanitarianism, and causes confusion for locals and belligerents, and cuts NGOs off from the local population. This can happen in many ways, including:

- the close physical proximity in terms of the «space occupied by military and humanitarians, including their living and working quarters, serves to give the perception of a common «club». Other indication of the militarisation of humanitarianism is the tendency for ex-military personnel to enter the NGO field, rarely does the opposite occur;
- they regularly share information through formal channels. NGOs have restricted access to ongoing security briefings. While these meetings are frequently cited as opportunities to inform NGOs, in reality NGOs are frequently the best source of information given they have access to areas restricted to the military. In addition, their country staff, who invariably live within local communities provide a great source of local information;
- with few exceptions, they regularly share transport and locals and belligerent cannot distinguish between the military and humanitarians;
- the military fund projects that are implemented by high profile western NGOs. These projects are designed to gain the acceptance of the local population and are therefore frequently selected on the basis of maximum visibility; and
- frequently the military provide armed escorts to humanitarians.

Zeebroek (Chapter 3) describes how there were few surprises when rebels destroyed humanitarian infrastructures in the DRC. No one could claim for certain that the attacks targeted humanitarians; such was the blurring of the military - humanitarian boundaries.

Smets (Chapter 5) portrays a different experience in the Balkans where he served with Belgian CIMIC. He views the role of the military-humanitarian co-operation as largely positive citing:

- The military logistical capacity;
- The ability of CIMIC to access populations in need and realise development projects it funds on the ground;
- The support it gives to NGOs;
- Its capacity to liaise and establish networks with other actors;
- Some locals, especially those working with CIMIC, greatly value its presence; and
- The CIMIC concept has served to greatly enhanced how the Belgian military is perceived by the Belgian public and would be Belgian military.

The extent to which these characteristics, roles and/or successes confer humanitarian status on the military is debateable. There is no doubt that the military with its logistics expertise, has a big part to play in natural and technological disasters where issues of impartiality and independence are not an issue. However, many analysts would question who is the main beneficiary in military humanitarian liaisons in contemporary conflicts.

### *NGO Networks and Humanitarianism*

Many of the chapters in this book, as in most documents relating to humanitarian action, group all NGOs together as if to imply that they are broadly similar. In Chapter 6 Schick provides an insight into the origin, make-up, and disparities of members in this broad grouping «humanitarian NGOs».

She defines «NGOs» as independent organisations created voluntarily and not working for profit, however, there the similarity ends. NGOs may work with a small interest group or represent whole continents. They can range from small voluntary grassroots organisations to highly efficient global enterprises with thousands of employees and volunteers. A small proportion of NGOs have objectives associated with international co-operation and a sub-group of these are humanitarian NGOs. Humanitarian NGOs are characterised by their main aim, which invariably is associated with saving lives and alleviating suffering, and the humanitarian principles form part of their mandate and mission. There is a wide range of different NGOs within this group labelled «humanitarian» e.g. human rights, environmental, social, etc.

There has been a steady growth in the number of humanitarian NGOs since the 1990s. This growth is partially explained by increased awareness of global needs, the proximity of recent conflicts and a growing social conscience. Unfortunately many of these new NGOs are entering a very different humanitarian context than their predecessors in the Cold War era. Bizimana (Chapter 2) identifies that good will, mandates and objectives are one thing but successful humanitarian action requires the knowledge and skills to implement these actions. NGOs frequently find themselves being used (instrumentalised) by states, military and belligerents. Examples of this include: the aforementioned coherence agenda, that views [humanitarian] NGOs as having a key role in implementing state plans; the CIMIC programmes in the Balkans and similar programmes in DRC that use NGOs to improve their acceptability locally; and the belligerents in countries like Somalia, Sudan, Afghanistan, etc., that steal and loot from NGOs to fund their respective causes.

In the 1990s several initiatives were introduced to improve the standards in the delivery of humanitarian aid and enhance the level of professionalism in the field. While NGOs are often regarded as the «poor relation» in the emergency stakeholder mix, one method to strengthen the humanitarian voice is through humanitarian networks. Networks may be established along the lines of special interest e.g. human rights or they may be established on a geographical basis i.e., national, regional or international levels. They can provide a range of service to NGOs, including:

- Lobbying and advocacy on the part of its members;
- Enhanced visibility through representation;
- Training, sharing of best practice and awareness raising; and
- Co-ordination of NGOs.

NGO networks can provide the required critical mass to ensure that the voices of NGOs are heard, as highlighted by Schick in Chapter 6. NGOs are frequently introduced to meet needs that are not or cannot be met by the public and/ or the private sector. They fill a very important gap especially in the case of humanitarian action. If they are «sucked in/ enticed/ instrumentalised by other resource rich stakeholders they lose their humanitarian status and breach the very principles espoused in their mandates. NGO networks provide the opportunity for humanitarian NGOs to participate in the politics of emergencies and crises. This affords them the opportunity to engage in constructive dialogue rather than being reduced to pawns or cheap implementers.

### *Media and Humanitarianism*

The media and in particular journalism is the subject of Chapter 7. Marthoz (Chapter 7) identifies journalism as «a decisive actor in the struggle for dignity and solidarity». It has the power to fashion the public's reactions to unrests and thereby shape governments attitudes. However, it is often rightly accused of weakness and digressions. In its purist definition, the role of the media is to report objectively. Marthoz (Chapter 7) claims that in many cases the media has been hi-jacked and now instead of corresponding they are promoting a particular one-sided view, frequently spun by the military.

The main criticisms levelled at contemporary journalism include:

- the lag period in reporting. Journalists appear to be satisfied to deal with old information from second hand sources;
- through allowing themselves to be «embedded» in the military, journalists are little more the pawns for their protectors;
- global issues of genocide or mass killings find it impossible to compete for air time or headline news with national scandals or celebrity issues. Journalists and editors are increasingly driven by profit and little weighting is given to ethical, social or educational issues;
- reduced numbers of journalists at the coalface plays into the hands of *genocidaires* and despotic leaders who invariably fear international attention;
- the media, like there humanitarian counterparts, are exposed to constant security threats; and
- the power of the media to sway public opinion has serious limitations. Partial reporting can seriously skew opinion, however, when dealing with complex political emergencies it is difficult to couch correspondence in its context given the limited resources in terms of space or time.

Marthoz (Chapter 7) calls for new forms of journalism to address contemporary conflicts. Contemporary wars are complex and therefore require a multifaceted journalistic approach. The problem(s), of these conflicts, are not one-dimensional and failure to respect this invariably results in biased reporting. While journalists are never neutral, they need to be objective and independent and while this may not sell newspapers it may save lives over time. The bottom line for journalists is to tell the truth and retain the highest ethical standards - a difficult task when «embedded». The role of journalists is not conflict prevention, however it is to inform the world of issues and stories that are

worth telling and to inform the international community on issues that should be of interested in the name of humanity. To turn ones back on such issues, only to return to cover the anniversary of a genocide has become all too common but not acceptable.

## The Scope of Humanitarianism

Humanitarians are only one grouping/ player in the bigger system that constitutes the external response to humanitarian crises. In Chapter 8, Rumin discusses the roles of states, multilateral organisations, NGOs and individual actors. He describes the dynamics of different types of conflicts and applies systems theory to explain the complexities arising from different factors including: the diversity of actors; their roles; power relations; resources; their varying temporal characteristics; and their diverse goals and value systems. He shows how each of these actors is a system in its own right with varying capacities to adjust to contextual changes.

Rumin (Chapter 8) concludes that external actors must be conscious of the primacy of state in contemporary global society. He also stresses the importance for external actors to realise their limitations and not to become frustrated by the limited impact that their efforts has on the bigger system. Invariably bottlenecks occur, however one may be able to predict this by understanding the aforementioned characteristics of other parties to their system. While this knowledge will not necessarily avoid the bottlenecks, it may avoid wasting time and reduce some of the myths/ idealistic notions of what is possible with improved co-ordination.

Reychler and Lange (Chapters 9 and 10) portray an expanded role for humanitarian action. Both are critical of the minimalist approach adopted by humanitarians to contemporary conflicts on the grounds that they:

- reduce all types of violence to physical violence and fail to recognise or ignore other forms of violence such as psychological, structural, cultural or the violence cause by bad governance;
- overemphasise «doing no harm» instead of «doing good»;
- fail to adequately highlight the plight of millions that suffer from all types of violence in forgotten regions; and
- frequently fail to empathise with the plight of those who find it necessary to resort to violence and/ or consider that they too may feel disenfranchised or victims.

Armed conflict rarely exists in isolation. It is invariably just one element in a complex system with different sectors at different levels.

The maximalist approach is based on the premise that peace could be a reality for all. This, according to Reychler (Chapter 9), must be made explicit - an achievable target. However, it is naïve to think that it is within the scope of humanitarian action. Instead it is part of that aforementioned bigger system working to establish a set of pre-conditions for sustainable peace, namely:

- An effective system of communications, consultation and negotiation;
- Peace enhancing structures and institutions;
- An integrative political-psychological climate;
- A critical mass of peace building leadership; and
- A supportive international environment.

These building blocks are mutually reinforcing and need to grow simultaneously. Humanitarian action is invaluable to this process as it serves to provide aid in an impartial manner to those in need. Humanitarians, or at least those that have retained the respect of the local population and have not been overly damaged by the negative consequences of their economic, political, social or cultural actions, can make a real difference in the peace building process. Nordquist (Chapter 13) describes how humanitarian action should not stop abruptly at the physical/ survival dimension and adds that humanitarian actions must consider the «transferability» of its actions to subsequent phases of the peace process. The trust and confidence established by humanitarians needs to be transferred into appropriate social and legal systems otherwise the vacuum between addressing the immediate physical needs, and the longer-term assistance and peace-building will be filled with street justice rather than court justice.

The challenge remains for Humanitarian organisations to raise their game in taking a proactive approach to ensure that their actions contribute positively to reduce tensions or at least do not worsen the situation. This is now being referred to as «conflict sensitivity» and according to Lange (Chapter 10) it combines needs assessment with analysis of conflict at local, regional and national levels to understand the particular humanitarian needs, the wider context of the situation (including causes and effects) and the links between this situation and your planned intervention (impact assessment). Humanitarian organisations have already begun to acknowledge the need for fundamental shifts in thinking if they are to fully embrace this concept. The changes required include:

- Improvement in information collection, analysis, and shared learning;
- Employing quality personnel with the required experience and skills, with contracts of suitable duration;
- Establishing meaningful and real partnerships with the required mutuality especially regarding local partners; and
- Knowledge and capacity to work effectively with all other stakeholders while implementing ones mandate (and being seen to do so).

Piquard in Chapter 11 stresses a need for in-depth analysis and a deep understanding of the «culture of a conflict» and a knowledge and acceptance of its «heritage» to direct external intervention. She concurs with Reychler's analysis of violence and the tendency for external actors to reduce all types of violence to physical violence. The processes of transforming a culture of war into a culture of peace requires a recognition and acknowledgement that other types of violence are real if they are being felt and experienced by individuals and/ or groups. The values, norms, and perceptions are dynamic and they will evolve. Supporting this evolution towards peaceful ends can be viewed as the «soft side» of the transformation process. Unfortunately, external stakeholders regularly fail to fully understand or appreciate the culture of the conflict or its stakeholders. Piquard demonstrates this by briefly analysing the role of Islamic NGOs in contemporary conflicts and the «demobilization, demilitarisation and resettlement» process; a process common to most conflict agreements. She concludes by asserting that conflict transformation and steps towards sustainable solutions requires a comprehensive knowledge of the concerned actors, their actions, and the contexts in which the crisis is grounded.

Cox (Chapter 12) emphasises the importance of «deconcentrating» operations to the field. He identifies many advantages of deconcentration, namely: direct negotiation in the field improves the process in prioritising needs; the efficiency of reconstruction process (tendering, negotiating contracts, etc.) is greatly enhanced; improved mechanisms to disburse of fund and reduce the bureaucracy to support the reconstruction process efficiently, effectively and in an accountable fashion. Cox (Chapter 12) concludes that the EU experience in Kosovo was infinitely more successful than in Bosnia where the centralised system proved slow, frequently lacked relevance and was over reliant on external consultancies.

Most authors agree that humanitarian action impacts on conflicts. Increasingly there is pressure on humanitarian actors to ensure that

this impact is positive and reduces the exposure of victims to violence and alleviates suffering. Humanitarian organisations possess a key link in the chain that bridges the gap between humanitarian contexts and sustainable peaceful contexts. They are frequently the «trusted» stakeholder and as such will increasingly find themselves challenged to retain this trust while reminding all stakeholders of their political, economic, social and moral obligations.

## Conclusion

The meaning of humanitarianism is being increasingly challenged. There are many sources of this challenge not least the humanitarian community itself many of whom question the motives of actors that position themselves under the humanitarian banner. At the same time there are calls for humanitarians to broaden their scope and recognise that their presence impacts on societies in crises and that these impacts can be both positive and negative. There is even less consensus on the way forward. Most advocate greater co-ordination between external actors, however some emphasise the need to first acknowledge that this co-ordination must recognise national and local institutions where they exist.

In many ways humanitarianism is stronger than ever before, given its newfound popularity with other stakeholders in crises situations. Actors that see themselves as primarily humanitarian will need to be exceedingly knowledgeable and skilled to carryout their mandates in a principled fashion while simultaneously exploiting their position as external stakeholders. Humanitarians will have to raise their game and this will require ingenuity otherwise they will fall prey, not only to manipulation by belligerents, but also to political actors, the media and other parties to modern day conflicts.



I

# **Humanitarianism and Humanitarian Action**



# Contemporary Humanitarian Assistance: Filling the Gaps or Blurring the Lines?<sup>1</sup>

Ladislav Bizimana

In this reflection, I seek to advance the controversial; «bridging the gaps» between the different fields and disciplines related to humanitarian assistance. I make an argument for a «humanitarian space» between restrained «minimalists» and unbounded «maximalists». My point is that there is space for all well intended and capable actors provided that the right actor intervenes in the right place with the right tool(s), rather than everyone doing everything, everywhere and with any tool at hand. I shall stress the role of continuous education, training and research in consolidating professionalism in the field of humanitarian action and in building a knowledge-based society; the ultimate safeguard in times of crisis and conflict. I hope to trigger more critical thinking among all those already involved in humanitarian action or those embarking on the tortuous humanitarian action road, whether out of compelling intellectual curiosity or genuine commitment to mankind's solidarity, or both.

## Beyond the words...

### a) *Humanitarian Assistance (HA): A life-enduring concept?*

The term humanitarian is presently so overused that it has itself become a source of considerable confusion. And this we cannot afford in the present phase of crucial decision-making.

(Angelo Gnaedinger,  
ICRC Director-General, 27 February 2004)

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<sup>1</sup> The views expressed here are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the NOHA Association of which he is the Manager.

This quotation from the Director-General of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the pioneer organisation in the field of humanitarian assistance (HA), amounts to a protestation against the real and potential abuse and manipulation of the term «humanitarian» in reference to various responses to contemporary crises and conflicts. The statement triggers some fundamental questions in need of answers: What is humanitarian assistance/action? Who is a humanitarian? How does one become a humanitarian? What is humanitarian assistance/aid/action for? How does a humanitarian carry out his/her work? As simple as they may appear, these questions are still relevant in spite of having been posed and answered several times. Perhaps existing answers are, at best, not definitive or at worst, not correct. After all, as conveyed by Galtung (1975:15), no exhaustiveness exists in «any social analysis, for it is merely part of the social process itself.» Perhaps existing answers are too difficult to grasp that they need to be decoded and re-coded in a more digestible manner or they may simply need to be echoed for the wider audience to become aware of them and to acknowledge them. Whatever the reasons, the bell is tolling and it is everyone's task to respond.

In 1998, Gnaedinger and a high-ranking fellow of the ICRC took on the issue: «What is «humanitarian action?»» (Girod and Gnaedinger 1998:10) In their analysis of the international response to the humanitarian crisis that erupted in the former Yugoslavia in 1989, the two authors made a case for a clear-cut separation of actors, roles, mandates, and approaches. They warned against the blurring of the lines and manipulation of humanitarian action, which can lead to confusion and make matters worse at the expense of the victims. Their remarks were directed mainly against the military and other actors like UN agencies or governmental agencies who take on humanitarian activities whilst, in ICRC's judgement, their behaviour and/ or roles lack the desired neutrality, impartiality, and independence: «The military, although it can certainly render invaluable humanitarian services —in such fields as civil engineering and logistics— cannot, by definition and by its very nature, transform itself into a humanitarian enterprise» (Ibid).

The ICRC's clarification was timely. During the same year (1998), precisely on 7 April 1998 (thus coinciding with the commemoration of the 4<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Rwandan genocide), a high profile international conference took place in London (UK). It gathered 225 participants from 35 countries to address the theme: «Principled Aid in an Unprincipled World: Relief, War and Humanitarian Principles». In her speech, the then UK Secretary of State for International Development, Clair Short, questioned the traditional scope of humanitarian assistance

and announced the principles of «**new humanitarianism**» —«the rights-based humanitarianism»— that «goes beyond the simple expression of compassion and seeks a more determined effort to tackle the underlying causes of conflict and strife that underlie today's humanitarian crises» (Birch 1998:06). Some participants espoused her arguments while others challenged them. According to the reporter of the conference, «[T]he dangers of allowing a conflict resolution strategy to jeopardise the impartiality of humanitarian assistance was set against the arguments that root causes can be no longer ignored» (id.:03). When writing this paper (2004), positions are as divergent as they were six years ago. However, before going to the heart of the matter i.e. the content, agency, and modus operandi of humanitarian assistance, I find it important to address another terminological (only?) confusion.

While the source of contention appears to be «humanitarian», this term is qualified by the words «assistance» or «action». Should it be: «Assistance» (the term traditionally used until it fell victim to «the blurring of the lines»?); or «Action» (what appears to be more common since the «the blurring of the lines»?); or is the meaning of both terms the same and can we therefore use them interchangeably? In most recent literature, public documents, statements, policy papers, the term «Action» is acquiring more prominence and is literally supplanting its elder sister (or twin?) «Assistance»<sup>2</sup>. In their 14-page reflection (online version) entitled *Politics, military operations and humanitarian action: an uneasy alliance*, Girod and Gnaedinger (1998) use the term «Action» in a way that makes it interchangeable with «Assistance». At the aforementioned conference, jointly organised by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid (DG ECHO) and the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), all speakers used the expressions «Humanitarian Assistance», «Humanitarian Aid», and «Humanitarian Action» interchangeably, with the term «Action» being used most frequently.<sup>3</sup>

The semantic nuance permitted in this context could be a change of the focus from the service/supply (Assistance/Aid) to the process/activity (Action). It is only within this interpretation that the term «Action» does not raise suspicions, and that everyone welcomes its use, be it to the detriment of «Assistance». Unfortunately, as is always the case

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<sup>2</sup> In all the works and documents herein cited, their authors (academic analysts, politicians, humanitarian practitioners, and policy makers) use more the term «Action» —and from time to time «Work» in substitution for «Assistance».

<sup>3</sup> The 2-page and half introduction summary of the conference report uses seven times the term «Action» and only three times the term «Assistance» for example, if my counting is accurate.

with words, there is often more implied than actually said. The nuance difference is important or un-important depending on the user and/or the context. The fact that the use of «Humanitarian Action» has supplanted its twin «Humanitarian Assistance» only since the early 1990s and is indiscriminately used to mean anything related to endeavours taken in response to contemporary crises and conflicts may indeed veil the legitimate wishes of many to see and make it more comprehensive and transformative as deemed necessary to confront these crises and conflicts. As things stand, the concept may still endure more life adversities but its practical interpretation definitely has taken on new dimensions that may be disputed but cannot be ignored. Here, I shall use both expressions interchangeably, sometimes with capital initials for the sole purpose of emphasis. In terms of acronyms, I use HA for «Humanitarian Assistance» and HAC for «Humanitarian Action».

b) *Humanitarian Assistance (HA): Always Victims' Need-driven, Neutral, Impartial, and Independent?*

More than a century since its creation in 1863, the pioneer and founding (non-governmental) organisation of **humanitarian assistance**, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), still defines and defends humanitarian work as solely being the provision of *protection* and *aid* to defenceless, vulnerable, and suffering peoples in situations of armed conflicts and internal strife. Such protection and aid includes any actions, programmes, and activities undertaken with an explicitly declared aim to defend the *dignity* of the victims through the prevention or alleviation of their physical, moral, and spiritual and psychological distress. This is the source of the first cardinal principle —**the principle of humanity**— that guides the work of the ICRC and its affiliated National Red Crosses and Red Crescent Societies, and which the organisation continues to ask other real and would-be actors to espouse and scrupulously respect<sup>4</sup>. The other cardinal principles the ICRC tirelessly champions are the following:

- (i) *Neutrality*: It prohibits taking sides and passing moral judgement onto the parties to the conflict or civil strife. For the ICRC and other like-minded humanitarian actors who take conflict

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<sup>4</sup> The ICRC's invitation to other actors was first articulated in an official document the organisation first published in 1994 under the title: *Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Disaster Relief*.

or civil strife as a fact, neutrality «does not imply aloofness, but compassion for war victims, in the etymological sense of «suffering with», or being by their side.» (Harroff-Tavel 2004:1) It is a tool to keep channels opened for concrete action, a means to an end, not an end in itself (Krähenbühl 2004:4).

- (ii) *Impartiality*: It bans any form of discrimination against those in need of assistance and protection. Humanitarian aid and protection has to benefit all afflicted peoples regardless of their origin, nationality, race, religious, and ideological beliefs, etc.
- (iii) *Independence*: It prohibits any political interference in the work of humanitarian actors. As such and in combination with **neutrality**, it allegedly constitutes a safeguard against political manipulation and abuse of the «humanitarian» brand. It is in virtue of this principle that the ICRC and like-minded humanitarian actors continue to insist on the respect of the identity, mandate and approach of each actor, and «cannot and will not ascribe to policies and approaches «combining political, military, reconstruction and humanitarian tools - advocated by the UN on the one hand and a number of states on the other» (Krähenbühl 2004:4).

Whilst the ICRC and its like-minded fellows admit the possibility and relevance of co-operation and integration between different actors including the military, they find it crucial to maintain the distinction between **humanitarian action**, on the one hand, and **political-military action**, on the other. For an undertaking to qualify as «humanitarian», the intention, the service, and the manner it is offered (the actor's behaviour or the assistance process), and the outcome must unfailingly be humanitarian: i.e. driven by the needs of «victims», neutral, impartial, and independent. The sole weapon prescribed by the ICRC is *persuasion* based on dialogue/ negotiation with all concerned and *confidentiality*, as opposed to public denouncement, condemnation, and coercion. The ICRC rejects these other forms of modus operandi, judging them conducive to humanitarian actors «being rejected» and/or «instrumentalised» to the detriment of the victims (Krähenbühl 2004:2-3). The «end justifies the means» argument is neither tenable nor desirable for true humanitarian work, suggests the ICRC. To support their case for the separation of humanitarian action from any other undertaking, the ICRC and like-minded actors, in particular *Médecins Sans Frontières* (2001, 2002, 2004), refer to the tragic events in occupied Afghanistan and Iraq. There, the warring parties associate humanitarian actors with occupying forces and target them as such, whilst political

and military actors view and integrate humanitarian action into their overall campaign against terrorists, thus transforming humanitarian aid into a «constituent part of a strategy to defeat an opponent or enemy» (Krähenbühl 2004:2-5).

Certainly, the case of Afghanistan and Iraq goes beyond «cynical examples of abuse of aid by belligerents» (Slim 2003:3-4), like those involving criminal generals in former Yugoslavia<sup>5</sup>. Though the targeting of humanitarian workers by parties and the tendency of politicians and military to use humanitarian aid for non-humanitarian ends are not new as such, the systematisation, globalisation, and transformation of this practice into a policy deserve more consideration. It presents us with serious challenges regarding the profile of humanitarian actors and their modus operandi in contemporary crises and conflicts.

c) *All Actors can be Humanitarian but «Some Actors are More Humanitarian than Others»<sup>6</sup>*

If humanitarian aid is to remain in its minimal and classical form, it is evident that the ICRC prescriptions are to be adopted by all real and would-be humanitarian actors. The only task would consist in correctly interpreting, applying, and disseminating the code of conduct engineered by the ICRC in 1994, following the debacle of the humanitarian community in Somalia, its shameful failure in Rwanda and former Yugoslavia. Actors could qualify as «humanitarian» or «not humanitarian» according to clearly established selection and evaluation criteria. In fact, these criteria already exist. The ICRC attaches special importance to some of them, namely (i) the existence of victims» needs, non-discrimination, (ii) the non-use of humanitarian aid to promote one's religious beliefs and political opinions, and (iii) the prohibition to serve as instruments of a government's foreign policy (Harrol-Tavel 2003:2). The Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR), of which the ICRC is key member, could do the job of guardian.<sup>7</sup> The ICRC does ac-

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<sup>5</sup> Slim reports a scene in a film (*Cry from the Grave* of Leslie Woodhead on the massacres of Srebrenica) where General Mladic is distributing aid to starved Bosnian Muslims with the intention to separate the men from the women and children in order to slaughter the men.

<sup>6</sup> The saying is calqued on the conclusion of Orwell (1945)'s classic novel, *Animal Farm*, perhaps the most successful classic satire of the fallacious pretensions of most totalitarian government systems.

<sup>7</sup> The SCHR is a coalition of nine of the largest international humanitarian organisations, set up in 1991 under UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/46/182 (adopted on 19 December 1991) on the coordination of humanitarian emergency relief. The member



tually denounce some actors, and warns against lumping «together a host of organisations that consider themselves humanitarian but in fact have very different identities, mandates and principles of action. Some are tied to political movements while others, like the ICRC, are independent.» (Harrol-Tavel 2003:2) Some of those organisations with political leanings «oppose their governments while others are instruments thereof» (ibid.).

But if humanitarian assistance is to include directly addressing the issues of good governance and social justice in places struck by abject poverty and misery due to endemic crises and conflicts, themselves rooted in institutionalised bad governance and world inequalities, then we are left with two options: (i) leave the classical humanitarians alone and find a different «brand» name for the new assistance, as suggested by the ICRC; or (ii) extend the old name to the new package, as suggested by the maximalists, to use Weiss (1999) terminology. In either case, what Slim (2003:2) suspects as possible **humanitarian fundamentalism** by which only some «self-righteous» humanitarian actors «can imagine one divinely sanctioned way of being humanitarian» is inappropriate and harmful. As Slim rightly underlines, this would be against the universal humanitarian ethic and duty championed by the same humanitarians. Slim directs his criticism against the disqualification of some actors on the sole ground of their being military or politicians instead of telling and helping them to «be as humanitarian as possible», as is the case in the US and the UK (Slim 2003:6). This is nothing new and may rightly object the ICRC, since it is enshrined in the four Geneva Conventions and their two Additional Protocols to which 185 States are parties and constantly called upon to respect and make respect. What is definitely new and may really anger the classical humanitarian is Slim's suggested reversal of the roles: «turn to [the military] and ask them what to do, how to cope and how to survive as humanitarians when one's country is at war»; or «better still, hand over our organisations to them» (Slim 2003:7-8). His view is that civilians «must be protected in the way the war is fought and the way its consequences of destitution, hunger, disease and impoverishment are addressed» (Slim 2003:6-7). Without going that far in the art of provocation, Weiss (1999), from whom the terminology of «classicists», «minimalists», «maximalists», «solidarists», and «political humanitar-

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groups of the Steering Committee are: Oxfam, Care, Save the Children, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC), World Council of Churches, Caritas, Lutheran World Federation and Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF).

ians» is borrowed, has also argued that the separation between the political-military and humanitarian is no longer needed, and that efforts should focus on the management of their de facto intersection in a way that best ensures «more humanized politics and more effective humanitarian action.»<sup>8</sup>

My own view is that the humanitarian profession, whether exercised in the classical manner or whether done using the maximalist approach, is a worthy yet daunting and risky business. Sticking scrupulously to the ICRC principles to the extent of silencing oneself against one's will and sometimes in face of atrocities is definitely a difficult choice to make and fulfil. It amounts to depriving oneself and one's peers of the freedom of expression, be it for good reasons like keeping the communication channels open, being accepted and having access to the victims. For some, it may be too huge a sacrifice to concede and justify. On the other hand, embarking on coercive humanitarian action entails putting one's life, the life of the intended victims, and that of other actors at risk albeit for good reasons such as the protection and rescue of the greatest number of victims. In either case, there has been and will always be actors who will be considered more humanitarian than others. Not all heroes' acts are equally heroic.

The problem of security of humanitarian actors today and heretofore, I would concur with the ICRC, is, among other things, a matter of perception. It depends on whether others (in particular those with the will and the power to obstruct humanitarian work and put lives of workers and victims at risk) perceive you as unquestionably humanitarian or not; or whether they associate or dissociate you from their enemies. The recurrent theme of the global «war on terror» being «either with us or against us», perceived neutrality and independence are lingering for external humanitarians as well, since as Slim (2003) points out, it is now their own soldiers who are at war in faraway troubled places. Does this mean that we should abandon the ICRC principles altogether? I do not think so. Rather, we should engage in constant and constructive dialogue with all concerned and restrain from publicly passing moral judgement on other actors, as this also may endanger our humanitarian work and make us fall into the trap of categoris-

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<sup>8</sup> *Classicists*: «believe that humanitarian action can and should be completely insulated from politics». They include the ICRC; *Minimalists*: «'aim to do no harm' in delivering relief»; *Maximalists*: «have more ambitious agenda of employing humanitarian action as part of comprehensive strategy to transform conflict»; *Solidarists*: «choose sides and abandon neutrality and impartiality as well as reject consent as a prerequisite for intervention». They include Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF).

ing humanitarians into «bad guys» and «good guys». There are cases in which implementation of these principles may yield more positive results than aggressive humanitarian work like protected safe areas or corridors. In other situations like that of genocide and ethnic cleansing little can be achieved with these principles alone. This is where complementarity between those who are «more humanitarian» and those who are «less or not humanitarian» is indispensable. As Griffin (2000) has elegantly put it, perhaps with some exaggeration, there may be places where even angels fear to tread.

d) *The New Context: New Problems, New Solutions?*

Though the cardinal principles of the ICRC have for some time been questioned and challenged from different academic disciplines and fields of expertise, the debate acquired a special impetus with the end of the Cold War and the ensuing eruption of protracted and multi-faceted crises and conflicts worldwide. Some challenge the claimed apolitical nature of HA as «conceptually and practically ambivalent» (Forsythe, as quoted in Ramsbotham and Woodhouse 1996:17), politically naïve and paradoxical, morally reprehensible and often counterproductive. In his article with an all-telling title «Principles under fire:...», the ICRC's Deputy Director for International Law and Cooperation within the Movement, Harroff-Tavel (2003), offers a series of arguments and counter-arguments on the controversy on this question. Like his colleague Gnaedinger (2004), he contends that a return to the basic principles is the sole reliable weapon against present humanitarian security challenges. Whatever argument weighs more, the reality is that mixed results of international responses to the humanitarian crises of the early 1990s onward prompted sustained attempts to re-conceptualise HA in a more broad and comprehensive framework, directly linking it up to conflict resolution, peacebuilding, and humanitarian intervention all of which may be anything else but political<sup>9</sup>. This conceptual shift, towards the maximalist view, responds to the very nature of the present context in which humanitarian actors are invited to operate.

Contemporary crises and conflicts are considered to be protracted and complex in that their causes —deep and immediate— vary as

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<sup>9</sup> Interesting discussions on the intersection between humanitarian assistance and other efforts aimed at preventing, managing and transforming crises and conflicts are available for example in: Brahimi 2000, Carl 2000, International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty 2001, Mial 1999, Okumu 2003, Ramsbotham and Woodhouse 1996, Schloms 2003, United Nations 1991, and Weiss 1999.

much as their manifestations, involving various actors with changing interests and implementation strategies. In some Conflict Resolution literature, these conflicts have been coined «international social conflicts» (ISCs) (Ramsbotham and Woodhouse 1996:87-105; Hansen et al., 2000:10-11). ISCs differ from Cold War conflicts in that: (i) they occur outside the superpower ideological rivalries by proxies, (ii) they emerge in reaction to the failure of inept, corrupt or collapsed state systems to provide citizens with some of the basics taken for granted in the developed world, (iii) they translate, in most instances, the determination of the victims to stand up and fight for their rights along group identity lines across conventional social classes and state borders, (iv) they are fought by identity groups, organised bands and militia acting on their own or in connivance with one or more internal or external supporters. As such, international social conflicts are at the same time local, national, regional, and international. ISCs become easily drawn-out and exacerbated and their causes «are likely to remain complex and multi-faceted, and the specific locations in which they may break out in future are difficult to predict» (Ramsbotham and Woodhouse 1996:104). In their worst form, ISCs are fought by unscrupulous and unaccountable militias, criminals, arms smugglers, mafias, mercenaries, state-sponsored and armed civilians who terrorise, extort, kill innocent civilians and force large number of others into internal displacement or exile (Cater 2002). This strategy of terror has now taken on a global dimension and extended to the real and would be humanitarian actors. Effective handling of these situations is possible only through a range of solutions —short and long-term ones— that pay due attention to their multiple and inter-related immediate and root causes. Both old and new solutions are worth trying.

## **Tentative ways out**

### *a) Principled, Coherent, and Consistent Humanitarian Action Policies*

A policy is, according to Durkheim, «a constructed set of actions designed to make shared visions into common strategy: a common strategy that takes them to concrete and, tangible and historic accomplishments.» (Durkheim, as quoted in Gonzalez 2003:100). In other words, a policy is both a theoretical and practical articulation of stances, conditions, strategies, and actions to be adopted and undertaken to achieve well-defined specific objectives in a given domain. Undoubtedly, the establishment of clear, consistent, and coherent policies

in line with one's doctrinal and moral stance is tremendously important in the field of humanitarian action where the life of millions of innocent peoples may be at stake. More often than not, relief aid has come in to remedy, if possible at all, damages caused by aid providers' policies in other domains like development and trade cooperation, military and security assistance, and global environment.

Policies in these other areas are most inspired by realpolitik game rules by which the rich continue to become much richer and the poor much poorer due to uneven distribution of resources and unfair competition rules. In such conditions, relief aid is, though well founded, insufficient at best, and an opium, at worst. It can give false expectations, make political decision makers feel comfortable and not concerned, and distract attention from the real causes of endemic misery and suffering of a substantial part of the world population<sup>10</sup>.

The old ideological bipolar order has been replaced by an equally harming bipolarisation along the divide of «rich» and «poor», the «good guys» and the «bad guys». This means entitlement for all good things in the case of the former and destitution and punishment for the latter. The «good guys» and «bad guys» divide is even more dangerous: we may rank good for ourselves (out of the usual self-complacency and vanity of mankind) but not that good in the eyes of others who too may therefore seek to destitute and punish us. This is perhaps the message to get through to the military and politicians and all those who are selective and partial in their humanitarian endeavours because of political, economic, and strategic self-interests.

#### b) *Multilateral Involvement and Shared Responsibilities*

The more a humanitarian action policy reflects the concerns and views of all the peoples involved, in particular other intervening partners and intended beneficiaries, the more chances there are for the policy to yield positive results. *Co-ordination* and *responsibility-sharing* among and between all actors involved at all levels are essential for the development and implementation of efficient policies in a field as complex and challenging as the field of humanitarian action. This may sound an already heard melody and therefore another banal joke that can be repeated only by clowns, to use Slim's (2003) excellent analogy.

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<sup>10</sup> According to 2004 estimates of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), in 2003, there were 200 million of peoples affected by natural disasters and 45 millions afflicted by complex emergencies, all of whom in need of life-saving help.

In fact, as early as 1991, the UN General Assembly passed a resolution (A/RES/46/182) calling «for the strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance»; and the aforementioned Steering Committee of Humanitarian Response was set up under this resolution. But it is not that straight forward: everybody commends co-ordination but no one accepts to be co-ordinated. In an official statement issued on 31 March 2004, the ICRC reiterated its readiness to be part of «dialogue, consultation and coordination with others» but not part of «coordination and integration by others» (Krähenbühl 2004:5). On the face of it, the nuance is semantically self-evident and the stance is both legitimate and justified. Many if not all other humanitarian actors are much likely to have the same position and they are entitled to do so.

Yet down on the line, we are likely to end with a scenario whereby everybody is a co-ordinator and integrator but no one is co-ordinated or integrated. Indeed, the ICRC's statement ends: «We are determined to maintain our principled operational approach in place, believing that it remains effective and necessary.» This takes us back to the controversy opposing *classicists*, *minimalists*, *solidarists* and *maximalists* (Weiss 1999). My view on this is that extreme protectionism and insulation are always dangerous whether they come from the angels or the devils. There may be cases where humanitarian action in its classical shape can better serve the cause of the victims, therefore requiring those working from, say, maximalist approaches to lay down their vanity and pride and bow to the know-how of the classicist. The other way around is also possible, and always someone will have to take the lead and show the way, provided his/her leadership —not dictatorship— is credited by the suitability of his/her modus operandi and know-how in the eyes of the real and would-be partners or co-ordination fellows. A case-by-case basis is more appropriate, and duty-sharing based on proven commitment and expertise is the best way to avoid the clash of philosophies, principles, and approaches, on the one hand, and co-operation and instrumentalisation by self-interested parties, on the other.

### c) *Quality and Timely Information*

Information is crucial in any human undertaking, much more so in the field of humanitarian action. For actors to determine the genuine needs of the intended beneficiaries of their endeavours and to set up the corresponding means to meet them, it is important that they have: the right information on the life of the target beneficiaries; a knowledge of the political, economic and cultural setting they have to operate in; an understanding of the geopolitical environment; the explicit

and non-declared intentions of other actors; the degree of commitment and co-operation; a range of means available to them, awareness of the real and potential risks involved and a realistic range of options to face them up. This implies establishing effective mechanisms of gathering, analysing, sharing, and disseminating information.

#### d) *Contingency Planning*

The field of humanitarian action is unfortunately full of uncertainties and unpleasant surprises. The possibilities for things to take a dangerous, indeed fatal turn, are always real and high; and humanitarian actors ought to be in a position to overcome un-expected challenges. In Rwanda, the 1994 bloodshed and the ensuing refugee crisis in the entire region of the African Great Lakes unreasonably caught many humanitarians by surprise. Some opted to simply pull out as a consequence of their un-preparedness; others chose to stay and do their best, much more out of their humanitarian ethics and not because of any beforehand fall back option plan that would have allowed them to face up the challenges adequately. The disarray was total, the distress unbearable, and effectiveness and efficiency desirable (Whitman and Pocock 1996, Adelman and Suhrke 1996; Borton, Brusset and Hallam 1996). Even the aforementioned security challenges and the problems of co-optation and instrumentalisation partly stem from the lack of alternative plans to deal with different situations that emerge in the course of action. Humanitarian actors need to think ahead of events instead of being driven by the events.

#### e) *Quality Assessments and Effective Follow Up*

Linked to contingency planning are continuous quality assessments of the situation on the ground. As already mentioned, most contemporary humanitarian crises and conflicts display complex and rapidly changing patterns. They involve many parties, states and non-states alike, internal and external, with different and often opposed interests and implementation strategies. Consequently, it is important that humanitarian actors carry out periodical reviews and evaluations of the situation and their responses with a view to meeting up emerging challenges and to improving their *know-how*. This is nothing new, one may say, and most of agencies and NGOs, organisations indeed carry out evaluations on their programmes and projects, be they of humanitarian relief or development assistance. In fact, copies of such reports continue to pile up in many offices and many rightly wonder whether it

is still worth carrying out evaluation in the absence of positive change on the ground. It would be a bit too hasty and pessimistic to play down the importance of periodical evaluations, not least for the production and reproduction of knowledge and its dissemination purposes.

What is still missing in many of these evaluations are independent views of third parties and, more importantly, of the aid beneficiaries. Humanitarians need to avoid self-gratifying and self-exonerating evaluation approaches and outputs. They must find ways of getting their aid recipients tell them the whole truth about their own views on the assistance they receive. This is crucial in situations where the aid stems from those with a share of responsibility for the victims' endemic tragedy. Periodical, independent, and objective evaluations could hopefully help address the issue of accountability, legitimacy, and mutual trust in a more useful manner. Cheated-on or disempowered beneficiaries need to know that appropriate measures both preventive and curative - have been envisaged to eradicate incompetence, misbehaviour, mismanagement, and fraud.

#### f) *Continuous Professionalism and Professionalisation*

Good will and solidarity commitment alone are not enough for successful humanitarian action. Knowledge and skills are equally if not more important since the way we understand crises and conflicts shapes our response to them. Much of our effectiveness and efficiency depends on the quality of information and knowledge about the multiple realities of these crises and conflicts, and the skills needed to handle them at our disposal. Humanitarian actors are required to acquire, through quality training, education, and research, a sophisticated understanding of the conditions leading to complex emergencies in certain places. Effective humanitarianism demands a range of policies, programmes, and actions covering specific law, educational reform, and public awareness campaigns on the challenges and opportunities presented by ethnic, religious, gender, sexual differences for the building of peaceful multi-cultural, knowledge-based communities. Hence, humanitarians need to acquire specific competencies enabling them (i) to adopt the right mental attitude; (ii) to collect timely and quality information and make good use of it; (iii) to take the right decision in each situation; and (iv) to design the most appropriate actions, strategies, and programme of activities in specific situations.

Openness to and critical appreciation of other cultural settings are as crucial for a humanitarian to identify values, customs, and beliefs that may feed violence and poverty, as are sound intellectual knowl-



edge and management abilities. In other words, the need for **professionalism** and **professionalisation** is self-evident in the field of HA. By *Professionalism* it is implied that clear rules of the games should be jointly established, respected, and followed. By *Professionalisation*, it is meant that those called upon to establish the rules and make them work need proper education and training to enable them to do what *needs* to be done, and not just what can be done in specific circumstances.

As Carl (2000) reminds us in her critique of some humanitarian NGOs, when the only tool in our toolkit is a hammer, all problems start to look like a nail. Obviously, no tool shortage is as fatal as that of appropriate knowledge and skills. Efforts to define the professional profile, including the ethical dimension, of a humanitarian and the corresponding learning methodology, as well as related efforts to refine, integrate, share, and spread quality knowledge and information need to be continued and increased not least for committed humanitarian actors to be better equipped to deprive politicians of the still fashionable excuse of «we did not know». Only with appropriate knowledge and skills will committed humanitarians be able to convince politicians that there are no more Luttwak's (1999) other peoples' tragedies; and that everyone should be concerned either out of Kantian solidarity or out of pure self-interests, or both, for the price for indifference to and complicity in other peoples' suffering may be the very turmoil and lawlessness nearing one's home in the contemporary world (Hoffman 1995:36, Natsios 1997).

## Conclusion

One of the most enduring and saddening phenomena of the post-Cold War era has been the proliferation of what initially were coined interchangeably **humanitarian emergencies**, **humanitarian disasters**, **complex emergencies**, and **humanitarian crises**<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> A crisis or a conflict is considered an *emergency* due to the urgency of the needs of the afflicted persons. It is considered *complex* because of its interwoven facets (economic hardship, social dislocation and disintegration, political repression, ethnic/religious tensions, acute/abject poverty, lawlessness and disorder, corruption and/or collapse of central authority, war or civil strife, displacement of large number of persons, gross human rights violations). It is branded *humanitarian* due to the fact that the direness of the situation is such that it directly appeals to one of the most shared mankind's instinct of compassion and help.

Any response to these phenomena was labelled **Humanitarian Assistance**. Throughout the 90s, mixed results of the adventures in Somalia, former Yugoslavia, Cambodia, Rwanda, and the whole African Great Lakes region triggered in-depth multi-disciplinary reflections on the nature of these phenomena and the treatment they ought to be given. Central to these valuable efforts is the acknowledgement of the need for: (i) continuous refining of doctrines, knowledge, and information; (ii) complementarity of disciplines, policies, programmes, and actions; (iii) consultation and collaboration between the different actors involved, including the mass media; (iv) direct involvement of target beneficiaries; and (v) continuous assessment for timely learning from practice and to build on this learning. While Humanitarian Assistance will, and should, keep its essential principle of not meddling in hard politics, it can no longer be efficiently carried out without due consideration of the political, economic, security implications of its delivery or denial. There is a need for constructive *multilateralism*, to use the code term, based on the following: (i) clear delineation of one's role and that of others; (ii) critical understanding and judgement of others motives, their expertise, and modus operandi; (iii) full awareness and acknowledgement of one's weaknesses and those of others; (iv) frank dialogue with other interveners; and (v) one's readiness to give and receive help from those working from different perspectives and with different means. This does not necessarily entail abandoning or endangering one's principles and modus operandi. It simply means being clever, i.e. knowing the missing ingredient in one's toolkit and where and how to source it with limited damage to oneself and others. After all, life and work in isolation is no more possible (has it in fact ever been possible?) in an interconnected world like the one in which we live today. Reflections need to be continued to find the ways Humanitarian Assistance can best serve the purpose of **crisis/conflict prevention, conflict management, and peacebuilding**.

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# The Democratic Republic of Congo: Security Obsession and Military-Humanitarian Confusion<sup>1</sup>

Xavier Zeebroek

In the last fifteen years, the functioning of the humanitarian community has moved not only towards more professionalism but also more complexity. In parallel, peacekeeping missions have also accumulated remarkable experience, though sometimes at resounding costs, which has pushed them towards more sophisticated interventions. This is why no one today can ignore the other, if not just for the reason that their interests, or indeed their principles, lend themselves to the opposite. This article will strive to demonstrate that in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), humanitarians and the military do not only satisfy themselves with meeting each other as if constrained or forced by circumstances. Far from the clichés after Kosovo, they visit each other, sometimes assiduously, they often respect each other and sometimes they even appreciate each other.

## 1. Three Pillars

In the DRC, we can distinguish three major pillars directly implicated in the management and resolution of the crisis: a political and diplomatic pillar; a military pillar; and a humanitarian pillar. Each pillar maintains relations, at varying degrees and depth, with the two others. Some of these relations are structural and subordinate (formal), such as the pre-eminence of civil and political control over peacekeeping troops. Others

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<sup>1</sup> This text is a shortened and adapted version of the article *«Je t'aide, moi non plus»*, published in the GRIP book *«Les humanitaires en guerre, sécurité des travailleurs humanitaires en mission en RDC et au Burundi»*, Ed. GRIP, Bruxelles, September 2004. This book is the result of a project financed by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid (DG ECHO).

are circumstantial (informal) and not imposed such as the information exchange and the coordination of action between humanitarians and the military as well as within the humanitarian community itself.

The number of humanitarian actors is important because we can count no less than 16 UN agencies and 67 international NGOs in the DRC<sup>2</sup>. The 10 most important NGOs each employ several dozen expatriates and a couple of hundred local aid workers in the country. The numbers of aid workers are therefore well into the thousands. The international community, be it at a political and military level or at the donor level, is equally as involved.

It is only the UN that can be found within each pillar. Politically, it carries a very high responsibility and the Special Representative to the Secretary-General is both the interlocutor of the government and the rebels but is also the highest authority of the whole United Nations system on the ground. In the DRC, the Special Representative is also the head of the peacekeeping mission and therefore the first two pillars are balanced in this position.

Finally, the humanitarian pillar of the UN brings together competent humanitarian agencies of which the principal ones include, UNHCR, WFP and UNICEF. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) ensures the circulation and exchange of information within the United Nations system and also between various external actors such as NGOs and the ICRC. A Humanitarian Coordinator, who is generally the oldest and most experienced head of the country's agencies, heads this humanitarian pillar, where the UN is concerned. In the DRC, this is the head of the UNDP.

## 2. An Original Structure

The UN Observation Mission in Congo (MONUC) is a peacekeeping operation whose structure is rather original in comparison with past operations. Alongside the military division, which is by far the largest<sup>3</sup> there is a civil division<sup>4</sup> that is the contact point with the external world.

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<sup>2</sup> Figures at the end of 2003. For a complete list, see the OCHA data base for the DRC.

<sup>3</sup> On the 15th June 2004, it was made up of 10 000 soldiers and 754 military observers. Source: <http://www.monuc.org/ContribMililit.aspx?lang=en>, Site accessed 17th June 2004.

<sup>4</sup> On the 30th March 2004, it was made up of 659 expats, 254 UN volunteers and 910 Congolese. Source: <http://www.monuc.org/Facts.aspx>, Site accessed 17th June 2004.



Here we find several highly placed officials who are responsible for political issues, humanitarian issues, child protection, human rights issues, as well as for the Office for Gender Affairs<sup>5</sup>. This team comprises a Regional Security Officer<sup>6</sup> (non-military), who is in charge of the security conditions of the civil MONUC staff who works in close collaboration with the military division. All, whether civil or military, work under the civil MONUC administrator, who represents Mr. William Swing, supreme chief of the UN Mission. Each of the six geographic MONUC sectors is structured in this same decentralised way. Wherever the MONUC has an important stationing, a daily briefing brings the highest placed officials of both the civil and military divisions together to meet with the force commander and the civil administrator. All security incidents as well as specific actions are discussed here.

The existence of a civil division that is relatively developed and active has a considerable influence on the relationships between the peacekeeping mission and the humanitarian organisations, be they governmental or private. Indeed, apart from the political advisor, all MONUC civil officials work in areas more or less linked to humanitarian work. This is particularly the case of the Humanitarian Affairs section which is responsible for putting the part of the mandate which specifies «to facilitate humanitarian action» into practice, which means providing direct assistance, particularly with regards to logistics, to the UN agencies, to OCHA and to NGOs. This specific objective has been translated in the field into a much more ambitious credo: «the objective of the section is, within the context of its mandate, to help save lives».

As a consequence, they interact at several levels with their counterparts in other organisations, whilst simultaneously (though many try to belie this) pursuing specific objectives for the MONUC, which do not necessarily correspond to those of the humanitarians.

### 3. The Environment and Security Practices

Before discussing the collaboration between the military and humanitarians, one must recognise that (by their own initiative), humanitarian organisations live in an extremely protected environment and work within the realm of strict and omnipresent security guidelines.

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<sup>5</sup> Created in March 2002 following Resolution 1325 of the UN Security Council, which asks to integrate a gender perspective into peacekeeping operations.

<sup>6</sup> Not be confused with the FSO of the UNSECOORD.

In the DRC, all the bigger NGOs and the UN agencies comply with similar security rules:

- Expatriates» residences as well as their offices are generally protected by a security perimeter which consists of a wall or a metal gate;
- These buildings are under surveillance day and night;
- Many of these buildings have an underground safe house;
- Any travel, even if only for a short distance, must always take place in a vehicle marked with the sign/logo of the organisation. Unless specific authorization has been requested, no person other than staff can be allowed in the vehicle;
- When reaching a certain level of seniority within the organisation, each staff member automatically is provided with a radio handset. These members of staff must communicate every single journey they make, even if it is a private journey;
- Several security perimeters are established in the town and surrounding areas. A curfew is often in place;
- One of the very first things that a head of mission discussed with a new member of staff is the security regulations related to their work;
- Like the UN, some organisations such as Save the Children or the ICRC establish different stages of alert, in function of the level of danger of the situation; and
- A satellite phone and fax are situated in the main buildings so as to still be able to communicate in case of any disruption to the normal telephone lines.

UN agencies roughly apply these same rules but in general delegate the responsibility of field security to a Field Safety Advisor (FSA) who makes sure that norms are respected, who provides the necessary authorisations and who trains new recruits. This is particularly the case for UNHCR and UNICEF. The Field Security Officer (FSO) of the UNSECOORD<sup>7</sup> tries to coordinate the different practices relating to evacuation plans and to relationships with peacekeeping forces, particularly in relation to alert phases. One must note that, since 2003, no UN staff can work in the field without having successfully passed a security exam set by the UNSECOORD.

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<sup>7</sup> For more information on UNSECOORD, see «security briefings for humanitarian».

In many aspects, many regulations are directly inspired by the military way of life. This is why, before they even possibly collaborate, the military and humanitarians lead a more similar life in the field than they would have previously imagined.

#### 4. Institutional «Waterproofness and Permeability»

The fact that expatriate staff live and work in a relatively clustered manner has a series of indirect consequences for them. It is a major handicap to being in contact with the local population, especially in the bigger cities. In the first instance, this may appear paradoxical because the proximity with war victims is very real, regular and detailed. But the population in need is not necessarily representative of the population as a whole.

Even though local personnel, who are most often in the majority, have to submit to the same kind of rules (at least within the boundaries of their work), they remain well integrated within their families, their neighbourhood and religious community. This gives them a big importance within humanitarian organisations because of their language abilities and knowledge of local customs especially. They also become a major source of information allowing expatriates to better contextualise their actions, which is an indispensable element for the long-term security of the mission.

Local NGOs, however, generally experience these security measures in a much harsher way, as their access to foreign humanitarian organisations in their own country is very difficult. Whilst civil society representatives often admire the competence and rigour of humanitarians, the precautions that the latter wrap themselves up with represent an extra obstacle to the recognition, collaboration and access to international funding.

Finally, at the expatriate personnel level, one can note an unexpected permeability between the military-political pillar and the humanitarian pillar. Indeed, it is more and more the case that retired military personnel find themselves in highly-responsible jobs within the United Nations or international NGOs. Their profile is actively sought for positions such as Field Security Officers (FSO), for UNSECOORD, or for demining teams for Handicap International. It is true that most of their work does require a specifically military experience. However, this is not the case for two heads of mission working for the NGO Action Agro Allemande (AAA) and the Jesuit Relief Services (JRS). Air pilots also sometimes have military pasts, for example at Pilots without Borders or Doctors without Borders (MSF).

But most frequent staff movements from one organisation to another occurs within NGOs, OCHA and the civil branch of the MONUC. It is quite usual to meet managers of the latter two institutions who started their careers as field managers in a NGO. Movement of professionals in the opposite direction is very rare. These individuals have sometimes had to work in institutions with contradictory practices and objectives. However, the expertise gaps, as indicated by this high-level personnel flux, demonstrates a requirement to know, respect and appreciate each other, which facilitates a basis for institutional collaboration, even when this may be against the natural order of things.

## 5. Gradual and Variable Collaboration

In the DRC as well as in Burundi, the interactions between humanitarians and the military are regular but of a varying intensity depending on the representatives and the activities. This gradation can cover the following areas:

### *Information exchange*

Two types of coordination take place at a weekly interval in the DRC and in Burundi. These are the general meeting for humanitarian coordination, and different security briefings.

#### MEETING FOR HUMANITARIAN COORDINATION

In each town of big or medium importance, the meeting brings together all members of the humanitarian community (UN agencies, ICRC, international and local NGOs), who are invited by OCHA, who coordinates the debates. Each can voluntarily discuss their recent experiences and possible problems. Useful information, e.g. reports on the region, updates on refugee movements or the latest needs assessment of a population in danger, is presented to all.

### *Briefings on the peacekeeping missions*

In the DRC, the most delicate subjects at play are discussed at the daily peacekeeping briefing when the civil administrator, the sector commander, the most highly ranked officers, the liaison officers and military observers are present. The civil branch of the MONUC is also represented by its section representatives. The Field Security Officer of

the UNSECOORD is also often present at these meetings which is recognized as one of his/her most important sources of information. No humanitarian organisation is invited but this is understandable, as all realise that certain sensitive pieces of information cannot leave the tight circle of the United Nations mission. Therefore, any information exchange on security will take place in an ad hoc fashion.

#### SECURITY BRIEFINGS FOR HUMANITARIANS

In each town where the UN is present, there is a weekly security briefing exclusively for humanitarian organisations. Security incidents and any rebel movements or criminal activities are reported. Predictable movements by the UN forces and the national army are also discussed in this forum.

Security briefings only gather together international NGOs and most often are led by a Field Security Officer (FSO), who is locally responsible for: the United Nations Security Coordinator Office<sup>8</sup> (UNSECOORD), a branch of the UN that is not very well known. The FSO is usually an old policeman, gendarme or soldier who is recruited as a civilian to permanently monitor the security of a zone where humanitarian work is being carried out. Under the supervision of a highly placed United Nations senior manager, s/he has a position of considerable importance since s/he determines the alert levels in each activity zone, gives his/her authorisation for any transfer of personnel and humanitarian convoy, trains UN agents in security issues and establishes evacuation plans. Of course, his/her authority officially only reaches UN personnel but the rest of the humanitarian community is generally very aware of his/her judgments, even if at the end of the day each organisation takes decisions in its own best interest. In the DRC, when the situation is deemed quite worrying, a (military) MONUC liaison officer may also be present at the weekly briefing or can even hold a more authoritative role, as experienced in Bunia after the UN Mission in the Congo was reinforced.

However, the NGOs are the organisations which are most active in the field and which also frequently provide first-hand (and sometimes exclusive) information. Indeed, one must never forget that certain big NGOs employ several hundreds of local contractors who are located throughout the rural areas. They therefore represent an invaluable source of information in far-reaching zones where UN agencies and

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<sup>8</sup> This is a branch of the UN Secretariat, directly linked to the Secretary-General to whom reports are sent.

peacekeeping soldiers do not go. This paradoxical situation has led to several field managers stating that they know more about the local political-military context than those whose job it is to find this information out. Field managers worry that they will be used as intelligence sources to peacekeeping forces, with the danger of creating a very negative mix of views in the eyes of the population.

On the other hand, in a zone where there is strong insecurity and where peacekeeping forces are very active, the situation can be reversed. This was the case in Bunia during the Artemis Operation, as well as after this when the strongly reinforced MONUC had as its objective to disarm the militias. At this point, a MONUC liaison officer was present at each security briefing; the officer then became a major source of information for humanitarians who wanted to risk leaving the city. During these troubled times, the military was so important for the security of humanitarian space that the former seemed to impose itself as an indispensable information partner for humanitarians.

#### SECURITY MANAGEMENT TEAM

Finally, within the United Nations system, there is a security coordination body called the «Security Management Team» that regroups the FSO and his/her Area Security Coordinator and also convenes meetings of the Field Security Advisers (FSA) of each United Nations agency and the Regional Security Officer (RSO) of the MONUC. Given their natural tendency to collaborate with the peacekeeping forces, it is not rare to see that meetings discuss the issue of armed escorts, albeit for the purpose of evaluating missions or food distribution. In principle, NGOs do not participate in these co-ordination meetings except in Bunia where a NGO representative is allowed to observe the meetings.

#### *Logistical facilities*

One of the strengths of the peacekeeping forces is their logistical capacity, particularly in transport and communication. In the MONUC case for example, a third of its budget is allocated to logistics. It is therefore useful to examine how this could be exploited for the humanitarian purposes.

#### TRANSPORT

MONUC planes provide more than 1000 flights per year over most of the territory. They transport freight as well as passengers and their

capacity largely exceeds the strict needs of the mission. Indeed, due to the extreme weakness of internal private transport<sup>9</sup> in the DRC, many agencies/ organizations/ institutions call upon this means of transportation which is cheap, if not free, they include: political leaders, Congolese military, ex-rebels, Churches, local NGOs and most humanitarian organisations. In 2003, 30 tonnes of freight and 1000 humanitarian agents who were not members of the MONUC used these planes. Only the ICRC and the WFP rarely use this mode of transport as they have their own planes.

#### EVALUATION MISSIONS

The use of helicopters in the DRC is largely limited to MONUC. They constitute the spearhead of joint evaluation missions, which are organised with military logistics so as to reach regions which are difficult to access or which are insecure. Indeed, the humanitarian head of the MONUC regularly organises evaluation missions in zones that were recently hit by fighting or in isolated villages that no longer have access to markets. By the end of 2002, 25 such missions took place. These missions that sometimes required armed personnel for security reasons, were sent out in helicopters clearly marked as belonging to the MONUC. UN agencies nearly always participate in such missions, whereas some NGOs systematically refuse to join (ICRC, MSF, Handicap International). Others will accept depending on the circumstances (ACTED, IRC) and some do not see why they should not participate (Care, Caritas). This blurring between the military and humanitarians is obviously much greater in this case, not only because of the means of transport used which is clearly military, but also because local inhabitants will not always know that humanitarian organisations exist and will only see scouts for the MONUC in the group. In all cases, it is difficult to determine whether the MONUC is only satisfying a request from humanitarian organisations, or whether it is using a humanitarian presence to stabilize the region. Most often, both these motivations intermingle.

#### *Patrols and UNSECOORD protection*

In certain towns, the FSO of the UNSECOORD can initiative night patrols that visit all the United Nations buildings as well as of those

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<sup>9</sup> Several small private companies exist and these concentrate on the most lucrative routes, in general those which link up the bigger towns with neighbouring capitals.

of NGOs who request it. In Goma, 20 armed policemen paid by the United Nations do their rounds each night. In Bukavu, each organisation must subscribe to this service. In Kisangani, MSF-Belgium refused to be involved in the nightly patrol. But in Uvira, in the absence of the FSO, it is the international NGOs who finance a joint non-armed patrol, which is bound to radio in any suspicious activity.

If demanded, these policemen can mount guard in front of certain buildings if a mission judges this necessary. This was the case for Care in Kisangani in October 2003 after there was an attempt to steal.

### *Project financing*

The paradox goes one step further in the case where projects are carried out by humanitarian organisations but are directly financed by the MONUC. Though such projects are much more modest in comparison to the overall humanitarian operations, they provide maximum visibility for the sponsor. Launched in June 2001, the Quick Impact Projects (QUIPS) are initiated and financed with the aim of facilitating the settlement of the MONUC in areas in which it operates, in other words, they serve to encourage the local population<sup>10</sup> to look sympathetically on the blue helmets. With a relatively modest budget —1 million US Dollars<sup>11</sup> per year for all the country— these projects cover the whole humanitarian range and are implemented by both UN organisations and private organisations. In the first two years, 78 projects<sup>12</sup> were carried out in the health, education and environment sectors but also at the agricultural level and public infrastructural rehabilitation level. These projects were implemented by well-known organisations such as the FAO, Caritas, International Rescue Committee (IRC), Handicap International, CORDAID and World Vision. Local public institutions, Congolese NGOs, religious institutions and Congolese civil society coordination groups also took part. The projects themselves included: rebuilding bridges (Kisangani, Kalemie<sup>13</sup>, Kabare), rehabilitating hospitals (Kinshasa, Goma, Ilebo), rebuilding schools (Bukavu, Kindu, Kananga,

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<sup>10</sup> The objectives of QUIPS are presented in a more diplomatic language on the MONUC website where one can read that the programme has as its aim to improve the efforts of the MONUC in building peace in the DRC. The projects are created so as to promote a sense of trust and well-being within the Congolese population. Source: <http://www.monuc.org/Quips/> accessed 18th June 2004.

<sup>11</sup> This amount is minimal in comparison with the annual cost of the MONUC (608,23 million dollars in 2004) or with the Consolidated Appeals launched by the UN in the DRC ().

<sup>12</sup> Complete list at <http://www.monuc.org/Quips/List.aspx> accessed 18th June 2004.

<sup>13</sup> Entirely realised by MONUC.



Lubero, Bunia, Lisala) and markets (Kindu). Note that the humanitarian barge towards Kisangani which was the talk of the town in April 2002 and, from a more anecdotal point of view, the distribution in Kinshasa of 1600 kangas<sup>14</sup> carrying the MONUC emblem... Often, during the inauguration of such reconstruction or even during simple distribution of seeds and agricultural materials, the beneficiaries can notice the connivance between the MONUC and the implicated humanitarian organisations.

### *Armed escorts*

Military escorts regularly accompanied food distributions in insecure regions of the DRC, in the surrounding areas of Bunia (Action Agro Allemande) after Summer 2003 or in south Kivu (Caritas) in 2003 and 2004. Whoever the humanitarian operator, the blurring between armed forces and humanitarian action becomes complete in the eyes of the population, but also in the eyes of the rebels. In short, it is the MONUC that is believed to be bringing food.

Sometimes, food can become such a power tool that peacekeeping soldiers do more than just accompany the convoys. In the autumn of 2003, Caritas carried out several food distributions in South-Kivu asking the MONUC to protect the beneficiary population for several days after the operation so as to ensure that the population would not be immediately pillaged. This is yet another proof that humanitarian assistance can, in certain cases, become a target itself for local actors, whether they are rebels or criminals of common law.

### *Evacuations*

As mentioned before, it is the FSO of UNSECOORD who prepares the evacuation plan for the whole United Nations system in the specified region. This plan is negotiated with each agency and invariably uses military logistics. The FSO also decides, under the supervision of the Area Security Coordinator, when the plan must be put into action.

In theory, international NGOs are never included in the plan. The reality is much more complex. When they are asked if they want to be included in the plan, most NGOs oppose it, be it only for the reason that they would then be obliged to respect all the security norms of the UN, in particular during the alert phases. However, the MONUC and the FSO

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<sup>14</sup> Materials/ clothe frequently carrying a message.

will never refuse to rescue humanitarian workers in distress if no other option is available. The priority will nevertheless always be UN agents.

We can also note that NGOs often have a higher tolerance threshold for insecurity, whether right or wrong, than UN agencies. On several occasions, we noted that when the FSO activated the evacuation plan this was followed, in a somewhat fragmented way, by NGOs simply deciding to reduce their activities. This was the case in April 2003 in Bukavu and in Uvira in the same year.

Each NGO agrees its own evacuation plan within their own means. Most will have automobiles but very few will have ready access to air or maritime means for evacuation purposes (in Goma, Bukavu and Uvira you can reach the neighbouring country by crossing the lake). Depending on the rapidity and seriousness of the evolving situation, missions may be in the position to carry out their own evacuation plan. In these instances help must be called for from other organisations with better logistical means or from the Blue Helmets directly. This was the case in Kindu in September 2001 and in Bunia in May 2003.

In general, even the organisations that are most reluctant to collaborate with the military, such as MSF or the ICRC, recognise that as a last resort they will not hesitate to call the peacekeeping forces. In this case, this attitude is no way contravening the internationally adopted codes of conduct.

## 6. The Besieged Fortress

For the first time in June 2004, humanitarian organisations' offices and stocks were pillaged in Bukavu but also in the rest of the Kivu area, in the Maniema and in North Katanga following student demonstrations essentially against the MONUC, which was being deemed too passive when the town was taken by two insurgent officers of the Congolese army<sup>15</sup>. As is stated by OCHA, «the attacks of the population against the humanitarian infrastructure do not seem to have been the result of any animosity towards the humanitarian community»<sup>16</sup>. However, nearly 200 humanitarian workers belonging to 30 international organisations were evacuated towards Goma, leaving some 3.3 million vulnerable people without assistance. The damage incurred costs

<sup>15</sup> These are General Nkundabamware and Colonel Mutebutsi who attacked and occupied Bukavu from the 26th May until the 9th June 2004.

<sup>16</sup> «DRC: the humanitarian community reorganises itself in the East», Communiqué OCHA DRC, 16th June 2004.

of about 1.5 million Dollars<sup>17</sup>. Of course we cannot deduce that cooperation between the military and humanitarians was the only cause for this catastrophe. It is rather a complex and longstanding mix of factors that entrench this blurring of organisations within the population. This impacted strongly on the humanitarian community and lessons need to be learnt from this experience.

Beyond the nuances in the military-humanitarian relationship that we have tried to explain here, it would appear that the local population has already decided: the confusion between the military and the humanitarian community is deep and widespread. The confusion is partly due to the objective elements we have examined (regular contact, logistical support, joint operations, escorts, etc.) but also due to certain clichés that would need a more appropriate analysis (the rich foreigners, the complicity with enemy groups, the bad usage of international financing, the powerlessness of the UN and of humanitarians in general, etc.). But above all, the events in June 2004 run the risk of reinforcing the spiral which was set into motion in the beginning of the 90s: the rampant militarisation of the daily lives of humanitarians especially expatriates. However, the Congo is not Afghanistan or Iraq. It is more of a low intensity conflict, as the strategists like to label it. This is why the casual visitor will not often perceive any of the threats that are evident to humanitarian workers or the peacekeeping forces, which in contrast, provides an enhanced visibility to their security environment. For most African city dwellers, the sight of this besieged fortress does not really facilitate the distinction between military camp and humanitarian organisation. Yet, more so than the donors or the journalists, it is the local populations who are the best protectors of humanitarian independence.

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The bibliographic references on the theme of humanitarian security in general are many. It is impossible to provide a detailed account of all of them. However, it is useful to note those that can help us to focus on the conceptual framework of this study as well as to determine the deontological advances that have been gathered.

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## **II**

# **Actors and Actions**



# **State Humanitarianism/Private Humanitarianism Relationship: What Form Should It Take?**

François Grünewald and Véronique de Geoffroy

## **1. Introduction**

Contemporary international humanitarian action acquired an important part of its credibility in Europe. The story of Henri Dunant at the battle of Solferino is one of a single man who mobilised the leaders of the time for the humanitarian cause. International Humanitarian Law, or the «Law of War», was principally developed on the blood, sweat and tears of the battlefields of Europe. The associated humanitarian action was born and took root thanks to the appearance and engagement of the large British NGOs between the decades of the 30s to 50s: Oxfam in the Greek famine, Save the Children and the orphans of a ruined Europe, etc. The next phase was linked to a dynamic brought about by French NGOs who assumed a specific place on the international humanitarian scene from the end of the 60s onwards. This is the «French doctors» movement. This school of thought has, since the beginning, been opposed to the «State argument»: it rejects the principle of sovereignty and diplomatic rules. The principle of «no borders» is often placed in opposition to everything that represents official power, in establishing a strong distinction between the free actions of organisations and the interventions bound and constrained by states. This characteristic is strongly linked to the conflictual relationship between civil society and state. It takes different forms depending on the country and the means of state-NGO interaction.

Although states play an important role in the humanitarian domain (in the writing, signing, ratification and application of international Conventions), the methods of regulation between state and private humanitarian action are not structured. The recurring difficulty in which the relationship «State humanitarianism/private humanitarianism» is

embedded, finds its roots in a series of contradictions: contradictions in the legitimate stakes of geo-strategy, politics and the economy, on which the state bases its decisions (state argument) and the ethical and judicial principles of humanitarian action, notably the principles of impartiality and independence. In effect, if humanitarian action is really built on these principles, as established in a pragmatic way in International Humanitarian Law, then in essence, states and their armies can never be humanitarian actors. Nevertheless, NGOs and other humanitarian institutions wish to benefit from the financial resources and materials that states can procure for them.

Large projects were instrumental in the clarification of the debate, as were a number of trends that were developing, although not without blunder. Most notable are operations in Bosnia, the international intervention in Kosovo, those of the British in Sierra Leone, the French in Ivory Coast, etc. One can see disturbing double standards emerging in the management of crises (intervention here, but not there). Then the drama of September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001 occurred and the debate took on a new and worrying form; the contexts of Afghanistan, Iraq and the general War on Terror. How is it possible in this new context to determine the roles and complementarities between actors? Is it necessary to reach a situation of calm in the relationship between state and private humanitarian actors or, on the contrary, should «creative tensions» be allowed to take their course? Herein lies the subject of our work.

On this subject, NGOs are divided in as far as they have different ethical positions, policies, histories, financing, and operational means. Certain NGOs require government funds and army logistics for their missions. Others believe in the necessity of implicating the «lifeblood» of their country of origin in areas of intervention and use alliances with military or enterprise. They believe that the solution to crises is reached not only through political decisions, but also through the integration of humanitarian action into a global plan encompassing economic and political sectors. Finally, others reject all links to the state in order to guarantee their independence, liberty of action and to preserve their image of independence and impartiality towards beneficiaries and belligerents in the area in which they are working.

## 2. State humanitarianism?

For more than a decade a trend can be observed in the field of the presence of state representatives in humanitarian roles: not only the armed forces (under whatever mandate they are given), but also civil



institutions; civil security, ad hoc institutions (such as Cellur - Emergency unit of the French Ministry for foreign affairs), English DFID representatives, American DAR Team, etc. Official UN mechanisms themselves, which also represent the action of state, even if it is from a multilateral point of view, are now massively present. In other respects, states play a more effective role as donors of funds for humanitarian aid.

Furthermore, it should be noted that humanitarian motives are more frequently invoked during interventions of the international community. On a bilateral as well as a multilateral level, the use of the word «humanitarian» serves more and more often as a justification for getting involved in world disorder. Humanitarianism is in grave danger of being instrumentalised to serve other causes: we note here for example in the draft Constitution for Europe the following phrase: «*The tasks referenced in Article 1-40 (1), in the course of which the Union may civilian and military means, shall include joint disarmament operations, humanitarian and rescue tasks, military advice and assistance tasks, conflict prevention and peacekeeping tasks, tasks of combat forces undertaken for crisis management, including peace making and post-conflict stabilisation. All of these tasks may contribute to the fight against terrorism, including by supporting third countries in combating terrorism in their territories*». Again the mix of genres is dangerous. To say that «all these missions—including actions of emergency and assistance—can contribute to the war against terror» indicates that humanitarianism should also contribute, which is nonsense.

Consequently, it became necessary to analyse the new relationship between «state humanitarianism» and «private humanitarianism» in order to identify the pitfalls and attempt to outline the potential for operational complementarity between different actors.

Does «State Humanitarianism» exist? For certain humanitarian actors the answer is a resounding «no» because ancient history and recent events have already demonstrated how risky a marriage between humanitarianism and politics can be. The crusades, the interventions in indigenous affairs of colonies, the peacekeeping operations with vague humanitarian mandates etc. all shrouded in the humanistic discourse of the states, however, the true motivations became apparent over time. Strategic, economic, political and media objectives mould state actions. Selflessness, impartiality, humanism, essential attributes of humanitarian action seems therefore to be strictly reserved for «private» humanitarianism.

For others, on the contrary, humanitarianism has become a foreign policy tool, the first line of response to political crises. On the side

of the civil mechanisms (civil security, fire services...), state humanitarian aid develops via the army, relying on the support of the tremendous military logistics and directly linked to the coercive power of States. This tendency is currently expanding rapidly in western States, most notably within the European Commission. Military doctrines are constructed, which follow directly from the American CIMIC (Civil Military Coordination) and which integrate humanitarian action as an activity entirely separate to exterior military missions, with a direct link to the entirety of mechanisms put in place by their country of origin, including their nation's businesses.

For a third group, there is necessarily a humanitarian role for states for the simple reason that they are signatories of the Conventions that make up International Humanitarian Law. These Conventions (the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the additional protocols of 1977, as well as the 1951 Convention on the Rights of refugees) as well as the numerous texts and resolutions of so called «New York Law» (notably resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly or the Security Council) give states the responsibility regarding the double injunction of «respect and make respected»: these responsibilities, which can be articulated in juridical and diplomatic spheres can also take an operational form by means of the transfer of resources or an undertaking on a territory. We realise quickly then, that what counts is the «why» and the «how». This is where the pitfalls of the State Humanitarianism/Private Humanitarianism lie.

### *From humanitarians in uniform to «humanitarian war»*

We notice that state humanitarianism is almost exclusively constructed on military capacity. The army being the natural mechanism for operational interventions exterior to the state, equipped with more than logistical efficacy, humanitarian actors don khaki and swaps a gun for a shovel. Yet the management of the human consequences of crises by the military (notably refugees or displaced persons) can quickly transform humanitarian questions into military stakes. Civil-military doctrines (CIMIC or ACM: Civil-military activities) can be seductive and Russia didn't hold back when it came to invoking them in order to have its army manage displaced Chechens and thereby deny any action by the HCR and NGOs. From this point on, if access to victims is refused, it becomes natural to want to use force for humanitarian motives. While compassion is certainly not the exclusive right of NGOs, there is a great risk of seeing humanitarianism become a motive for triggering operations of war. It could then become a «finger

on the trigger»<sup>1</sup> and the notion of a «just war» could give rise to «humanitarian war». Consequently, one can readily understand the intensification of the already existing reluctance of many states or local authorities to accept a humanitarian intervention. This shift, harmful to the work of NGOs and humanitarian organisms, would be, above all, extremely prejudicial for the victims of the innumerable forgotten conflicts and dormant crises.

### *Humanitarianism versus politics*

Another identified shift in the construction of the state humanitarianism lies in the fact that we risk seeing the development of a doctrine of humanitarian intervention to the detriment of the political treatment of problems. This is due to the fact that in parallel to states» increasingly strong presence in emergency situations, there is at the same time a disengagement of states from the politics of development. The funds allocated to development are constantly diminishing. It comes across much better in the media, in a wrongly simple and useful way, to intervene in an emergency than to use preventative or preparatory means of dealing with a crisis. Nevertheless, the vulnerabilities that can be seen in an emergency are often the consequence of «bad-development». The victims of natural disasters are the poorest of populations, those who are obliged to cultivate and live in the most exposed areas where no building is permitted. The same cyclone in Central America or in the United States has neither the same cost in terms of human life, nor the same impact on infrastructure. Wanting to intervene in an emergency without examining the roots of the vulnerability is impossible.

To have a real impact, it is therefore necessary to tackle political problems. There will always be hurricanes in Central America. Their impact will be more and more lethal as long as land reform, structural adjustment plans that reduce the role of the state to the minimum, and economic globalisation that continuously increases the number of vulnerable people, are not taken into account.

### *Humanitarian realpolitik or two-speed humanitarianism*

A third risk becomes apparent in this «humanitarian-political» alliance: that humanitarianism, in becoming a foreign policy instrument, would be subject to a number of different priority demands, which

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<sup>1</sup> To use an expression of J.C. Rufin.

would irreversibly divert it from its intended purpose and would eventually result in a two-speed humanitarianism. Indeed, state humanitarianism over the past number of year has developed almost exclusively in areas of important geo-strategic or economic significance (the Balkans, Afghanistan, Iraq). The motives for this concentration are varied: geographic and cultural proximity with regard to public opinion in western countries, direct threat to the demographic balance on our borders, the risk of organised crime in Europe, economic stakes and international competition for reconstruction contracts, etc. If these motives are not reprehensible as they are, there is a risk that they will lead to the creation of «two-speed humanitarianism». Much investment and action takes place in certain areas while at the same time, entire populations are forgotten because they are considered «far away» and have no direct impact on us. Furthermore, state humanitarianism is totally dependant on geopolitics and is only invoked for states deemed to be weak in this regard. The resounding silence over the crisis in Chechnya echoes in the wake of the intervention in Kosovo. Who would react over Tibet, and the massive violations of human rights in China? The current debate over a possible military intervention by the international community in Darfur is interesting in this respect: as soon as the government or the Sudanese army raises its voice, there is a swift return to observation missions in the African Union.

Under pressure from economic lobby groups, state humanitarianism affirmed that it should be able to help with gaining access for national enterprises to areas of reconstruction following a crisis. This can be understood in the discussion on the role delegated to armies on overseas missions, by means of civil-military activities (de Geoffroy, 1998)<sup>2</sup>, which are assigned the role of intermediaries between the needs on the ground and the national enterprises. Supporters of the «economic war» have insisted that states expected a «return on investment» from these interventions and for this purpose, used the involvement of the army in humanitarian action. Once again, it is not the existence of this economic interest that poses a problem, more its long term impact on the development of a legitimate role for states in humanitarian action. What will become of «non-profitable» territories? Doesn't the economic factor introduce a risk that all state humanitarian action will be concentrated only on so called «emerging» countries? Again, we should not be led into «two-speed humanitarianism». In fact, the eco-

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<sup>2</sup> See «What role have armies in rehabilitation?», Veronique de Geoffroy, University of Aix-Marseille, URD Group, August 1998.

conomic war turns out to be a pipe dream. Indeed, it is neither the army that win contracts, nor the enterprises that move in disguised in uniform. The granting of reconstruction contracts happens by mechanisms that are politicised in a different way, as the story of the contracts for the reconstruction of Iraq amply shows.

### 3. Multilateralism and humanitarian action

#### *A short history*

The management of crises saw the emergence of another category of actors, aside from private and state actors: the multilaterals, which started out as part of the UN apparatus and has more recently become part of the EU. These actors have various status and mandates. The multilateralisation of action allows the dilution of national objectives in a supra-national and universal interest. During the cold war, the only UN agencies that could intervene in crisis situations involving countries of the socialist block were, apart from the UNHCR<sup>3</sup>, the World Food Programme and UNICEF. Since western governments blocked other UN agencies, these three agencies had a monopoly of sorts over UN humanitarianism. The relationship between state, multilateral and private humanitarianism was based in part on a series of capital flows, the origins of which were becoming more and more difficult to trace. This allowed the state to be both present and absent in the highly sensitive areas of Cambodia, Laos, Angola, etc. Since 1989 and after the Cold War, states have demanded more visibility in asserting their presence and the multilateral systems have lost some of their appeal.

Nevertheless, the end of the cold war «liberated» the UN and allowed the organisation to develop humanitarian dimensions for the management of crises. Admittedly, the result of operations in Somalia, Rwanda, Yugoslavia, Sierra Leone and Abkhazia leave the observer perplexed, given the disproportions of the means deployed, the amounts spent and the results obtained. The United Nations developed and diversified their operations on the ground, both in terms of the types of actors involved and methods put into practice. The UNDP, the WHO and the FAO all created or reinforced their capacity for pre-crisis, crisis and post crisis intervention. The World Bank also created their «post-

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<sup>3</sup> Whose mandate and role are underpinned by the Geneva Convention of 1951 on the Rights of Refugees, the Additional Protocol of New York, and the 1961 OAU Convention on the Rights of Refugees in Africa.

conflict unit». The creation of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA), which was transformed into the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), with a deputy-secretary in charge, signal the stages of an ever-stronger engagement of the UN at the highest levels in the humanitarian sector. This has not neglected to attract the interest of donors. The power, influence, and (one would hope) the rediscovering of the importance of the joint management of crises, has resulted in a new infatuation with multilateralism. The dialogue between NGOs and public powers is confronted with the arrival of a new partner: «the multilateral». If the former partnerships between UNICEF, WFP, UNHCR and NGOs had already proven themselves, the new actors had to establish themselves in the management of crises. It didn't turn out to be easy.

The liaisons and interactions between these different actors were numerous, diverse and often conflictual. They are thankfully becoming more balanced, more synergetic, and based on respect and a quest for complementarities. Several scenarios must be analysed in order to better understand the stakes of these interactions.

### *A new strategy in international negotiations*

The practice of appointing NGO representatives as assistants to national delegations participating in large-scale negotiations is an ancient practice in many European countries. In France it is still a recent development. Humanitarian action, on occasions, has provided some successes. In fact, recent experiences of negotiations for: the International Convention Against Anti-Personnel Mines; the establishment of an International Criminal Court; and in the course of the work of Task Force Mitch in preparation for the Stockholm Conference on the Reconstruction of Central America have all shown just how powerful a union forged between the state and civil society can be. Such partnerships require genuine political will on both sides, real confidence (and not a desire for instrumentalisation) and the capacity to work.

### *The need for support for the lobby in a crisis situation*

Cases of violations of the law, notably of International Humanitarian Law, are numerous. Faced with certain violations, specific individuals, such as the High Commissioner for Refugees, have particular responsibilities. Unfortunately, their weight often depends on the will of the donors. In the presence of «donor fatigue», attacks on the right of asylum and on the principle of *non-refoulement* are numerous: Burma,

Afghanistan, and tomorrow Guinea, Ivory Coast, etc. NGOs attempt to negotiate with authorities, in association with UNHCR for the respect for refugees, but often in vain. Sometimes there is no alternative but to accept defeat or to withdraw, both equally negative for the populations concerned. In this context, NGOs often expect an appeal by their government to the UNHCR. The ominous recent tendency for «voluntary» repatriation is unfortunately becoming the rule rather than the exception, with states acting as accomplices. The same scenario exists with regard to IHL violations, and even more so for violations of Human Rights in pre- and post-conflict situations. For humanitarian NGOs, often equipped with nothing more than denunciation or withdrawal as a «weapon», this strategic union with the state is vital, if it is well managed. But does this union not confirm the presence of double standards?

### *Necessary coordination*

In crisis situations, whether before, during or after, coordination among actors of all types is of vital importance. The complexity of situations, the security problems, the importance of avoiding duplication, the quest for meeting needs in the optimal way in the presence of resource constraints, the urgent need for coherence, and the need to make coordination a *sine qua non* to the quality of interventions. But not just any coordination! For a long time «inter-agency meetings» were a must, with nothing much more going on than an exchange of information. On the other hand, often in difficult and dangerous situations, particularly in the beginning phases of an intervention, coordination happens spontaneously and harmoniously. The arrival of new UN actors (OCHA, UNDP, the Resident Coordinator Office) brought with it new coordination problems, due to the power struggles between UN agencies. The situation became even more delicate when the donors, state representatives, as it happens, expressed a wish to be present not only for the meetings of donors, but also for the operational coordination meetings on the ground. All of a sudden, the spontaneity and the confidentiality of exchange were put in danger by the presence of ambassadors at these meetings. Their presence also had positive aspects, however: rapid mobilisation of resources for emerging emergencies, relaying of sensitive information vital to the security of ground staff, and a better coordination between donors. The current initiative started by a group of countries on «good donorship» could have extremely positive repercussions if coherence between state actors and respect for humanitarian principles on the ground are also introduced.

*Bilateral versus multilateral versus private*

With the development of state humanitarianism in most western countries, we also note the difficulties in drawing the link between bilateral systems and multilateral mechanisms. These difficulties are further exacerbated by the involvement of the military, which by nature, orients itself towards the protection of national interests. The danger is that the entire international humanitarian response mechanism will be weakened. Attempts to introduce a level of coherence in these systems have existed for over twelve years, from the work of UNHCR and WFP in trying to make military means available to humanitarians, to the more recent Oslo meetings.

Private actors often find themselves caught in the middle: between their states of origin, who wants to instrumentalise them; the state in which they are intervening, who seeks to control them; and the multilateral system, which attempts to «take them over». Occasions of coordination have often become the arena for this game in which it is essential to know, to assert and demonstrate one's commitment to a certain number of principles.

**4. The new realities of the world «post 9/11»**

The attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup> in New York turned political orders upside down. State-humanitarian relations are still in the process of being reorganised. The following analysis of the relationship between states and humanitarian actors is anchored in significant fieldwork and regular debates among French and European NGO networks. It has given rise to four «agendas» with which take on different forms and evolve in different ways: the coherence agenda, the collective security agenda, the war on terror agenda, and the civil-military actions agenda.

*The coherence agenda*

The coherence agenda is a result of an effort to show that it is possible and useful in times of crisis to unite political-diplomatic interests (negotiations and a quest for peace), development interests (showing peace in a positive light, taking steps to reinforce the capacity of the state, even if there is conflict between various parties) and humanitarian interests (implying a strict adherence to the principles of independence, impartiality, and in certain cases, neutrality). This approach,



launched within the context of UN reform, has been attempted in two complex situations: Taliban Afghanistan, and Sierra Leone before the peace accords. There were a number of reasons for its patently obvious failure: principally the pressure necessary to achieve conflict prevention or to advance peace negotiations are of a magnitude and range that has nothing in common with the survival stakes of the population. This system, like that of sanctions used elsewhere, has rarely had any real impact on the course of events. On the other hand, repercussions on the conditions faced by the populations have always been dramatic. It is for this reason that NGOs and the Red Cross have adopted hostile positions towards the instrumentalisation of humanitarianism by «politics» in this search for «coherence».

It is clear that for heads of state, political people and diplomats it is important to find coherence in their actions, for reasons including the fact that public opinion and parliaments demand it. State humanitarian action exists, particularly due to their responsibilities in crisis management, the fundamental role they adopt as signatories to International Humanitarian Law and because of the vast resources they have at their disposal. It is vitally important to clarify what coherence is and at what point humanitarianism is instrumentalised and becomes subject to other agendas. The current example of American foreign policy in Iraq demonstrates the every-day associated dangers.

For Europe, the coherence agenda also contains an aspect linked to the control of movement of people (migrants and refugees), to the struggle against illegal trafficking (drugs, prostitution), and to the mafia. It is clear that for humanitarians, this confusion of mandates in the name of a hypothetical coherence is not alone unacceptable, but dangerous.

### *The collective security agenda*

Evolved out of the collective security agenda as is established by the Treaty of Amsterdam and instituted by the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) involved a pro-active approach to crises. It is clear that preventative diplomacies, actions of crisis prevention and mediation, and even forceful interference in the management of a conflict to influence its course are fundamentally important, necessary and noble. It is often necessary to deploy military means to prevent the resolution of a crisis from turning into an incubation laboratory for the next crisis. It is important that this is done in a cohesive way. If it is difficult to remain neutral faced with genocide, it is obvious that in essence, intervening between two belligerents who wish to wage war (victory for

one and defeat or destruction of the other) will never be seen as neutral, and often will not even be seen as impartial or independent. In this context, every instrumentalisation of humanitarianism in an effort to prevent or resolve a conflict runs the risk of impeding access to populations in need, and can even introduce serious risks to the security of humanitarian actors.

### *The war on terror agenda*

A step further in the potentially tragic mix between humanitarianism and military is the attempt to subordinate all decisions, including humanitarian ones, to the «War on Terror». This strategy brings a risk of introducing serious breaches of the vital principles of independence and impartiality. How does one deal with territories that are presumed to harbour terrorists but where the population are suffering the consequences of conflict or natural disaster? How does one choose where to provide assistance?

There is also a risk of causing confusion and security breaches. The experience of the PRT (Provincial Reconstruction Teams) in Afghanistan shows the reserves in the same uniform as the Special Forces. While the former attempt to carry out the same actions as the NGOs: livestock vaccination, distribution of blankets, school construction, etc., the latter run military operations against alleged terrorists and members of Al Qaeda. Extremes have been reached, with the distribution of leaflets by the American special coalition forces, which stated, in substance «if you do not denounce the ex-Taliban or Al Qaeda agents, you will be deprived of humanitarian aid». Nevertheless, the response of the State Department of North America when confronted with questioning humanitarians was consistent: «you are either with us, or against us». This type of situation can only serve to demonise humanitarian actors, and alienate the entire Muslim world, against the west. This can already be seen in the increased numbers of NGO worker assassinations in Afghanistan, and in the despicable attack in Baghdad which cost the lives of Sergio de Mello and many of his co-workers.

### *The agenda of civil-military actions*

The intention here is not to give an exhaustive presentation on the question of civil-military actions, but to highlight some salient points. We recall that these civil-military actions are relatively recent, having come to light in the last ten years, however the majority of the worlds armies apply them. Central to the civil-military concept is the use of in-

telligence to empathise with people in order to avoid/ limit problems. But a number of bad practices, dangers and incoherencies have appeared as international military interventions in crisis management multiply. One must be vigilant. There are several levels of analysis to be explored:

#### MONO OR MULTI-STATE COALITIONS

Kosovo, the British intervention in Sierra Leone, Afghanistan, and Iraq represent the phases in the emergence of a relatively new phenomenon; that of ad hoc coalitions driven by one or several military actors outside of the UN structure put in place to intervene under Chapter 6 or 7 of the UN charter, the Department of Peacekeeping operations. While it has shown its military efficiency, this new method of managing crises is not without danger because it is the ultimate phase in the challenge to the legitimacy of states with the law of the jungle. Put into place in the name of a «just war», they quickly become operations in the name of interests that hide behind alibis of human rights and access to victims. The Iraqi quagmire, in which one of these coalitions is getting tangled up, could well be the proof that this approach is a failure, as has been suspected following the disastrous American intervention in Somalia barely ten years ago (although with a UN mandate). How quickly one forgets!

While the legitimacy of such interventions is disputable, or even nonexistent, there is a large effort to justify operation on moral grounds, all the more so because no war can «last the distance» without the support of public opinion in the territory of interventions, and the country of origin of the troops. In this respect, the image of «reaching out a hand to populations in distress» and of supporting the reconstruction of the state are easy propaganda tools. It is on this pretext that the coalition in Afghanistan developed the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) strategy. PRT type mechanisms are described in the following extract from the report on the Groupe URD mission in Afghanistan in 2003.

In November 2002, the American embassy in Kabul announced the Joint Regional Teams (JRT) initiative, later renamed PRT. These PRT were intended to represent, through actions carried out by the American army reserves, support for the Afghan government implementation in difficult zones. This was to be achieved through a series of humanitarian and reconstruction actions, some very similar to those of NGOs. At the same time, the Special Forces carried out their hunt for Taliban and Al Qaeda, and the American aviation continued bombing. This un-

leashed a series of reactions, among them from British NGOs through the BAAG (British Agency Afghanistan Group), from the coordination of NGOs in Kabul via a declaration from the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR), as well as letters addressed to American Congress by US NGOs. The issue of PRT put in place by coalition forces, particularly the American army, became one of the most controversial subjects during the Project Quality mission in January/February 2003. It was therefore studied closely through a series of contacts with ICRC, UNAMA (United Nations Mission in Afghanistan), ACBAR, NGOs, certain embassies, and with the coalition forces themselves, in Kabul as well as on the ground, notably in Bamyan. Three central points are developed below: the issue of political strategy, juridical domain linked to security, and operational dimensions.

The definition of a mandate and the terms of reference of the PRT was in constant evolution, which gave rise to a feeling of imprecision and approximation concerning the real objective of the initiative. Following a lobby by the humanitarian agencies, certain components of these PRT were revised, and others removed from the texts. For example, it was clarified that the PRT would not have a role in coordination mechanisms. Declarations of the role of PRT in the fight against Al Qaeda were deleted. All that was left were regular and worrying incoherencies between the discourse of the American embassy and that of the coalition: the humanitarians continued to ask themselves whether behind the contradictions, there was perhaps a «smoke screen» strategy. The geographic choices made (Bamyan, Gardez, Kandahar, Kunduz) clearly point to political choices. On the one hand, this could have a certain legitimacy: to support and reinforce the presence of the AIA (Afghan Interim Authority) in difficult zones. On the other hand, this political action is not necessarily compatible with a humanitarian approach, particularly if the political action implies a resort to armed force.

While the distribution of tasks between the Coalition Forces (notably the American Special Forces) and the PRT had apparently been theoretically defined, the terms of distribution on the ground remained blurred. The two wear the same uniform, and often live in the same place. Can a combatant claim to be a humanitarian actor (independent and impartial)? What are the risks of confusion in relation to IHL? For humanitarians it is difficult to discern the difference between civilian and military actors engaged in assistance; it is even more confusing for the populations. In the case where the Coalition Forces operate militarily in a zone, while at the same time the PRT rehabilitate the clinics and the schools in the same region, how is an af-

ghan villager who can barely read supposed to understand? Already these villagers have difficulty telling the difference between the various agencies who all arrive with the same white land rovers with self adhesive aerals: one could predict that the PRT would add another level to the confusion. In the long term, this can lead to security risks in which NGOs are easy targets. Those who receive American funding and who display it on their signs and stickers are at even more risk of being targeted.

One of the objectives announced by the PRT is the gathering of information on the needs of the populations by means of the «hasty village assessments», which were used during June/July 1999 in Kosovo to feed the AIMS database. On the one hand, one could ask what the link is between this activity and the one designated under the heading «intelligence». On the other hand, one could ask whether or not this method is appropriate for the situation in Afghanistan today. Its position on the crossroads between emergency and development would imply more participatory methods of information collection, which reinforces the role of local actors, rather than rapid, non-participatory methods.

A number of principles have been defined by UNAMA with the input of NGOs:

- Ensure that the legitimate aim of supporting the AIA does not go against humanitarian principles;
- Support NGOs in their efforts to maintain independent and impartial humanitarian space;
- Ensure that non-military actors carry out coordination activities;
- Recognise the different mandates and the necessity for each to stick to their own, while respecting those of others; and
- Promote the idea of a strong PRT presence in sectors where military logistics is a real comparative advantage (large infrastructure projects, rehabilitation of government offices and buildings, disarmament and reintegration of former combatants).

Diversions continue to be the rule rather than the exception. If a certain number of positive points should be mentioned (civil military actions are no longer carried out by men in civilian dress but by uniformed personnel), a general incomprehension remains between the coalition forces and a large percentage of the humanitarian world. The agreements that appeared to have been reached between the major state in the coalition and the UNAMA do not seem to be respected. The major state in the coalition revived a communication campaign aimed at NGOs, embassies in Kabul and journalists, in an attempt

to create a positive perception of the humanitarian approach of the PRTs. Humanitarian workers were extremely worried when they realised how much soldiers' participation in health activities increased the level of confusion among Afghans as to the distinction between military and humanitarian. The assassination of our five MSF colleagues in the North of Afghanistan is there to remind us how well founded those worries are.

#### UN LEVEL:

The end of the cold war brought about the release of mechanisms allowing the application of the UN charter, in particular Chapters 6 and 7. We now see the deployment of a range of UN interventions in crisis contexts, from simple intermediation to «projection into the zone» of contingents of Blue Helmets with various mandates (peace keeping or peace enforcement). This latest phenomenon, which takes place in complex emergencies, contains a number of derivatives, in the frequent and uncoordinated «emergency» actions (mainly medical), as well as in escorts of humanitarian actors by military vehicles. We also see, usually in the context of large operations requiring considerable logistics, the development of humanitarians using military logistics. This is what the UNHCR launched as «civil military assets» in the mid-1990s.

#### EUROPEAN LEVEL:

The European reflection on the subject began with the «Petersburg Trials» included in the Union Treaty of 1991 (Article 17.2), which defined the role of the union and its means (including military means) of crisis management, from prevention to re-establishment of order in the post-conflict period. The tendencies observed are unfortunately ones of concern for humanitarians. The creation of a «rapid reaction capacity» on a military basis, the risk of marginalisation of ECHO, the authority that represents the best of Europe's humanitarian wing, and the increasingly strong hold that European militaries have over the management of crises, all pose a certain number of questions, which need to be answered.

#### FRENCH LEVEL:

The French reflection on the subject started out by reflecting on the Balkans crisis: seeing the troops of American reserves, in the context

of UN forces, avail of reconstruction contracts. The school of economics of war attempted to promote the idea that the intervention of the forces in these conflicts should open up the markets. The elaboration of the French ACM doctrine was «tempted» initially by this approach, but later decided to distance itself from this approach. Since then, the French doctrine has evolved in an interesting way; it seeks clarification and respect for mandates and the division of responsibilities, in particular in line with IHL. The French army took a radically different stance from the British or American armies.

## 5. The large stakes

### *A return to law*

«Impartiality», «Humanity», and «Universality», three key words in humanitarian action. If states wish to develop a humanitarian role, they must conform to these. That may seem idealistic, however, these states themselves signed up to this in International Humanitarian Law (IHL). Faced with the possible derivatives of state humanitarianism and the consequences for humanitarian action in general, a number of NGOs are calling for a return to the law. «The states commit to apply the present conventions and to ensure they are applied by others». This first of four articles of the Geneva Conventions details the responsibilities of states towards victims of all conflicts. IHL confers rights, responsibilities and obligations on various actors, including the international community, in crisis situations. Between state reasons and the imperatives of the public conscious, the law protects humanitarianism and provides a framework to direct the behaviours on the different actors involved.

### *State diplomatic responsibility*

States appear to want to implement their crises management policies in their entirety including the deployment of military means during serious crises. Of course all of the state's mechanisms should play a role in victim protection during conflicts. At any point in the crisis, diplomats, judges, non-military civil servants, etc. should be able to put in place an inter-state cooperation policy that will include the «crisis phenomenon». Diplomatic means could then play an important role in early warning systems, allowing mediation mechanisms to be activated and a halt brought to the crisis causing elements.

The work of the states in developing and advancing the law is even more important. A huge mobilisation of civil society all over the world was required to enact the Convention banning anti-personnel land mines. The alliance between NGOs and certain states, for example Canada, meant that the debate could be taken off the streets and away from private citizens, and brought into the diplomatic circles of importance.

### *Working with and articulating complementarities*

Activating humanitarian means on the basis that they are the only means available introduces counterproductive confusion for all actors. The military have particular competencies in specific areas of activity: emergency operations in disaster zones, maintaining order, and re-establishing the rule of law. These activities rely on technical capacities and not just on the availability of resources. This reinforces their legitimacy, which is of benefit to the populations concerned. In working on these areas of expertise, the division of tasks between actors in a zone is facilitated.

From a legal perspective, and therefore the source of the mandate for intervention, the context provides the operational priorities and comparative advantages of the different actors that give rise to potential complementarities.

## **6. In conclusion**

The term *humanitarian* is a victim of its own success. Employed in every context where populations in crisis are aided, it incorporates political action, securing a zone, coercive action, economic restart, etc. While each of these actions can be potentially legitimate, useful and occasionally complementary, they are not all *humanitarian*. Business is necessary and useful in a post crisis situation in order to reboot income generation activities, but it is not humanitarian. The military is essential in securing a zone and re-establishing a way of life for populations in areas where external interventions are taking place, but it is not humanitarian. That states who have invested resources in the management of a crisis would wish to have a certain «return on their investment» is legitimate, but it is not humanitarian. Neither can it be called humanitarian when the consequences of a crisis are thus: the genocide in Rwanda was distortedly called a «humanitarian crisis», thus freeing states from their responsibilities under the 1948 Convention on genocide...



So what is humanitarian? It is simply to alleviate the suffering of victims of crises by offering protection and assistance, while respecting the fundamental principles of humanitarianism, which are: humanity, universality, independence, impartiality and neutrality.

In an era where cynicism is rife, the reaffirmation of the «law» as the centre of gravity of the relationship between a state and civil society could seem naïve and idealistic. However, it is on this basis of law that states committed themselves through the Geneva Conventions relating to IHL and that national and international individuals went to work in places where they were needed, independent of strategic, economic or power interests.

It becomes clear that it is important to reflect in terms of identity and mandate (including judicial), in political-strategic terms (use of force for crisis management, on condition that it is within a clear multilateral context), in terms of comparative advantage (the advantage of army logistics in certain situations —particularly natural or technological catastrophes, advantage of means of intervention of NGOs and other civilian actors in others— for example in working closely with populations when a clearly independent and impartial position is necessary). Knowing one's own mandate and sticking to it while respecting the mandate of others, as well as an understanding of diversity to be able to dialogue, are the essential stakes to ensure clarity and a division of roles in «coordination with» and not «coordination by».

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# **CIMIC (Civil-Military Co-operation): Bridging the Gap between the Military and Humanitarians. Field testimonies**

Bruno Smets

What's the relationship between a just-arrived military force and the NGOs and PVOs that might have been working in a crisis-torn area all long? What we have is a partnership. If you are successful, they are successful; and, if they are successful, you are successful. We need each other.

General J.M.Shalikashvili  
USA,Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff

## **Introduction**

Peacekeeping operations have become a very important part of life for a professional Belgian soldier. First in eastern Slovenia, then in Bosnia and Kosovo, the Belgian military has concerned itself for more than a decade in establishing lasting peace in the Balkans. However, classical military training had not prepared us to work in this environment or to carryout such tasks. Furthermore, as time went by, our mandate evolved and we became entrenched in the general reconstruction plan for the country. There were many actors in the field. To succeed in our mission, we had to take into account the civil actors who were directly implicated at the heart of the operation (the international organisations such as the UN, the OSCE...), but also those actors (the NGOs) that were gravitating around the former, and especially the civil population itself. This situation led us in 1998 to adopt the CIMIC<sup>1</sup> concept. Whilst this term was unknown during our first operations in ex-Yugo-

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<sup>1</sup> Civil military cooperation. This concept was developed by NATO and was tested on the ground within the realm of the IFOR/SFOD operation in Bosnia in 1995.

slavia, CIMIC now holds a great importance. This can be evidenced by the presence of CIMIC teams deployed in the field. Their role is still relatively unknown and yet it goes beyond providing «straightforward» emergency humanitarian aid. The purpose of this article is to clarify any questions on this issue, answering key questions such as who are these teams, what do they do, and for whom to they work?

## Some History

When we are deployed on the field, confusion often exists: basic infrastructure such as schools and health centres are seriously damaged, if not completely destroyed, public administration services do not really function, law and order is most often non-existent, or partial and corrupt, society functions through the black market, the region is full of mafia types and is drowning in corruption, nationalist armed groups and extremists create insecurity and criminality etc. These scourges are typical of a country in crises and they slow down the reconstruction process.

At the beginning of the 1990s, during our operations under the banner of the FORPRONU<sup>2</sup>, the military commander at the lower end, i.e. deployed on the ground, concentrated exclusively on his/her priority mission: to ensure security in general in his/her area of responsibility (AOR)<sup>3</sup>. Any cooperation activities with civil parties were at that time the prerogative of the United Nations competent services, i.e. the UN Civil Affairs. However, these services were sometimes limited in terms of available resources and due to the sheer extensiveness of their zones of action the ground unit commander would frequently experience problems in executing activities in the field. During this period, one must admit that the civil-military cooperation on the ground was non-existent, if not tense, and sometimes even conflicting.

Having learned from this experience, NATO<sup>4</sup> decided to take charge of the organisation of such cooperation. Because of the high number of actors on the ground, it is indeed essential to maintain *organised* relationships with non-military actors, so as to avoid any misunderstandings or, in the worst-case scenario, any virulent opposition. However, an efficient collaboration is only possible when parties know each other. One must understand the different structures and mechanisms

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<sup>2</sup> Force de Protection des Nations Unies (ex-Yougoslavie), March 1992-December 1995.

<sup>3</sup> Area of responsibility.

<sup>4</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

of all actors. In order to achieve this, it is necessary to have competent staff, structure, procedures, material and financial means, and learning through instruction and training. In one word: the CIMIC concept.

After 1995, the NATO forces realised this new concept in the field within the context of the IFOR/SFOR mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina. But if NATO managed at first to dissuade all overt opposition on the part of different opponents, the threat evolved nevertheless. Units were faced with protests that sometimes turned into riots. In the end, the question remained: is the best way to avoid problems with the population not to ensure its support?

On the Belgian side, given our engagement at the time in Croatia within the ATNUSO<sup>5</sup> mission, our participation in the SFOR<sup>6</sup> mission was only very limited (some logistical and engineering secondments). We had to wait until June 1998 to have a significant presence in Bosnia within the first Belgian-Luxembourg contingent<sup>7</sup>. From then on though, the CIMIC was an integral part of all our missions. Whilst suspicion existed at first, dialogue and mutual comprehension progressed bit by bit. And today, many civil and military actors coordinate their actions, cooperate and even collaborate on certain joint projects.

## The «Operational CIMIC»

To understand this new reality, we first need a definition. The CIMIC constitutes the overall means by which the military commander can establish formal relationships with the local authorities, the local population and the international and non-governmental organisations in his/her area of responsibility. Public relations and cooperation with the press are excluded from this<sup>8</sup>. The extent of the CIMIC is therefore very wide. The Belgian application of the concept limits itself to supporting units of the terrestrial components put into place *outside* of the national territory, that is ones which are essentially engaged in peacekeeping operations. This restrictive frame is the domain of the «operational CIMIC».

The operational CIMIC tasks can be separated into three stages.

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<sup>5</sup> Administration transitoire des Nations Unies pour la Slavonie orientale, from January 1996 to January 1998.

<sup>6</sup> Stabilization Force.

<sup>7</sup> 1 BELUBG (First Belgian-Luxembourgian battle group), deployed in Bosnia from June to October 1998.

<sup>8</sup> Défense (ACOS Ops&Trg), *Joint concept for CIMIC in operations (draft)*, Brussels, 2003, Chapter I, p. 4.

The *pre-operational* tasks mainly consist of training units in subjects related to the civil dimension of the operation (such as the origin of the conflict, the historical and political background, local customs, basics in the local languages, descriptions of the civil and military actors, human geography, etc.), and in sending liaison individuals to all civil actors in the action zone, so as to facilitate the deployment of troops by the exchanging of information (localising the mine fields, state of the roads, researching possible stationing zones, etc.). Furthermore, because of their knowledge of the population, the teams which are deployed before the arrival of the contingent, can facilitate the first contact between the local authorities and the military command, and can therefore exert a positive influence on the welcoming of the troops by the local inhabitants.

*During the operation*, CIMIC's tasks include, to:

- permit the liaising, communication, coordination and information exchange between all actors in the zone of operation (international and non-governmental organisations, local leaders...); and
- contribute, by its actions and concrete projects, on one hand, to realise civil aspect of the operation, i.e. the reconstruction of the civil environment (beyond providing emergency aid, the CIMIC must progressively help the local population to reach the stage where it can look after itself) and to contribute to a positive reaction by the population to the presence of the military force. In the Belgian context, this means the realisation of *CIMIC projects*, with the Ministry of Defence as donor.

The *post-operational tasks*<sup>9</sup> must allow for an easy transition of certain activities to the local authorities or organisations by the end of military engagement. In Bosnia and in Kosovo, the ultimate goal of the CIMIC is the successful transfer of competencies and authority to local institutions, and the end of NATO military presence in the territory.

CIMIC therefore does not only fly to the population's rescue. It also brings its support to deployed units. By setting up social, economic and cultural projects, we try to help the population, whilst maintaining a good image of the mission.

CIMIC's primary role is therefore clear: to create a favourable climate to facilitate the mission of the operation, as well as the units' work on the ground, and thereby to guarantee better security for the contingent, as well as for all the civil actors within the operation.

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<sup>9</sup> Sometimes called «transitional tasks».

CIMIC must work with complete transparency. It never constitutes an intelligence organ which profits the military force. At most it provides the Intelligence Officer of the unit with information regarding population density, the whereabouts of minorities needing protection, the number of returning refugees and the vital needs of the population. To act in any other way would automatically remove all credibility for CIMIC, with as an immediate consequence the loss of trust of the population towards the deployed force.

Finally, with each external operation being a new mission, the Belgian concept of CIMIC necessitates a permanent revision within the Defense Ministry, as to how best to respond to the evolving situations.

## Operations on the Ground

With the NATO concept as its base, the Belgian Defense developed the CIMIC concept for the terrestrial component. Today, we have enough specialised personnel to integrate the contingents in operations on the field. Within the battle group<sup>10</sup> deployed on the ground, a dozen troops compose the CIMIC team, itself integrated within the CIMIC unit of the NATO, called the CMTF (Civil Military Co-operation Task force).

This CIMIC team is composed of several TCT<sup>11</sup>. These mobile teams of two to three people travel up and down all the operation zone of the Belgian battle group so as to understand specifically the situation of the population, to evaluate what assistance can be given, and to coordinate this by setting up various projects. In order to do this, the teams create work relationships with the different civil actors within the zone. They also have a privileged relationship with the local authorities. Furthermore, they maintain regular contact with the local population. By opening a CIMIC House outside the camp, they create a real meeting place for the local military command, for the local population in difficulty, and for the representatives for humanitarian organizations, which operate in the area. Finally, they develop, implement and monitor CIMIC projects. Their work is composed of three main axes: to assist refugees who wish to return to their home, to set up a basic public infrastructure, and to stimulate the economy to re-establish employment opportunities.

Even though the return of refugees to their homes is the responsibility of international organisations and NGOs, these do not always have

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<sup>10</sup> roughly +/- 800 people.

<sup>11</sup> Tactical CIMIC Teams.

the personnel and the logistical means to provide their assistance, nor do they always have the adequate information needed. Due to their many patrols, deployed battalions on the ground have a good vision of the overall situation of the population. This information is compiled in a database for the whole region. All this information is made available to local representatives of humanitarian organisations. The TCTs therefore also serve as a bridge between refugees and the humanitarian organisations that often have important quantities of equipment: beds, blankets, tents, pans, etc. This good cooperation is the guarantee of a fair distribution of materials to those who are in real need. Difficulties and problems exist nevertheless. The return of minority groups in certain regions is sometimes accompanied by intimidation acts or the multiplication of administrative harassment, and the difficulty in coordinating actions is made even harder by the division of different zones of action between the military and humanitarian organisations<sup>12</sup>.

When this new concept was first applied on the ground, different opinions emerged as to the level of subordination that should link the CIMIC teams supporting the unit and the commander of this unit. Depending on the personality of its members, the CIMIC team could sometimes look for a lot (maybe excessive) of autonomy from the military commander. The desire to guarantee its independence and to do humanitarianism at all costs could lead to wanting to report back directly to the headquarters in Brussels. On the other hand, there may be instances where military commanders consider the CIMIC teams as an integral part of their headquarters, going as far as considering them as a section of the intelligence services. Indeed, due to the nature of their missions, the CIMIC teams have access to locations where units would not go to. These locations can still nevertheless be in areas that are of interest to the units. Due to this fact, the CIMIC teams can be seen as a good source of information. As more and more missions take place however, this problem should be solved and all CIMIC actions will be carried out in the frame of specific objectives, as defined in the concept.

## Projects all Around

The TCT teams are responsible for establishing the CIMIC projects and to appraise their technical and financial requirements. The danger is to want to please the local population rather than establishing

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<sup>12</sup> United Nations High Commission for Refugees.



projects that are adapted to local needs. The first step is therefore to establish what the local population wants. By traveling the region the TCT teams, in close collaboration with local groups and humanitarian organisations operating in the region, take stock of and classify the reconstruction projects in order of priority. Then, several options are possible: we can contact a humanitarian organisation that has the funds and the necessary expertise to carry out the work; we can ask the battalion to carry it out (for example, civil engineering work); or we can write a project proposal, which we submit for approval to the headquarters in Brussels.

Once the project is accepted, the TCT team calls for offers of interest. It analyses carefully the offers of the different interested local firms. These must present a good price-to-quality ratio and must employ local people. The team then draws up the contracts and monitors the ongoing work. The firms that were successful in obtaining a contract and which work to a satisfactory level are included on our database. They therefore have the opportunity to be called again, even if we do try to work with a maximum number of different firms/companies. We support projects that have a real impact on the quality of life of the population and on the renewal of micro-economic activity.

### *Funding...*

In the Belgian context, these projects, which cover many reconstruction aspects, benefit from funding from the Ministry of Defense budget, which equals to 22,500 euros per month<sup>13</sup>. The commander of the battle group also has an additional monthly budget of 2,500 euros, which is used in case of any emergency. The bigger projects are submitted to the international organisations, as they are the only ones who can afford to finance them. The majority of the funds invested in our projects come from the European Union or from contributions from NGOs.

### *Diversity...*

The projects are very diverse. Education is certainly an important objective. Our actions contribute to the improvement of conditions of school children. Amongst other things, school buildings are renovated,

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<sup>13</sup> When carrying out a joint project with Luxembourg, 12,500 euros can be added onto this amount.

sanitary facilities are modernised, and equipment, school materials and games are distributed.

The preparation for the return of refugees consists of rehabilitating housing and the basic public infrastructure, such as the «ambulantas», which are small health dispensaries consisting of a consultation room and a dental surgery, which are most often in a appalling state after having served as military health posts during hostilities. Wheelbarrows and tool kits are also distributed to refugee families so that they can clear debris from the homes they return to.

The rehabilitation of public infrastructure in general is also a priority. This can range from repairing the water distribution points, and electricity networks in an isolated mountain village, to the renovation of small train stations, the reconstruction of water mills which will allow inhabitants to mill their grain, the installation of bus shelters, of speed bumps or road signs near schools, and the construction of playgrounds for children.

Other projects do not cost us anything and are easily realised with the personal skills and equipment of the deployed battalion: transport and equipment distribution to help humanitarian organisations (UN-HCR, UNICEF, CARITAS,) felling and pruning trees, mine disposal, mine awareness training for the local population, etc.

Finally, with a view to supporting the local economy and creating employment, a proportion of the funding is used to boost small private enterprises, such as chicken rearing, sawmills, local construction companies, etc. In Kosovo, in close collaboration with Caritas and UNMIK<sup>14</sup>, we rehabilitated an agriculture training school. This farm-school is a boosting developments in the region with multiple perspectives. The region has a successful school, which enhances the local population's training opportunities in a region where 70 percent of income comes from agriculture. Furthermore, the school has as its project to establish a seal of quality on local agricultural produce and meat. We thereby hope to enhance the quality of local agricultural produce.

The majority of these projects have helped us acquire the hearts and minds of the population. Whilst as much work as possible is handed over to local enterprises, these projects allow the soldiers to carry out activities that are different to their routine daily military tasks. Whilst these can be very varied, they are not glorifying jobs, and moments of exaltation are rare. To be able to participate in CIMIC actions of one's contingent, and thereby experience the progressive reconstruction of the country, provides the soldier on the ground with a deep

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<sup>14</sup> United Nations Mission In Kosovo.

sense of purpose which conveys an altogether different dimension to the soldier's often lengthy presence in the field.

The introduction of the operational CIMIC has allowed a new spirit, a new dynamism to enter military ranks. Sending soldiers off on external operations at the beginning of the 1990s coincided with the suppression of the military service in Belgium and thereby of the beginning of an army career. The Belgian soldier is searching for his identity, and the purpose of his existence is sometimes put into doubt. Training officers and volunteers was fundamentally adapted by what emerged following what the first contingents learned when first operating in the field. The central axis for this training is based on knowledge of the civil-military dimension on operation zones, of negotiation techniques, on international armed conflicts law, on specific techniques, etc. These subjects are still very important in the training of our soldiers. The Belgian professional soldier, «peace soldier», has a new career today and has found a new motivation within it.

Funding is nevertheless limited. It is therefore a matter of helping those who really need it. Some people ask for funds and equipment whilst driving the latest Mercedes model ! Others do not hesitate to resell the equipment they were given. It is therefore necessary to be rigorous when distributing aid.

Another hurdle that must be jumped is to avoid the affected populations becoming permanently dependence on aid. Therefore, when a project is coming to its end, we hand over all responsibility to the local authorities.

### *How we are perceived...*

Civil military cooperation is not exclusive to the specialised TCT teams. In practice, each soldier at his level carries out small civil-military actions within the realm of his/ her daily tasks.

To try and describe how the local population feels with regard to his actions is a particularly difficult exercise, especially when trying to remain perfectly objective. In all modesty, we think that in general, Belgian soldiers that were sent to the Balkans carried out work that was generally really appreciated by the local population.

To know that our men are carrying out useful and effective work is one thing; but to hear it from the mouth of one of those who represented our voice and our ears in these regions —the interpreters who accompanied our soldiers all day long whilst they were carrying out their daily tasks— is another thing which takes on a whole other dimension. It is the strength of the testimony of one of these auxiliaries that is presented below in Text Box 1.

With regards to the local perception of CIMIC projects, some may think that this would be proportional to the financial resources deployed to carry out the assistance projects. But this is not so! In keeping with the small size of our country, the Belgian CIMIC is indeed quite modest if compared to projects and budgets of certain bigger European nations. The Belgian CIMIC is not trying to achieve great visibility, nor is it trying to open any doors for national investors. Local populations in the regions where we work understand this, and know to appreciate those that come in aid to them unselfishly.

**Text Box 1: To the families of the BELBOS<sup>15</sup>**

When the Belgian soldiers arrived in Central Bosnia, I was recruited as an interpreter. This was a new experience for me. Having been a teacher for twenty years, I was more used to younger people. However, I was curious to see how things would work when spending time with soldiers. From the very start, I have held them in such high esteem that I felt the need to write to you. In their white tanks, with their blue helmets, they look so strict, strong, disciplined and handsome; ready to accomplish their mission as peace soldiers. But what touches me the most is that they talk to me about their families, whilst showing me the photos of their babies, of their pets. They offer me sweets that you send them from Belgian. They are very well-behaved, very polite. I see them looking after the sick, being affectionate to the children, stroking the dogs, feeding the birds and that warms my heart after having lived through so much cruelty here. These boys know how to laugh and cry, we know that. That gives us hope for our new generation. What I appreciate the most, is their modesty. You can be proud of your sons. Congratulations to the women, fiancées, girlfriends who have had the luck to meet them. I am the mother of a twenty-year old. My dear Belgian friends, may God keep you away from all misfortune and above all from war.

Njazica HIKUS»  
 Interpreter for BELBOS in SANTICI (1994)  
 Published in VOX Magazine.

In addition, we understand the meaning of compromise. The multicultural and multilingual characteristics of our country have made

<sup>15</sup> BELBOS: Acronym for BELges en BOSnie (BELgians in BOSnia). This belgian mechanical infantry company was deployed from March to August 1994, alongside a British batallion in Central Bosnia, within the frame of the FORPRONU mission.

us accustomed to living with people that are different, to look for solutions to our problems through negotiation rather than brutal opposition. Finally, the level of visits of our CIMIC house is an excellent barometer to measure local perception of our CIMIC actions in the region. We are convinced that our presence is useful here. However, the Belgian soldier is convinced that the question to pose is whether this sentiment is reciprocated in Belgium?

Belgian troops sent on operations to areas as discussed like the Balkans are very sensitive to expressions of interest and support, whether from their families, their friends or from the Belgian population as a whole. The role of the Belgian media is not to be neglected in this instance. But one must realise that, as the trains that arrive on time never receive much attention, operations and actions, which are carried out successfully rarely receive the media attention and the recognition they deserved. It is a shame because press articles can provide huge moral support. The peacekeeping soldier has the feeling that he is not forgotten, that his commitment is not just a military thing and that the whole population recognises this. This provides him with a sentiment of pride which has a positive impact on his day to day work, and which, given the international context in which his work is carried out, has a positive impact on Belgium's reputation.

## Conclusion

In the beginning of the 1990s, civil-military cooperation in the Balkans was mainly based on improvisation and pragmatism. Because they were confronted with the needs and the realities of the ground, servicemen had to adapt and developed a modern concept of cooperation with the civil world. Today, peacekeeping operations are totally inconceivable without the CIMIC dimension. However, few civil actors are really familiar with the concept. Some are still suspicious of it, afraid of the distortion of the military mission. The Belgian contingents deployed are not «NGOs in uniform», wanting to take over the responsibilities and tasks of the humanitarians. For the military commander, the military aspect of the operation remains the priority, and invariably consists of creating the conditions for security and stability which will allow humanitarian organisations to develop their activities.

Today, each operation has a military and a civil dimension. As security in a region increases, the civil aspect of the operation increases, with the CIMIC effort intensifying accordingly. In an operation zone, CIMIC is therefore indispensable to ensure harmony between civil and

military actions and to encourage complementarity within the frame of a common mandate. Short term, it ensures that there is a proper framework for the military to execute its mission. Long term, it must accelerate the return to a normal way of life, the building of sustainable peace, and the reconstruction of the country by the local authorities and by the international community without the presence of the military.

The most intense civil-military relations certainly exist in the field, when humanitarians and the military work side by side on many common projects. CIMIC has an advantage of having greatly contributed to a nascent mutual comprehension between the military and humanitarian actors. But CIMIC has above all succeeded to act: in an organised and coordinated manner; to overcome the bureaucracy and any opposition to progress; and finally, it allowed for the accomplishment of a multitude of little things that presented the local population with hope for a better tomorrow.

As for the Belgian soldier, he has the right to feel proud of his achievements: the smile of a child in his rebuilt school constituting the best reward!

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# Humanitarian NGO Networks

Kathrin Schick<sup>1</sup>

## A short history of humanitarian aid

The roots of the Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) movement date back to the beginning of the Red Cross movement in 1863. Most social movements and NGOs were created due to the realities of war and social upheaval. Many NGOs started as movements created by groups of volunteers wanting to help victims of persecution and the effects of wars. The Spanish Civil War and the Second World War gave the impetus to the creation of a range of such organisations. Many of the well known NGOs were created during that period: Save the Children (1919, UK); International Rescue Committee (1933, USA); OXFAM (1942, UK); Care (1945, USA); and World Vision (1959, USA) all came about this way. As such these organizations were rooted in the cultural and ethical values of western societies, who also disposed of sufficient financial means to support humanitarian missions.

The 1960s and 1970s saw the protest movements against the Vietnam War and the independence wars of many African nations. These events lead to the creation of solidarity movements mainly in Europe but also in the US. They worked for democratic rights in countries in Latin America or showed solidarity with the Afghan, Angolan, Palestinian, Mozambican and Saharawi people among others. These processes led to the creation of more NGOs and to a broadening of the scope of

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engagement of development and humanitarian NGOs to include the whole Southern hemisphere.

During the time of the Cold War neutral humanitarian aid existed parallel to aid given on political grounds, the latter often provided through governments. But critics about military interventions (Vietnam, Afghanistan) and violations of human rights by governments led to the creation of new organizations taking a proactive political stand on humanitarian grounds. A typical example is the French NGO Médecins sans frontières, created in 1971, which started out by advocating for a political solution to the Biafra conflict in Nigeria while at the same time helping the victims of the war on humanitarian grounds.

With the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 new war and conflict scenarios emerged. The absence of the two power blocs led to an increased number of civil wars. In these conflicts in Africa (Rwanda, Liberia, Sierra Leone), in the Balkans, the Former Soviet Union and Indonesia (East Timor), the civilian populations were increasingly targeted. Meanwhile western political powers embarked on so-called ethical humanitarian military interventions in Iraq, the Balkans, Somalia and Sierra Leone. As a consequence the UN came under pressure to become more active in conflict management and humanitarian issues. This led to an increasing number of peace-keeping missions.

With the Balkans war right outside its door, the European Union, involved in military and humanitarian aid, embarked on developing a common foreign policy and strengthening of its humanitarian interventions. It created the European Commission Humanitarian Office (ECHO) in 1992.

During this period the importance of humanitarian assistance (HA) was upgraded in the political arena and through increased attention by the media. HA was seen both as immediate aid to victims and as a political tool to solve conflicts.

For humanitarian NGOs all these developments led to increased financial resources but also to more pressure from and dependency on both the media and politics. The increased humanitarian involvement of the military in conflict areas resulted in more contact between NGOs and military forces in the field and to a debate about military interventions and the role and mandate of the military in conflict areas. The increased political initiatives to politicise HA sparked a debate about the independence, impartiality and neutrality of humanitarian organizations. Also the impact of HA in conflicts came under debate: dependency, support of war economies and sustainability became issues. The evaluation of the humanitarian efforts during the Rwanda Genocide



led to the establishment of several initiatives seeking to improve the quality of humanitarian interventions.

## **The characteristics of humanitarian NGOs**

An NGO is an independent organisation created voluntarily and not working for profit. Instead it works for a common good in solidarity with, for example, a continent, a country, a people, a group, a cause, or society as a whole.

NGOs consist of volunteers and/or employees representing individual or collective members, but have a formal structure and a budget. NGOs can range from small grassroots organisations consisting of a handful of volunteers to highly efficient global enterprises with many thousands of paid employees and volunteers.

The term «non-governmental organisation» is often debated since it is not clear whether it refers to ideological, juridical or financial independence from the State. But most of the NGOs in this so-called «third sector» (as opposed to the governmental first sector and the private second sector) would argue that their donors hardly control their ideological independence despite the fact that they receive a considerable part of their economic means from governments and the European Commission.

Humanitarian aid is considered to be a sub-sector of the sector of international cooperation which also includes long term development, food aid, development education and trade, just to mention a few of the possible specializations under this heading.

Most NGOs involved in international cooperation are working in several of these sub-sectors and are running both long-term development projects and delivering humanitarian assistance. For several years an ongoing debate among both donors and NGOs implementing projects has stressed the need to work in a way which links relief with rehabilitation and development: the so-called «LRRD» or «transition» debate. It is therefore not easy to classify the majority of NGOs in this sector as exclusively one or the other.

Humanitarian aid is characterized by the short-term duration of the intervention in both natural and man-made disasters, as well as in complex emergencies. The main aim is the saving of lives and the prevention of suffering of the victims of emergencies.

While the International Committee of the Red Cross is mandated by the international community to be the guardian of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and universal humanitarian principles, most hu-

manitarian NGOs base their interventions on these principles deriving from the Geneva Conventions. These are the principles of impartiality and independence, and that assistance should be given to the most vulnerable groups based on needs alone. NGOs consider themselves as humanitarian actors as defined in the annexes and protocols to the Conventions.

Even if NGOs are not directly mentioned in IHL, it is of great relevance to all relief agencies. The IHL articles concerning civilian relief describe when states must allow humanitarian assistance to reach civilians and which conditions they may impose.

The humanitarian principles form part of the mission statements and mandates of most humanitarian NGOs. As such, IHL is both an ethical value underlying their field operations and a practical tool to implement their mandates, especially as it refers to the access to vulnerable populations and to the issue of security of humanitarian aid workers.

Since the 1990s in its strive for quality and high standards of professionalism, the community of international NGOs has sought to reaffirm the humanitarian ethic through the development of the Code of Conduct (signed by 307 NGOs as of October 2004), the Humanitarian Charter and the Sphere Minimum Standards in Disaster Response. These practically operate as «soft law» in the NGO community.

## **Humanitarian NGO networks**

Following a trend away from political parties and trade unions, many people have considered it more worthwhile to support a clear social cause. One of the results being a steady growth in the number and importance of civil society organisations including humanitarian NGOs.

Traditionally the humanitarian community involves a range of civilian actors such as the United Nations, the Red Cross movement and governments. Over the last decades several trans-national NGO networks have been created in order to influence and follow the policies of both the US government, the UN and the European Institutions.

An NGO network brings together a number of NGOs working for a common purpose at national, European or international level. Networks can be organised in different ways: they may have collective or individual members or a national platform structure. Today a wide range of NGO networks and alliances exist in the fields of international co-operation, human rights and the social and the environmental sector.

While the individual member organisations of these networks are based at national level and implement projects all over the world, the networks work on lobby and advocacy issues on behalf of their members. They also provide services to their members concerning information sharing, enhance NGO visibility through representation, training and awareness rising on issues related to humanitarian assistance. Many of the activities of the networks are implemented through working groups contributing to the exchange of best practices, exchange of opinions and co-ordination between NGOs.

Besides being political pressure groups, networks also function as interlocutors with institutions and governments as well as interest organisations for their members. Most of these networks are membership-based and seek to have a high degree of financial independence from donors in order to be as independent as possible from possible political considerations.

### **The spectrum of humanitarian networks**

Currently there are four humanitarian NGO networks operating: The International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) is a global network of human rights, humanitarian, and development NGOs, which focuses its information exchange and advocacy efforts primarily on humanitarian affairs and refugee issues. ICVA has around 70 members. Founded in 1962, ICVA attempts to influence policy and practice to reflect humanitarian principles and human rights through information-exchange and advocacy. In particular, Geneva-based ICVA facilitates relationships with UN agencies and other international organisations on issues such as protection and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

Founded in 1984, InterAction, based in Washington, is the largest alliance of U.S.-based international development and humanitarian nongovernmental organizations. Its Humanitarian Policy and Practice Committee serves as an umbrella for coordinating all of InterAction's work in refugee and disaster assistance. Their work is concentrated around the issues of protection and durable solutions for displaced people, as well as disaster response and operations. Civil-military relations and security are other issues. The Committee and its 73 members also run crisis-specific working groups.

The Standing Committee of Humanitarian Response (SCHR) is a coalition of nine of the largest humanitarian organisations including the Red Cross Family and MSF. Based in Geneva, their secretariat focuses

mainly on influencing the humanitarian policies of the UN institutions. Several of its members were involved in the development of the Code of Conduct for NGOs. SCHR also took the initiative to develop the SPHERE project which developed the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards for disaster response.

Voluntary Organisations in Cooperation in Emergencies (VOICE) was created in 1992 when the European Commission created its Humanitarian Office (ECHO). VOICE is a network of 90 NGOs throughout Europe that are active in the field of humanitarian aid, including emergency aid, rehabilitation and disaster preparedness. VOICE's essential overriding mission is to foster links among Humanitarian Aid NGOs. Based in Brussels, VOICE also aims to facilitate contacts with the institutions of the European Union and to develop collaboration with international humanitarian organisations. VOICE accomplishes these aims through four types of services: developing information, devising instruments for consultation, giving political expression to the shared concerns of NGOs and developing the life of its network.

### **The added value of network activities**

The humanitarian networks seek to enhance the effectiveness and professional capacities of its members engaged in international humanitarian efforts. They work to enhance the identity, autonomy, credibility and diverse perspectives of each member agency. They also provide a broadly based participatory forum for professional consultation, coordination and concerted action. Through their work the networks foster the effectiveness and recognition of the NGO community, both professionally and in the public eye.

NGOs operate increasingly in the midst of conflicts that deliberately target the civilian population. While undertaking their work they witness atrocities and human rights abuses, and humanitarian assistance alone is often not enough to alleviate the suffering of the victims. The need for advocacy on protection issues has become more vocal from many NGOs and several of the networks are therefore focusing on protection and the situation of Internally Displaced People (IDPs), especially in relation to the UN.

Through their members NGO networks get the in-pu from the field reality and can therefore develop lobby and advocacy initiatives based on this information. They can highlight basic understanding and can offer fundamentally different views on for example the implementation of International Humanitarian Law.

Quality and professionalism are other important issues for the networks. Currently ICVA and SCHR are working on a project to look into how the Code of Conduct has been used by NGOs in their daily work, especially in the field. They are also engaged in a project developing tools and guidelines for NGOs on the issue of sexual exploitation of refugees.

Together with several of their members all four networks work together to spread the knowledge and use of the so-called Sphere standards and the Humanitarian Charter in humanitarian interventions all over the world.

Another important challenge for the humanitarian community is the relationship between the military and civilian humanitarian actors in the field. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee, which brings together UN agencies, non-UN humanitarian agencies and NGO networks therefore developed guidelines on how to use Military and Civilian Defense Assets in complex emergencies, the so-called MCDA guidelines. ICVA, SCHR and Interaction were involved and were able to contribute actively to this process.

Increased international military interventions legitimized as humanitarian interventions have contributed to the blurring of the lines between the military and civilian humanitarian actors. Private Western security contractors contribute even more to a confusion of who does what for whom. Many of the activities of these actors have resulted in the reduction of the humanitarian space which civilian humanitarian actors depend upon in order to operate according to international humanitarian principles. Campaigning for the maintenance of humanitarian space is therefore a high priority for humanitarian networks and their members.

There is also the possibility of mutual education between institutions and networks. For example, NGO networks and their members have been invited to brief NATO ambassadors as the former often know more about a given situation. NGO networks have also been invited to give their viewpoint on EU draft guidelines for civil-military relations in the field to the military staff of the European Council. Concerning practical cooperation on the ground there is a need for dialogue, not least for security reasons (e.g. Afghanistan).

In order to carry out their mission and to maintain a certain level of security in action, independence from belligerent parties in complex emergencies remains fundamental for humanitarian NGOs. Political independence from donors is as crucial for NGOs in order not to be related to a donor's special geopolitical interest in a given region (Iraq, Afghanistan and so-called «humanitarian wars»). Over the last year

VOICE has therefore campaigned with success to have the humanitarian principle of neutrality included in the draft European Constitution. The increased politisation of humanitarian aid, through giving humanitarian assistance instead of finding durable political solutions to conflicts, is another topic VOICE worked on. Topical briefings contribute to awareness raising on relevant humanitarian issues such as EU crisis management.

The networks have a role to play as interlocutors between their members and institutions such as the UN, the EU and governments. An example of partnership on contractual and funding issues has been the consultation process between ECHO and its NGO partners. Since 1999, VOICE has been involved in facilitating this process with ECHO concerning the Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA), which regulates the project funding for NGOs. The so-called FPA Watch Group has worked on behalf of all ECHO NGO partners in order to raise their concerns and viewpoints with ECHO. Currently a new group is being established in order to follow the implementation of the third FPA signed in 2003.

In relation to the European Parliament (EP), VOICE has raised issues such as access to vulnerable populations as well as the security of aid workers. Another important issue to lobby the European Parliament on is ECHO's annual budget.

Institutions and NGO networks can also establish common projects. Recently NATO worked together with several networks and their members to set up a code against trafficking in human beings.

Concerning the dialogue with the institutions, networks can also promote the position of its members broadening their representation and maintaining their anonymity. NGOs find the security situation in certain countries so difficult that they often prefer not to publicize relevant information by themselves in order not to endanger both their foreign and local staff, as much as the population they are seeking to assist. Networks thus play an important role in advancing such information.

Through their members NGO networks often have relatively close contact with the grass-roots level of civil society. Through their broad based membership, NGO networks can also play the role of multipliers, that is, to spread information or positions to more people than their own members.

Through their advocacy the networks seek to draw the attention to the fact that access to vulnerable populations and security for humanitarian workers represent the two major obstacles to the implementation of emergency interventions. The two issues are closely linked to

the efficient application of IHL by governments and the international community. They therefore also have a role to play in drawing the attention of governments and the wider public to the importance of the work of their members.

Among their members they play the role of facilitators and seek to contribute to better coordination through information exchange and exchange of good practice. Over the last years, for instance, VOICE has organized several conferences among others on the issue of child soldiers and on the challenges for EU Humanitarian Aid. Through these activities, expert research and reports, NGO networks can challenge conventional wisdom.

## **Conclusion**

As the representatives of an active civil society movement, humanitarian NGO networks and their members will have a number of important roles to play as interlocutors with regional and international institutions also in the future; instead of being cheap implementers for donors they can continue to be important actors for change.

At EU and UN level the concept of partnership between the NGO networks and the institutions has to be developed further, and real spaces for dialogue have to be created. The networks have an interest in engaging in a constructive dialogue with the relevant institutions. But in order to do so there needs to be a clear commitment by the UN agencies and the European institutions to recognize NGO networks as relevant political players - not just cheap implementers. NGOs have to systematize their experiences, coordinate their positions even better and communicate the achievements and nature of their work more widely. NGO networks are key players in making this happen.





## Forbidden Journalism: Tribute to the Information Thieves

Jean-Paul Marthoz<sup>1</sup>

A ghost floats above the world of international journalism, the ghost of powerlessness and of insignificance. After two decades of crises, catastrophes and wars which had seemingly given the press the power to fashion the general public's reactions and to determine governments' attitudes, journalists now doubt everything, even their own integrity: the war in Iraq, with its «human rights» justification, with its propaganda and its «media blunders», and with what consequently followed —news full of hatred and murders—, was the last straw leading to bitterness.

One year after the beginning of hostilities, the press, especially in the US, is now admitting its errors; the press is suffering from depression. Some worthy exceptions aside, Sy Hersh from the *New Yorker*, Dana Milbank from the *Washington Post* or again the *New York Review of Books*, *The Nation*, or *The American Prospect*, the main media have passed on without hesitation the lies and approximations from the White House and the Pentagon. They have left it up to others to reveal the exactions and the violence in the Abu Ghraib prison. Television, instead of covering the war, has chosen to promote it<sup>2</sup>.

Very often, journalists have been lagging behind the news and have been out of sync with reality. After having missed the last genocide of the century, in Rwanda in 1994, they first of all underestimated the crisis in Kosovo, before over-covering, but after the event, a war without any real battlefield. During the second Chechnyan war, only a handful

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<sup>1</sup> International Director of Information, *Human Rights Watch*.

<sup>2</sup> For a more detailed analysis of the American press during the Iraq War, read Jean-Paul MARTHOZ: *Face au marketing de guerre, in Irak, les medias dans la guerre*, Actes Sud, Paris, 2003.

dared venture there, the daring special reporter from *Libération* Anne Nivat<sup>3</sup>, the Russian journalist Anna Polikovskaia<sup>4</sup>, and the American photographer Stanley Greene. Most of the reports about the exactions committed by the Russian forces and the Chechnyan rebels against the civilian population came from the humanitarian organisations. More recently, most of the press took eight months before picking up on the tragic measures of scorched earth policies and ethnic cleansing as pursued by the Khartoum government against the black African tribes of Darfur.

«The era of war correspondence is clearly over» wrote the journalist Philip Knightley, already a few years ago. For thirty years, the media and the military have fought a bitter battle, and the military have won. After the Gulf War, Kosovo and now Chechnya, it is desperately clear that future wars will be reported according to the terms laid down by the military and government communicators. The 150-year-old tradition of war correspondence is dead<sup>5</sup>. Whilst, in Iraq, hundreds of journalists have tried to cover the conflict independently, by staying in Baghdad or by going it alone, hundreds of others have accepted to be embedded within the invading forces, without always differentiating between journalism and patriotism.

This confusion is serious because journalism, so often and so rightly accused of its weaknesses and digressions, has been and remains a decisive actor in the struggle in dignity and solidarity. From William Russell, of the *Times* in London, revealing between 1854 and 1856 the horrendous conditions of hygiene and equipment in the British Army during the Crimean War, to John Pilger, continuously denouncing for 25 years the suffering in East Timor, from Albert Londres, investigating the Cayenne prison, to Corinne Dufka, posted in Sierra Leone, the conviction of a few journalists that they could change events by the power of their words and the impact of their photos, has given this profession the most glorious pages of its history. The introspection and melancholy of journalism concerns from now on all those who are not satisfied with the new disorder of the world and who worry about the indifference and disillusion.

The essential thrust of information is demonstrated by «absurdity», by the fear of the torturers and *génocidaires* of seeing their acts

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<sup>3</sup> Author of *Chienne de Guerre* and of *La Guerre qui n'aura pas eu lieu*, published in Editions Fayard, Paris.

<sup>4</sup> *Tchéchénie: Le déshonneur russe*, Buchet-Chastel, Paris, 2003, 185 pp.

<sup>5</sup> *No More Heroes: war correspondents retreat from the frontline*, IPI Report, first quarter 2000.

exposed. When one reads *The Burning Tigris*<sup>6</sup> by Peter Balakian, the apocalyptic account of the Armenian genocide in 1915, there is no doubt that the Ottoman authorities and their German allies sought from the very outset to hide the horror, and afterwards sought, helped by the Turkish government, to deny its reality. When one reads *Official Secrets*<sup>7</sup>, this masterpiece on the Holocaust by Richard Breitman, it clearly appears that the Nazi authorities in 1942 were afraid of their own people and afraid that the Allied Forces might learn and above all might understand what was going on. When one reads the detailed analysis carried out by Alison Des Forges<sup>8</sup> for *Human Rights Watch*, significantly titled *Leave None to Tell the Story*, of the preparation and enactment of the Rwanda genocide, it appears tragically that if the press had clamoured much louder during the period 1991-1993, if they had remained in or entered the country in April 1994, the United States could not have turned a blind eye and refused to talk of genocide, and the perpetrators could have been stopped. The Rwandan government was so scared of the international reaction that it took the departure of the journalists and the unenthusiastic journalistic cover, as a «license to kill». In April, the three main American television stations devoted 32 minutes to Rwanda, one and a half percent of their news programmes<sup>9</sup>. Between April and June, five people were murdered every minute, as was known, but not seen, by all. The genocide was the equivalent of twice as many 9/11 victims, every day for one hundred days.

The same doubts arose in connection with Darfur, causing a representative of a human rights defence organisation to exclaim: «Journalists do not cover genocides. They simply cover their anniversaries». Whilst the most serious exactions carried out by the Janjaweed militia against the Black African population took place in Autumn 2003, the American press only really began to cover the humanitarian crisis in April 2004. When thousands of people had already been killed and more than a million had been displaced.

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<sup>6</sup> Peter BALAKIAN: *The Burning Tigris, The Armenian Genocide and America's Response*, HarperCollins Publishers, New York, 2004, 475 pp.

<sup>7</sup> BREITMAN, Richard: *Official Secrets, What the Nazis Planned, What the British and Americans Knew*, Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, London, 1998.

<sup>8</sup> Human Rights Watch/FIDH, *Leave None to Tell The Story*, New York, 1999, 798 pp.

<sup>9</sup> MOELLER, Susan: *Compassion Fatigue*, Routledge, London, 1999, p. 283.

## 1. **Courage**

«No information, no photo is worth the life of a journalist», exclaimed a leading figure in the American press a few years ago. At the risk of appearing indecent, we believe however, that there is certain information that is worth taking a risk for: war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide are such examples of the need to inform, and come under the written obligation to be found in the Convention of 9<sup>th</sup> December 1948 which imposes a duty on all States to «prevent, suppress and punish» the crime of genocide.

To put the question of journalism faced with humanitarian crises is to put the question of journalists» security in war zones and of the responsibility of everyone to guarantee their protection as called for under the Geneva Conventions. But it is also to talk of courage. Every day, in many countries, in Colombia, in Algeria, in the Great Lakes Region, in Iraq, journalists take risks to defend the right to knowledge and the right to speak. In Sarajevo, in East Timor, in the Middle East, journalists have died because they wanted to report barbaric incidents. I would like to pay tribute to these «media bandits», to these journalists who avoid the government information and press services, who jump over barriers, force roadblocks, and cross the line of fire, also to these humanitarian workers who work in these distant and outlawed places, far from the CNN cameras, and without whom world news would be even more brief and frivolous. I would in particular like to pay tribute to Daniel Pearl, of the *Wall Street Journal*, beheaded by his extremists captors in Pakistan, to Elizabeth Neuffer, of the *Boston Globe*, who after having written one of the most powerful books on the Balkan massacres, met her death in Iraq. But I would above all like to remember those journalists who were killed far from the limelight. I am thinking of Miguel Gil of the *Associated Press* and Kurt Schork of *Reuters*, who died in Sierra Leone, in one of these rotten and forgotten conflicts which led some of the public to turn their eyes away or to zap to the next channel.

For a long time now the press card no longer protects against bullets. In many war zones, journalists have become legitimate targets, the taking of hostages has become part of the normal panoply of the warlords, government soldiers are shutting off the battlefields. *Silence, we're killing*. Everyone is involved: in August 2004, the new Iraqi Army forced journalists to leave the town of Najaf under siege. August 27<sup>th</sup>, Enzo Baldoni, of the Milan *Diario della Settimana*, was shot down by his captors from the so-called «Islamic Army of Iraq».

While it had become customary to wonder at the latest possibilities offered by new information and communication technologies, at the

miracles of live television and Internet, most post-modern wars take place *in camera*. CNN, which had set up its cameras and deployed its satellite antennas on the roofs of the Al-Rashid Hotel in Baghdad, during the Gulf War, stayed clear of Chechnya; too dangerous.

## 2. News as a Commodity

However, physical fear is not the only reason for the withdrawal of war correspondents because in the world of journalism one will always find enough scarred veterans, enough ambitious and crazy young people, enough rebels, to follow powder and blood. The media economy is just as determining. «The greatest risk for international news, said Seymour Topping, former chief editor of the *New York Times*, is the concentration of ownership and the search for profit, as is its tendency to not assume any responsibility except that of its own accounting.»

After many years marked by concentrations, privatisations and the mingling of the press and industry, information, especially the television, has become a commodity. Whilst in most democracies, a few titles and a few quality programmes still prosper on an ambitious and rational conception of information, only a minority of the public views them. International news is the first victim of this duality between an elite press and a more general public press. Especially in the United States, international cover has constantly decreased over the last ten years. The time and space devoted to it has been reduced—a drop of 72 percent for the major American stations since the 1970s—, many foreign offices have been closed down and the international menu of the main television programmes or of the main regional papers is usually limited to a few sensational pictures and to a meagre and incoherent selection of news flashes. September 11 and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have naturally changed the situation somewhat but this return of international news to mass media is short-term because it is not inspired by the recognition of the importance of the world, but more by its current closeness to home.

In the United States, the country which so much determines the action or inaction of the international community, the media apartheid has become a reality: only 4% of the population can be considered to be well informed on international events. The remainder sways between naïve ignorance and half-yearly media enthusiasm: Somalia and Bosnia in 1992, South Africa and Rwanda in 1994, Kosovo and East Timor in 1999, the war against terrorism and Afghanistan in 2001, Iraq

and the Sudan in 2004. This slots in between O.J. Simpson, Lady Di, Monica Lewinsky or Schwarzenegger.

This commoditisation of information has a travelling companion: the reign of communication. Special reporters, already castigated by an infotainment logic which favours mass journalism and instant information, usually found far from the scene of battle, such as Grenada, Kuwait, Kosovo, Chechnya, Afghanistan, Iraq or the Sudan, constitute a wonderful manipulative plebe for the military specialists in psychological warfare and the communication directors of the big NGOs.

Swearing that they would not be caught out again, journalists find themselves between two syndromes: that of Timisoara, which taught them to be wary of emphases and fabulations, and that of Srebrenica, which makes them afraid of missing a crime against humanity or a genocide. Paradoxically, whilst humanitarian mobilisation depended mainly on the availability of images, in East Timor, Kosovo and recently to a certain extent in Darfur, it is the denial of access and the absence of images that was one of the main causes for indignation and intervention. «The reference to Srebrenica, said Jean-Christophe Rufin<sup>10</sup> when talking of Kosovo, introduces into the political arena/discussion what philosophers call a «parousic» dimension. Parousia is the moment where the hidden is revealed. When talking of Kosovo, the example of Srebrenica continuously gives rise to the fear that something more serious will be revealed than what had already been found. The idea that the real drama exceeds the visible drama will lead to experiencing the Kosovo crisis in a virtual mode. Humanitarians, for the first time, no longer have the need to alert public opinion by a description of the facts, insofar as a certain section of the public, the American public, will continue to be convinced that these facts are only the tip of the iceberg and that all will be revealed one day, as was the case with the Bosnian mass graves.»

Even if this «parousic» dimension has enabled humanitarian actors» determination to be reinforced and has encouraged the «international community» to do something in Kosovo, the gap between sensational journalism and the reality in the field can harm/ influence of humanitarian information and thus intervention possibilities. It could be discouraging. Journalists, encouraged by extravagant declarations, run the risk of transferring their scepticisms and doubts onto information

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<sup>10</sup> *Kosovo: échec ou espoir?*, in *Des Choix Difficiles, les dilemmes moraux de l'humanitaire*, Under the guidance of Jonathan Moore, Gallimard, Paris, 1999, p. 397.

from NGOs. At the cost of once again underestimating the extent of the crisis. In the grey areas of the «nasty little wars» of the start of this century, truth and sobriety are imperative.

### 3. New Conflicts

The changing nature of conflicts also explains the uneasiness found amongst journalists. Since the end of the Cold War, which offered a logical framework and a clear understanding of all crises, issues and the dividing lines between good and evil have become blurred. Recent conflicts have eroded the concept of «entitlement». In most wars, from Liberia to the Ivory Coast, from Ituri (Congo) to Darfur (the Sudan), from the Jaffna Peninsula to the killing fields of High Magdalena (Colombia), there are no longer many combatants who will be idealised by public opinion in the North. There are no longer any good rebels: the Islamic slaughterers, Tamil terrorists, Chechen hostage-takers, Hutu *génocidaires* and the Colombian narco-guerrilleros have banished to the attic the broken dreams of 1970s romanticism. Afghan «freedom fighters» have become the Taliban, and President Kabila is not as inspiring as Che Guevara.

Very often, there aren't even any good victims. In the course of ethnic conflicts, confusion has spread. Whilst in Sarajevo it was possible to choose your side, to feel sympathy for the besieged population and even to attribute the most sombre role to the Serb forces, whilst in Rwanda in 1994 the blame on *Hutu Power* and the innocence of the Tutsi victims were without doubt, confusion reigned in the Hutu refugee camps in Congo when victims of this humanitarian crisis more mediated than the genocide itself, were suspected of being murderers and therefore guilty.

The incredible and apparently irrational brutality of the civil wars adds complexity to the situation. The massacre by machete of hundreds of thousands of Tutsis in Rwanda, the amputations in Sierra Leone, the executions of Colombian peasants, the exactions committed by the Janjaweed militias in the Sudan, appear, literally, to be incomprehensible. The reflex is therefore to simplify, to take for sole explanation ancestral hatreds and tribal divisions, or to take refuge in unsuitable historical (the Holocaust) or localised (the comparison between the chaos in Mogadishu and gang warfare in Los Angeles) analogies, which confuse more than clarify.

«In three minutes one cannot explain several centuries of hatred»: it was in these terms and referring to pictures showing Iranian Islamic

demonstrators that one of the best public American television programmes in the early 80s, the *McNeill/Lehrer NewsHour*, advertised itself, thus underlining the damage caused by the information economy, or rather the economy on information. In the world of media and in particular in the television world marked by the competition for the highest audience, most television channels don't even have these three minutes needed to explain the «centuries of hatred». Their only recourse is a stereotyped form of commenting on selected images, following a certain marketing logic, and their dramatic character is obtained through copying the fast rhythm of a thriller series.

Three problems emerge from this conception of information: the impression of dizziness and of insignificance whereas the repetition of the information would allow it to be really brought home to the public and to the leaders; the excessiveness of the horror which, instead of provoking indignation and action among the audience, plunges it into numbness and oblivion; the simplification, even a caricature, of the origins of conflicts. Yet, by defining a conflict, by naming it, one also determines the solutions, which have to be sought. What is there to do when faced with a «millennium of hatred» except offer help to the victims or else ignore them and change television channel? And yet there is something that can be done, action can be taken against the perpetrators, if this hatred really is as it is described: government programming of a genocide. Something else *can* be done, if the violence of killers is linked to globalisation and to the criminalisation of the world economy.

#### 4. Understanding in order to Act

Understanding this context is essential to establish humanitarian action and in order to think of a sustainable solution for crisis situations. Indeed, in the world of media where sensationalism is king, it is easy to shock and mobilise public opinion but even easier to frighten people and cause them to switch off. Images of the famine and war in Somalia create an atmosphere where intervention is desired, and images of martyred American soldiers create such feelings of indignation that call for withdrawal.

It is necessary for journalists as well as human rights organisations to analyse the historical causes and the economic context —areas so often forgotten in this post-Marxist and «end of time» era—, to enquire into the proliferation of state and non-state actors, and to unravel the interconnection of local and international authorities, since



they cannot expect to have any impact if they denounce the existence of evil without being concerned with the root causes of such evil.

Only a detailed conflict analysis will ensure that the conflict will not only be described in relation to its brutalities and violence and to prevent them from nurturing the feeling of scorn vis-à-vis these cursed peoples and continents which have fallen prey to the profit and loss of modernity.

The choice of journalism affects the choice of action taken. The increased distinction between two increasingly divided classes of media, quality press and sensational press, has meant that public opinion has equally been divided as to the solutions. Fed by «journalistic junk food», the general public falls back onto the easy solution of providing aid to the victims, rather than stopping to consider the means of stopping the carnage. Rwanda offers a poignant example of this. Whilst television channels were showing pictures of civilian massacres, sometimes within range of UN soldiers» revolvers, it was only a few months later, when a cholera epidemic broke out in Hutu refugee camps in Goma, that the American public started to show its generosity.

For quality press viewers, where explanation has priority over emotion, the equation is different. This type of conflict raises not only the question of assistance and aid to victims, but also that of the neutralisation of the perpetrators. The right to intervene has shifted: from access to victims over borders, to the right to track down their executioners. Pity has turned into the right to justice.

Even though the hunting down of Somali warlords in the streets of Mogadishu in 1992 showed the limits in this shift towards military operations, it is in these terms that many journalists and researchers from human rights organisations think of the conflicts they cover. In recent years indeed, we have seen that the information we have on civilian massacres, inevitably called for investigations into their executioners, into the chain of command and into intervention methods to bring an end to war crimes and crimes against humanity. The creation of international criminal courts, in place of heavy-handed interventions, is only a postponed version; some would say a watered-down version, of this desire to bring those responsible to justice.

## 5. A New Form of Journalism

These new conflicts call for new forms of journalism. At the most technical level, they call for new ways of preparing reports and of the reconsidering of editorial organisational methods. What point is there,

in these times of fast-moving globalisation, in the almost complete separation of international news services, of national politics, of economics, of developments in society and miscellaneous news? Like food scares which rope in all editors—from the agricultural editor to the European correspondent, from the medical columnist to the political editorialist—, humanitarian crises cover almost all these areas. The situation in the Great Lakes Region for example is of as much concern to the diamond economy specialist as to the arms trafficking specialist, the military chronicler, the African specialist, the person responsible for immigrations and asylum matters, the United Nations correspondent, and the diplomatic commentator. The challenge of this «transversal» or «integral» journalism is to bring back meaning to the news.

## 6. «Journalism with Meaning»

The world, indeed, as Zaki Laïdi so well put it, is «devoid of meaning»<sup>11</sup>. And for this reason today, the battle of words and ideas is just as important as, if not more than, the war of pictures. To support the humanitarian cause, it is no longer sufficient only to plant ones cameras in front of suffering, one must first explain its causes. It is equally just as, and increasingly, important to imagine the solutions, and particularly to offer an interpretation of the world which neither ends up in cynicism or in despair.

Sombre and catastrophe books such as those by Robert Kaplan, *The Ends of the Earth*<sup>12</sup> or *The Coming Anarchy*<sup>13</sup>, are just as important as CNN images because, when one realises that they are read by heads of state or political readers and that they are discussed during numerous seminars in political circles, they provide a powerful code to understanding current affairs and are a constant reference in political decision-making.

«Meaningful journalism» raises ethical issues in information and introduces the dilemma of involvement. No cause justifies the downgrading of the quality of journalism and of democratic debate. As a matter of principle: because, for humanitarians and journalists, the end should not justify the means, because solidarity should never overlook the truth. Similarly, issues of efficiency should not compromise the truth,

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<sup>11</sup> *Un Monde Privé de Sens*, Fayard, Paris, 1994.

<sup>12</sup> Random House, New York, 1997, 476 pp.

<sup>13</sup> Random House, New York, 2000, 198 pp.

because the loss of credibility affects one's capacity to act in the long term.

Thus, during the conflict in Kosovo, human rights organisations suffered from NATO's communication and propaganda policies. Their methodical gathering and verification of information suffered under the sensationalist accusations made during Evere briefings which made them look as if they were additional forces in the intervention. In this over-mediatised confusion, their words became hidden and doubts encouraged by war propaganda also affected them.

## 7. Objectivity or Truth?

One should be as wary of the rule of objectivity as of the choice of partiality. In recent conflicts, partiality guided many journalists» reports disgusted by the brutality and the perversity in the aggressors» camp. However, even though the feeling of humanity legitimately leads journalists to choose the side of the victim —the Tutsis and moderate Hutus in Rwanda, the inhabitants of Sarajevo in Bosnia, the black African people in Darfur— this does not dispense them of their obligation to tell the truth particularly about the acts and strategies of the victims» leaders.

Objectivity can nevertheless also be a masking force, when it merely tries, as if it were an apothecary of information, to strike a balance between freedom of speech and speaking time. «A journalist should be objective, but a journalist cannot be neutral, said Elie Wiesel, when demonstrating the futility of the theory of objectivity in the face of the ignominy of the Holocaust. Neutrality does not hurt the executioner, it only affects the victim».

Objectivity does not rhyme with accountability, it is not acceptable to say «one minute for Hitler, one minute for the Jews». In Rwanda, for many American channels, it was one minute for the genocide committed by militias and the Hutu government, and one minute for the war crimes committed by the Tutsi army, in this way covering up the reality of the horror, diluting responsibilities and justifying international inaction, by relegating both camps to the scandal of violence<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> Jean-Paul MARTHOZ: *Le journaliste, un témoin engagé*, UNESCO, Paris, décembre 1994.

## 8. Premonitory Journalism

Human rights organisations are faced with the same dilemmas as journalists. Very often, humanitarians are witnesses of history. «When events give rise to revisions, negations, the search for truth, passionate speeches, humanitarian actors, writes Claudine Vidal, as eye witnesses claiming to be independent of the belligerents, become the informants of professional historians<sup>15</sup>.»

However, in this world of emergencies and right of intervention, documentation of war crimes, gathering of testimonies of sexual violence or mutilation, information on acts of genocide, all come too late. If classical techniques of denunciation and enquiry make it possible to support the ensuing struggle against impunity, as demonstrated in the setting up of international criminal courts or the «Pinochet precedent», they appear to be increasingly derisory vis-à-vis «live crimes».

It is for this reason that, in recent years, from Kosovo to Chechnya, from Sierra Leone to Darfur, *Human Rights Watch*, in addition to its role as a historian of horror, has been trying to also be a witness and a chronicler of current history. In order to force the international community to act, and in order to forbid it from thinking that it could, several years later, present its excuses to the victims by arguing that it did not know or that it did not appreciate the full extent of the horror of the crime.

The role of journalism is to report events, but who decides when any situation becomes an event? The setting-up of the murdering structure by the *Hutu Power* in 1993 was not an event, the genocide was. Must we leave to the *génocidaires* of this world the freedom to choose, machete in full view, the moment when an event should start claiming the attention of the international press? It is at this point that the challenge of «premonitory journalism» is posed. Whilst preventing conflicts is not the primary mission of journalists, it is to inform the international community of the imminence of these conflicts. It is through this action that journalists reconcile their professional ethics with their humanitarian beliefs. The war in Kosovo provides us with a clear example. Whilst the media managed to maintain focused attention on the humanitarian crisis due to their flocking to the borders during the war in Kosovo, it is imperative to question the role they could

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<sup>15</sup> Claudine VIDAL: *Les humanitaires, témoins pour l'histoire*, Les Temps Modernes, April-May-June 2004, p. 92.

have had *before the conflict*, in anticipating and helping to prevent it. Everyone knew about the drama which was unfolding in Kosovo. Ever since 1989, analysts were warning against the apartheid policies that Milosevic was enforcing. And ever since 1990, *Human Rights Watch*, amongst others, was relating human rights abuses, behind which a logic of violence and exclusion existed.

This crisis was an «announced crisis» and most of the quality press have articles and programmes in their archives, which describe, sporadically, the oppression of the Albanian majority in Kosovo. But was it sufficient only to «cover» in the more classical sense of journalism, or should more noise have been made? Not only do the tragedies in ex-Yugoslavia, as with those in Central Africa, rest upon a notion of involved journalism, but also upon journalism with its «premonitory» function, like the image of the canary in coal mines who alerted to the presence of firedamp and to the imminence of an explosion.

Whilst journalism does not entertain the all-mighty power that some demagogues affirm it does, journalism must nevertheless attempt, when the commission of crimes against humanity is announced, to change some of the more classical rules in information and the more conventional definition of national interests.

It is perhaps at this stage that tension can arise between «diplomatic» journalism, tempted to follow the pragmatic or sensitive logic of power, and the more radical and prophetic human rights journalism. Practitioners of the first form made a mistake with their proximity to the Dayton negotiators who, to stop the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, negotiated with Milosevic and stepped back from tackling the whole extent of the Balkan problems, thus turning their eyes away from an already foaming/bubbling crisis in Kosovo. Practitioners of the second form of journalism were not able to demonstrate the reality of Milosevic's system with sufficient force, nor were they able to suggest any scenarios, which could have ensured the stopping of this infernal spiral of violence. More than ever before, the war in Kosovo rendered vital the creation of a less conventional definition of what makes good «headlines» because, as can be seen again, today's «neglected conflicts» can become tomorrow's humanitarian tragedies. Five years after, however, editors have followed the Darfur crisis in exactly the same way. First neglected, it then exploded onto our headlines, after more than 10.000 people had been killed and more than one million had been displaced...

## 9. Against the Tide

There is a corollary to this remark: courage. It is not the time for physical courage to face the snipers and killers, but the courage to swim against the tide of the rules of the information business. Courage in standing up to editors by fighting for subjects that no marketing director would want to caution; courage vis-à-vis the general public which often is looking in the news for confirmation of its own prejudices and justification of its indifference; courage vis-à-vis its peers, tempted by gregarious journalism. «Journalism, said George Orwell, does not consist in giving people what they want, but in telling them what they do not want to hear». It sometimes takes more courage to stand up to the laws of the market and the trumpets of fame than to enter a town under siege. Paradoxically, today, in a media environment that encourages the journalist to be a follower, he/she must learn to be solitary in order to show solidarity.

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### **III**

## **Working in Conflict, Working on Conflict**





# The Dynamics of Humanitarian Action in Conflict Situations: Some Characteristics

Serge Rumin

## Introduction

Autumn 1994, Goma in the North Kivu region in the east of Zaire<sup>1</sup>: for several weeks, Pierre H.<sup>2</sup>, a voluntary doctor with a humanitarian organisation, has been participating in one of the largest humanitarian operations ever undertaken<sup>3</sup>. Humanitarian organisations that are active in refugee camps, where several hundred thousand people are housed, are obliged to put pressure on the authorities of the former Hutu government and the fleeing armed militia for the management of aid. An evaluation of a health centre in a camp showed evidence of serious ill effects. A good example is a young woman, Therese F.<sup>4</sup> (16 years old), who is looking after her five young brothers and sisters alone<sup>5</sup>, is obliged to prostitute herself to a group of militia who control the ultimate phase of distribution in order to receive her food ration. If international aid is stopped the outcome will be fatal for hundreds of thousands of people. If international aid continues, it feeds a daily cy-

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<sup>1</sup> Now Democratic Republic of Congo.

<sup>2</sup> Real situation, fictitious identity.

<sup>3</sup> It involves the assistance of Hutu refugees who have fled from Rwanda. In July 1994, the country came under the control of the Tutsi rebel army, the Front Patriotique Rwandais (FPR). The FPR is based in Uganda and since 1991, it has been engaged in the fighting in the north of Rwanda, which resulted in the Arusha power sharing agreements in 1993. On April 7<sup>th</sup> 1994, an unclaimed attack in Kigali causes the explosion of the Hutu President, Habyarimana's airplane. This event gave rise to the massacres and the genocide of between 800,000 and 1 million Tutsi and moderate Hutu.

<sup>4</sup> Real situation, fictitious identity.

<sup>5</sup> The sudden and massive nature of the population movement resulted in many families being separated.

cle of violence and the victims are the most vulnerable people. Pierre H. is tortured by this insurmountable dilemma and decides to resign.

Autumn 2004, Darfur in the southwest of Sudan<sup>6</sup>: A village mainly populated by women, children and elderly people (the able bodied men having formed armed groups to fight the regime) has just received food aid from a humanitarian NGO. The following day the village is attacked by one of the many militia groups supported by the government of Khartoum\*. The attack seemed to be directly linked with the aid distribution as the militia wished to send a message to humanitarian organisations, as well as to impose a reign of terror. Marie F.<sup>7</sup> a young coordinator of an international NGO acting in the area is confronted ten years later, like Pierre H., with the paradox of humanitarian action in a conflict situation.

These examples illustrate how humanitarian action in conflict situations pose fundamental questions for the individual actor of international aid. If they remain unanswered, they can result in psychological problems (Watzlawick, 1975), as in the case of Pierre H. In the following paragraphs we will identify certain dynamics that underpin humanitarian action in conflict situations. We hope to show the value of the humanitarian actor, on an individual as well as organisational level, of integrating these dynamics for more efficient action. In order to do this we have decided to mobilise some theoretical elements of the sociology of organisations and the theory of systems, rather than the alternative juridical theories or international relations. We will focus on some concepts characteristic of conflict situations, humanitarian organisations and of individual actors in humanitarian aid. Using all these various elements and their interdependence, we will then show the dynamics.

## Characteristics of the armed conflict situation

### *The state as an actor in conflict*

The entire inhabited planet is divided into States. The State underpins the existence of a sovereignty that is exerted over a people within a given territory. International organisations exist, but as the name «international» suggests, the level of organisation is such that relations

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<sup>6</sup> For more precise information on the humanitarian situation in Darfur, visit the Internet sites listed in the bibliography at the end of this article.

<sup>7</sup> Real situation, fictitious identity.

between States are regulated without affecting the sovereignty of the State. Today the European Union, (by means of the European Commission) is initiating a new type of organisation with «supra state» properties. It is nevertheless a fact that the State remains sovereign in that it chooses to adhere to the organisation of which it, in cooperation with others, controls the mechanisms. However, a level of organisation inferior to that of the State<sup>8</sup>, whether it is groups constituted on social, political or geographic bases, cannot escape from the authority of the State. The state as a level of organisation is the only one to enjoy the monopoly of the use of physical force<sup>9</sup> (that it can decide to share with other States or to put at the disposal of other States). The monopoly of force of the State is theoretical (Elias, 1975) and certain organised groups within the frontiers of the State can decide to assume all or part of this ultimate monopoly. A *de facto* armed and organised group can succeed in exercising a *de facto* authority over a portion of the territory and the population within it. When the sovereignty and the monopoly of force are contested, armed conflict ensues with a well-known impact on the population.

### *The main types of armed conflict*

Acting in a conflict situation requires a profound understanding of what this notion covers. Firstly, and to simplify we classify armed conflict in three broad categories<sup>10</sup>:

- *International conflict*: an armed conflict between two or more States.
- *Internal internationalised conflict*: these are conflicts that take place within the borders of a State but of which one or more parties to the conflict are under the authority or the influence of a foreign power.

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<sup>8</sup> Here we must make the difference between States and Federal States. The notion of the State that we are discussing here is that which is subject to international recognition and includes therefore federations of States (Russia, the United States, etc.) In the case of federations of States, institutional mechanisms provide for the relations and the level of autonomy of federal states, up to pure and simple separation. Whatever the separation, it can only be effected within the framework of the laws governing the federation. The federal State is therefore subject to the authority of the federation of States.

<sup>9</sup> Max Weber, the first to define the State as the only institution that possesses the «monopoly of legitimate violence» on its territory. All violence outside the force of constraint exercised by the State is illegal.

<sup>10</sup> There are other ways of classifying for example using the concept of war (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> generation etc.), or by asymmetric conflicts etc.

— *Armed internal conflict*: these are conflicts that take place within the borders of a State. The State can be part of the conflict (liberation war, rebellion, etc.) or indirectly implicated (e.g. tribal conflict). Despite the internal nature of these conflicts, and the sovereignty of the State in which they take place, the combined effect of their qualification in international public law, of the breach of human rights, the international mobilisation of the civil society, and the media coverage that reveals the humanitarian imperatives, these conflicts are subject to various forms of internationalisation (Kolb, 2001). These forms of internationalisation have the effect of involving the State when it is not part of the conflict, as well as other states by means of diplomatic relations. Nowadays, only internal conflicts within a tyrannical and totally closed state can occur without international influence. Such a situation would imply direct involvement of the state.

The state can therefore find itself in all forms of armed conflict. These days, the state remains undoubtedly the most important level of organisation in relations between peoples. Its existence and its properties, characterised by the ultimate concentration of power, exercise the strongest influence, not only on the lives of individuals<sup>11</sup>, but also on all other levels of organisation, without exception.

### *The dynamic of armed conflict*

Armed conflict has a dynamic. For a humanitarian actor, work in a conflict situation covers a multitude of different situations. Some say that there is a crisis situation that precedes armed conflict, the armed conflict itself, and post-conflict. Nevertheless, these three stages are not always clearly identifiable. For example in Burundi, the armed conflict has been dormant since 1993. Acts of war and massacres are followed by periods of calm and agreements between parties in an irregular and unpredictable cycle. In 1995, the European Union supported two programmes in the main hospital in Bujumbura. A development programme with Ukrainian surgeons (financed by DG8<sup>12</sup>) who inter-

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<sup>11</sup> The physical territory also imposes its natural laws (temperature, storms, etc.) on individuals but this is not a human organisation. It has a level superior to the state as not even all states united could prevent a huge storm. Religion also has an important influence on the lives of people throughout the world. However, it does not have the global dimension of the concept of the state and cannot be considered as a level of universal organisation of relations between peoples.

<sup>12</sup> The Directorate General responsible for development.

vened to support local personnel during the day ran at the same time and in the same place as an emergency and substitution programme during the night (financed by ECHO). A medical NGO operated on the wounded at night in a deserted hospital. A debate started as to how one defines when the conflict has ended. At the European Union this debate gave rise to the famous concept of the «grey zone», between emergency and development. Certainly one of the indicators of the end of conflict is the nature and intensity of socio-economic exchanges that the conflict actors maintain.

We note two important elements of the dynamic of conflict. The first element is the complex character of an armed conflict for the observer who wishes to comprehend and anticipate its evolution. The systems theory acknowledges that the complexity arises from different factors (Liu, 2004): number, diversity, uncertainty and interactivity<sup>13</sup>. This reading is very relevant to armed conflict and it can be easily seen to what extent complexity is one of the fundamental characteristics. The number of elements involved is generally large but this large quantity can also be found in other dimensions, like territory. The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) illustrates this factor well<sup>14</sup>. These elements can be divided into a number of categories (government, political organisations, arms traders, armies, militia, uncontrolled gangs, sympathisers, victims, vulnerable, etc.). The elements and categories of elements interact in both a bilateral and multilateral manner and in the multitude of interactions; it becomes difficult to perceive all the side effects. Uncertainty reigns at the behavioural level as well as at the level of the available information. All of these examples constitute factors of the complexity of a conflict situation.

The second element, which follows on from the first, is the unpredictable nature of conflict dynamics. A recent example is the public speculation about Iraqi army resistance and the bloody urban guerrilla warfare that was expected in Baghdad at the time of the American invasion of Iraq. For example, there is much discussion about the post-conflict situation and it mobilises the majority of international aid efforts. However, a peace accord in no way implies the end of conflict.

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<sup>13</sup> Systemic complexity must be added here as a property that emerges at the level of the system but which we broach this subject here.

<sup>14</sup> The immense size of the DRC and the absence (or deterioration) of infrastructure makes exchanges very difficult. This is a dimension of the complexity of the conflict. In DRC there is no force (police, army, administration etc.) capable of exercising any form of sovereignty on the whole of the territory and its population. This is in part caused by the physical limits imposed by the immensity of the territory.

Have the causes of the conflict been resolved, and has the level of complexity decreased? As long as weapons are present in the environment, violent conflict is never far away. Moreover, even after disarmament (which is never fully complete) the end of physical violence does not imply the end of conflict. Before conflict starts, there exists a link, a set of interactions between two entities, without which there is no conflict. The nature of the interactions evolves, producing violence or not, but the link endures (Simmel, 1998). Conflict is still present and continues in different forms. In Rwanda, Kosovo, and Bosnia-Herzegovina, the state of peace did not resolve the ethnic tensions<sup>15</sup>. In practical terms this means that the more complex the situation on the ground, the more humanitarian action will be subject to uncertainty.

## The dynamic of humanitarian action

### *Aid actors*

There are a large number of international humanitarian actors, each with their own properties. We examine three broad types of actor:

- *States*: their intervention is most often in the form of funds donated to aid operators. The resources that are available to them and which they control give them a certain amount of power over decisions about what actions should be taken. They are the ones who control the funds. It can happen that actions are carried out directly by a state, either in a military or a civilian capacity. Whatever it consists of, every financial and operational engagement is underpinned by a hierarchy of values, the culture and national values, the historical relations with the countries in question, the political choices of the government in place, etc. For example, in France, the humanitarian action is part of the budget of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and is considered a tool of international relations. However, it must be noted that the conditions placed by donors varies enormously depending on the donor and on the situation. Certain financial arrangements leave a lot of leeway that is then subject to adjustment. The goals of the operator can be included in this way and the end constraints disappear.

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<sup>15</sup> For example, in Bosnia, polarisation is a reality, as proven by the municipal elections of 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2004, which were largely dominated by the ultra-nationalist parties.

- *International organisations*: they are the largest operators and distributors of aid. These organisms also depend on donors, but they hold a certain amount of leeway in that they are in possession of structural funds granted to them at regular intervals. However, large operations are still dependent on the generosity of donors. Certain organisations operate on short programme cycles (Peacekeeping Operations, ECHO<sup>16</sup>, PAM, etc.), while others have longer cycles, like the European Commission, which can commit funds and undertake programmes over five years<sup>17</sup>. Non-Governmental Organisations<sup>18</sup> (NGOs): they form the largest number of operators on the ground. They are made up of civilian persons; they have a mission and financial resources; and are theoretically independent from governments. This level of independence is strongly linked with the organisation's capacity for obtaining its own funds. Only a few large organisations like MSF, OXFAM, etc. have the financial mechanisms (private donations, sales, etc.) to be assured real freedom of action. Operators that depend uniquely on institutional donors are also subject to their influence, which can, in extreme situation, go as far as a distortion of the organisation's mission. Note that independence is not a synonym for political neutrality. Indeed large organisations are based on a political agenda and a choice of society, within a framework of values. Christian charity organisations like Catholic Relief Service and CARITAS are examples of this type of organisation.
- *Individual actors*: Individuals who commit themselves do it by means of the actors above. They are therefore subject to the framework imposed by the organisation that they are part of. The bigger and more institutionalised the organisation, the smaller the decision making capacity of the individual. One's goals must be compatible with the goals of the system in which he/she is working. A small and less established organisation has fewer financial resources but offers more opportunity to influence the actions undertaken, which are bound as ever to the prerogatives of the donor. Whatever the institutional room for

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<sup>16</sup> ECHO: European Community Humanitarian Office.

<sup>17</sup> For example the CARDS (Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stabilisation) programme, which was of direct benefit to the management of the post-conflict situation in the Balkans.

<sup>18</sup> We exclude the ICRC from this definition due to its unique status that differs from both the International Organisations and the NGOs.

manoeuvre, the individual will develop their strategies (Crozier *et al*, 1977).

### *The temporalities of humanitarian aid*

It is interesting to note that each actor is governed by different timeframes. We distinguish:

- *The temporality of context, the temporality of conflict*: conflict has its own temporality, on a historical scale. Whatever the conflict, time is most often evaluated in decades. It is on the scale of a human life, that a person can live in the context for all or part of their life (e.g. Israel-Palestine, Rwanda, East Timor, Kashmir, Afghanistan, etc.). Needless to say that an individual who grows up in such a context, integrates the hostility in their personal development preceding the perpetuation of the conflict. This temporality takes into account the emergence of the crisis, the armed conflict and the post conflict. As we have seen, its evolution is not linear.
- *The temporality of states*: states are dominated by similar temporalities. However, the changeover of political power between parties that occurs in democratic countries, which represent the largest donors, influences the timing of commitments with the rhythm of the various election cycles, and the budgetary programmes that ensue. Nevertheless organisations at this level can commit themselves over several years. For example DFID, the British development agency committed funds to Rwanda over ten years. More usually, funds are committed over two to four years. The mechanic linearity of budgetary procedures exists in this temporality.
- *The temporality of International Organisations*: their temporality varies between a few months and several years. Most often the maximum is two years, with the exception of certain European Union mechanisms. Temporality is largely punctuated by financing. For example, the Peacekeeping Operations<sup>19</sup>, have annual budgets and personnel are frequently recruited on contracts of six months to one year. Moreover, the missions must report

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<sup>19</sup> These are becoming more and more involved in humanitarian action: the first phase of UNMIK (Kosovo), MONUC (RDC), and UNMIL (Liberia), have an assistant mission director responsible for humanitarian affairs. See: Collected work, A Peace Operations Review, Centre for Development and Security Studies, King's College of London, 2002.



every three months to the UN Security Council, which results in internal dynamics and cycles.

- *The temporality of NGOs*: this is subject to the temporality of their resources. The objectives of actions undertaken are set within the limits of available resources and timeframes can vary from a few months to one year but are rarely more than two years. As a conflict situation moves towards stability, resources granted to the programme diminish but in compensation, are allocated over a longer period of time.
- *The temporality of the individual*: individuals act with their own temporality. Nevertheless, their action is largely conditioned by the organisation of which they are part. If an actor has a contract of six months, it would be more difficult for them to set two-year objectives, than it would for somebody who was certain to stay three years.

These different «temporalities of action» mix and impact on one another. Two actors may have the same final goal, but acting in different timeframes, may find themselves in opposition. If one person wants results in a few months, they will choose a different course of action to someone who sets their objective in the longer term. The choice of actions could be incompatible. This clash of temporalities is one of the affects of a lack of coordination that is frequently documented.

### *Goals and values*

Each actor works within their own framework of values while mobilising resources to reach an objective. Each level of organisation possesses its own value framework and its own goals. Even if the ultimate goal is to give assistance to victims, whoever they are, the differences in how the assistance is carried out are huge. For example, as well as the action it undertakes, a small humanitarian organisation also has to think about how to perpetuate its structure, which is fragile and donor-dependent. Its own development depends totally on the evolution of conflict and the response of donors. Humanitarian action becomes a means of development and a necessity. The ill effects can manifest themselves in the reluctance of certain NGOs to end a programme, synonymous with a decline in resources. The structural dependence on the economic process, which is inherently unpredictable, is a source of tension that is very common in most NGOs. But from an ethical point of view, there are more serious examples. For example a small medical

NGO with few financial resources, who commits itself to a tuberculosis treatment programme, despite the fact that it doesn't have enough resources to continue the programme over several years. This has very serious consequences as the treatment programme will not be completed due to a shortage of funds, and a resistance will be created in the population. In this case, the value and goal of the programme are subordinated by the temporality of resources.

This phenomenon is another factor that explains the problems of coordination of aid, when theoretically similar goals being pursued within one value system are not always compatible. If operational logic demanded that an NGO withdraw, and in pursuit of optimisation, homogenisation and *profitability*, that one NGO would manage the medical sector, the dominant logic in this decision would be how compatible withdrawal is with financial survival.

### *Systems and paradoxes*

States, International Organisations and NGOs are also systems that interact and are driven by their own dynamics. We can also identify the dependent relationship of the systems, a type of hierarchy. For example, an individual acts through an NGO that is dependant on donors, within a State at war (this system is stricken by a structural crisis). The systems theory (Von Bertalanffy, 1993) details two forms of change: those that are internal to the system, level one changes; and changes of the system, level two changes. The former does not affect the properties of the system, the latter does. For example in the case of small NGOs that are dependent on donors. A director can change a project or a donor in order to obtain more funding. This does not affect the fundamental properties of the organisation i.e. its structural development is linked to the economic climate: in order to develop, it needs more projects and therefore more disposable funds which implies more serious crises, factors that are not under the influence of an NGO. A level two change would be to change the working rules of the organisation: that is to use only its own funds to develop. This would make it a different type of organisation, one that develops different rules and working values. Such a decision could not be taken internally by the small NGO. The limited resources having been allocated, this change would signify the end of operations. Only an external intervention could permit such a change (for example a private donor who is unlikely to enter the equation since resources are not devoted to the identification of any such donor). Financial independence would be achievable if, from the beginning, the internal working rules and resource allocation had been es-

tablished for the purpose of obtaining this independence. A different goal would mean a different system.

In returning to the two examples of Zaire in 1994 and Darfur in 2004, we find the same laws. The actors were confronted with a desire to make a change that did not belong to the system in which they were working. Indeed, whatever an individual does in the framework of their NGO, they are subject to the rules of a superior system, that of states. In both cases the states failed to undertake the necessary measures to disarm militia, and in the case of Zaire, to supply the necessary human resources to effectively manage the refugee camps. The change in context here outweighs the possible changes at organisational level. Studies carried out by the famous School of Palo Alto during the nineteen sixties and seventies by George Bateson and Paul Watzlawick, among others, showed how paradoxes illustrate the desire to carry out a change in the properties of the system in which one works, a change that is impossible to make internally because it is a level two change, which implies an externality. Pierre H. and Marie F. were both subject to what the School of Palo Alto defines as «paradoxical injunctions»<sup>20</sup>.

## Conclusion

Armed conflicts, at any stage of their evolution, occur in extremely complex contexts. In addition, whatever form the conflict takes, the state as an actor inevitable finds itself at the heart of relations in which humanitarian actors are implicated. There is no conflict today where humanitarian actors will not be subject to interaction with state actors. The hierarchy of contexts and systems impose a dynamic. Temporalities clash and result in unintended consequences, which may even be contrary to the common goal. So what is the relevance of humanitarian action? What good is intervening if the complex dynamic of systems dominates individual action?

Firstly, there is no alternative, states are, and will remain for a long time to come, informers of world order. Secondly, it is impossible to say that the emergence of a supra state organisation would guarantee the end of conflict and a compatibility of dynamics. Here we must highlight the emergence of such mechanisms within the European Union, which are generally considered to be a guarantee of stability in Europe. It is difficult, however, to attribute this stability to the partially supra

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<sup>20</sup> This phenomenon has been identified as a source of schizophrenia.

state nature of the organisation, rather than to the strong interdependence between its constituent states (Elias, 1975). The EU has only been around for half a century and has just about the same temporality as a conflict, so it will certainly be necessary to wait a long time before history can judge.

But the aim of this analysis is not to dismiss as a failure or to paint a negative picture of the dynamics that underpin international aid action. It is to introduce the actor to reading on the subject so that he/she can better target his/her actions. A better understanding of the dominant phenomena allows one to place oneself in accord with what is possible, not go down a track that is already rife with frustrations, and make the right choices. For example we identify that the paradoxical phenomenon of Zaire allows one to decide: either to stay and accept the negative effects while trying to limit them; energy should not be spent trying to resolve a problem that is not solvable at one's own level; or else to withdraw, change NGO and try to work at level two by means of political engagement with the media to try to exert pressure on states. There is no right or wrong choice, only the choice that allows a way out of an inhibiting phenomenon. In the same way, by identifying the different temporalities: individual, organisational, institutional, and contextual, actors can situate their action on a larger scale, interrogate the long, medium and short-term objectives, and reconcile these. But above all, reading about the dynamic of systems must avoid wasting time in vain battles such as the myth of coordination. Only an intervention that supersedes the systems could resolve the problem, such as the highly controversial example of the new Rwandan government in 1994, which imposed a strict framework on the action of humanitarian NGOs.

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### *Internet Sites*

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[www.ochaonline.org](http://www.ochaonline.org): Official site of the Humanitarian affairs of the United Nations

[www.ohchr.org](http://www.ohchr.org): Official site of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

[www.msf.fr](http://www.msf.fr), [www.msf.ca](http://www.msf.ca), [www.msf.ch](http://www.msf.ch): Official sites of Médecins Sans Frontières-France, Canada, Switzerland

[www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org): Official site of Amnesty International

[www.hrw.org](http://www.hrw.org): Official site of Human Rights Watch



# Humanitarian Aid for Sustainable Peace Building

Luc Reychler

At the end of the 1960s there were the green and peace movements. The first movement was depicted by some as a movement of gnomes; in Dutch we say «boskabouters», people who drew attention to the environment. Very quickly they were taken seriously, especially, because of the activities of the Club of Rome, which published a best seller titled «Limits to growth». The green movement transformed itself into political parties, departments, national and international governmental and non-governmental organisations, MA and PhD programmes and into binding law. The peace research movement had a more difficult time. It remained a marginal actor. In the 1980s they reached a peak with the marches against the installation of medium range missiles, but then they faded away again. In the last ten years, however, conflict prevention and peace building has been taken more seriously, not because of moral or legal reasons, but because of perceived self-interests. There is a growing awareness that there are also limits to violence and that the world can no longer afford the material and human waste. It has become clear that sustainable development is impossible, when no serious efforts are undertaken to halt the violence. In the meantime, the humanitarian community is reducing the human suffering of these human disasters.

## The fabric of violence

An effective policy for the prevention of violence demands a better understanding of the fabric of violence. This implies: (1) a shift from a narrow to a broad definition of violence; (2) more attention to less visible violence; (3) the inclusion of intentional and unintentional violence, (4) an empathic understanding of violence; and (5) a greater awareness

of the interdependence of violence in different sectors and at different levels (Reychler *et al*, 2004).

### 1. *Towards a broad definition of violence*

The narrow definition of violence focuses on overt physical violence. A situation where physical violence is absent tends to be considered non-violent or peaceful. Physical violence is aimed at immobilizing, injuring, or even killing the other. A broad analysis of violence starts by identifying different communities in the conflict area. Then it searches for inequalities of their quantitative and qualitative life expectancies. Quantitative refers to the average life expectancy of the members of a group. Qualitative refers to inequalities in the political, the economic and social arena. The political arena relates to all matters of governance, administrative control, and command over the means of coercion. The economic arena relates to all matters connected with the production of wealth and the distribution of resources (social- and health security). The social arena relates to all matters connected with social esteem, including the distribution of status and social privileges (Tellis 1997). A distinction can be made between vertical and horizontal inequalities. Vertical inequalities are assessed by e.g. comparing the incomes of the 20% richest and 20% poorest people. Horizontal inequalities are assessed by comparing groups with identifiable affinities (identity groups). The third step of a broad violence audit is the identification of the means of violence, which caused or contributed to the differences in life expectancies of particular groups. The means of violence can be clustered in five groups:

- Firstly, we research what kind of physical violence has been committed (conventional, ABC, guerrilla, terrorism, torture etc.). The direct consequences are visible: people killed, wounded, refugees, destruction;
- Secondly, we identify the prevailing structures of discrimination or closure in the political, economic and social realm. In each of these arenas we look at (a) the existing patterns of distribution with respect to power, wealth, and the status respectively, and (b) the relative ease with which individuals can secure access to power, wealth, and status through peaceful means. In a book «Anticipating ethnic conflict», Ashley Tellis (*ibid*), provides some useful tools for assessing structural closure in a systematic way;
- Thirdly, we try to get an idea of the psychological means of violence. Psychological violence is directed at the hearts and the



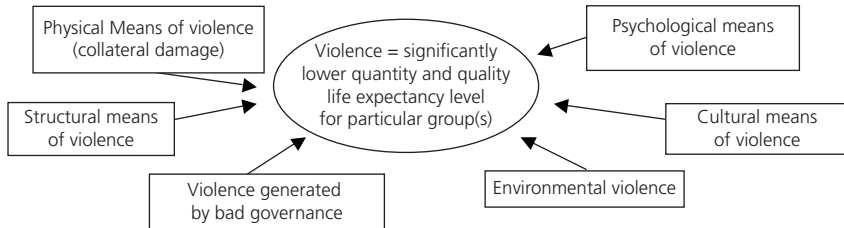
minds of the people. Psychological violence can originate from the use of other means of violence or from psychological operations. There are measures which (a) dehumanize people, (b) raise angst, fear and stress, (c) raise the conformity pressure, (d) increase the feeling of powerlessness, (e) reinforces anger and revenge, or (f) lead to hopelessness and despair, etc. Psychological violence enhances the violent behavior of some and diminishes the resistance of others;

- Fourthly, we try to get a good grasp of the cultural sources of violence. Here we study how secular and religious belief systems are used to justify the other types of violence. Dangerous distinctions are made between civilized and uncivilized peoples, God's chosen and un-chosen, and loyal subjects and enemies of the state. When a conflict escalates a culture of peace can become a culture of war. Textbooks can breed hate and perpetuate violent conflicts. The media play a great role in the waging of war and peace. The distinction, made by J. Galtung (1999) between peace/conflict and war/violence journalism, points to the positive and negative political-psychological impacts of the ways the media cover or discover conflicts; and
- Fifthly, we look at bad governance as the originator of violence. Bad governance kills. Bad governance, at the national and international level, causes most of the violence in the world.

## 2. *Attention should be paid to the less visible threads of violence*

The magnitude of violence today is like a gift to the media: the more people are interested in violence news, the higher the ratings for conflict journalism. The manipulation of the news about violent conflicts and their victims has become the object of many lobby groups. This has resulted in the existence of classes of victims. The first class victims get most of the attention. Their suffering is shown in way to touch the hearts and minds of listeners and viewers. Examples are the 9/11 attack on the twin towers or the Israeli victims of the Palestinian suicide killers. The second class victims get less attention, and their suffering is covered in a more distant way (e.g. the Palestinian victims). The third class victims are those who are hardly get any (international) attention. They are practically invisible, such as the nearly 2.5 million deaths in Congo. In addition to covering the second and third class victims, attention should also be paid to the less visible means of violence: structural, psychological, cultural and «bad governance generated» violence. Certain types of violence are taboo. It is not politically correct

to mention them. Examples of these are «taboo violence» the «global democratic deficit» and what Richard Falk (1999) has labeled the «predatory globalization».



**Figure 1**

A comprehensive definition of violence

### 3. Most of the violence committed is «unintentional» violence

Violence can be categorized as direct and indirect, and as intentional and unintentional violence. The combination of the two dimensions produces four different categories of violence, as depicted in Figure 2 «violence square»:

1. direct and intentional violence
2. direct and unintentional violence
3. indirect and intentional violence
4. Indirect and unintentional violence.

The difference between direct and indirect violence relates to whether or not the violent act is direct in character. One can, for instance, kill an individual by shooting him, but also by letting him starve when denying him access to food. While in both cases the result remains the same, the directness of the violent act differs. When committing violence indirectly, the actor avoids having to face the violence directly by making the causal chain longer (Galtung, 1990). The last category of violence is indirect and unintentional: violence is committed indirectly. The perpetrators did as such not intend the consequences. This type of violence could also be called «inadvertent violence». It is the output of bad governance. Bad governance can be the consequence of six types of behaviour (a) poor administration caused by inexperience and/or ignorance; (b) corruption; (c) indifference and neglect; (d) greed and self-interest; (e) stupidity; (f) religious and ideologically inspired poor governance, and (g) environmental violence.

	Direct	Indirect
Intentional	terrorism PHYSICAL VIOLENCE	STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE
Unintentional	COLLATERAL VIOLENCE	Bad Governance INADVERTENT VIOLENCE

**Figure 2**  
Violence Squares

Bad governance cannot only kill; it can also victimise as a result of well-intentioned policy-making. Therefore, a seventh category «do no harm» category of inadvertent violence could be added. This last category mainly refers to a failure to assess the possible negative consequences of a policy or intervention (Reychler, 2003).

4. *Prevention requires an empathic understanding of violence*

Conflict in the media and in international fora tend to be depicted in Manichean terms, as a struggle between Good and Evil, or between civilized and uncivilized people. The perpetrators of terrorism are portrayed as criminals or even psychopaths. Even when terrorism is not the «greatest threat», as Bush would like us to believe, it is great infotainment. The conflict in the Middle East has become the «circus maximus» in today’s news world. The fixation on terrorism is problematic, because (a) it increases the propensity to overlook and neglect the other types of violence, which kill disproportionately more people, and (b) to forget the fact that terrorism is far less lethal and destructive than counter-terrorism and that the difference between conventional warfare and state terror is not always very clear. The other types of violence committed are the root causes of most political terrorism. Secondly, the amplification of the fear caused by terrorism helps to justify conflict profiteering and the use of double standards in the political arena (the US support of conservative monarchies, the neglect of countries were more violence against the committed, the support of Israel’s colonial policies, the negative attitude

vis à vis the International Criminal Court, etc.). Thirdly, it blinds people from the fact that the use of armed violence can be perceived as good and bad. If everybody would perceive armed violence as bad, it would have disappeared. The fact is that the same violent act can be perceived by some as good, just, legal, rational, moral, courageous, beautiful, or healing, and by others as bad, unjust, criminal, irrational, immoral, cowardly, ugly and insane. The suicide killers from Palestine can be perceived as criminals, cowards or insane people, but also as courageous youngsters helping their country to get rid of the illegal occupation. Most Palestinians consider them as resistance, freedom fighters and as heroes. They are not anti-Semites, but anti-colonialists. To get a better understanding of the use of armed violence one should not start by legalizing, moralizing or psychologizing, but look at the violence committed as a behaviorist. This implies: (a) studying how many people are killed and maimed, and what destruction is caused, (b) accepting that the suffering and pain is universal and not something only your people experience, (c) realizing that political violence is predominantly committed by normal people in abnormal circumstances (Reychler *et al*, 2003). In order to prevent violence, it is therefore important to (a) prevent these abnormal circumstances from occurring or if already occurred, transforming them; and (b) to develop an analytical empathy.

5. *An awareness of the complex interdependence between conflict in different sectors and at different levels.*

Armed violence does not come alone. It tends to be related to other types of violence committed in different sectors, levels and times. A more effective conflict prevention policy requires a better understanding of this cross-impact. The September 11 events in the US have been associated with the dissatisfaction with the world trade system, the role of the USA in the conflict between the Israel and the Palestinians, and the use of its military might to support friendly conservative governments. The war against terrorism in countries, such as Russia, the USA and Israel, will be costly and have boomerang effects, if no measures are taken to seriously address the root causes. In the era of globalization there are no «innocent bystanders». In asymmetric conflicts, neutrality reinforces the «might is right» principle.

## Sustainable peace building

Sustainable peace is not a mirage, but a political reality that can be created (Reychler, 1999). It is present in many countries and even in a few regions in the world. The European Union is a good example. In contrast to the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, Western Europe has become a «security community»<sup>1</sup> or an environment that has acquired all the attributes of a sustainable peace (Deutch, 1978). A series of pre-conditions has been proven to enhance the creation of security communities: compatibility of political and economic values, «we-ness» feeling, democratic regimes of the member states, communication and mobility, political efficacy and successful arms control (Reychler, 1991). The concept of security community mainly refers to the interaction between states; however, the framework that we propose has its principal focus on building peace between different parties to the conflict, groups or communities *within* countries. The objective of this conceptual framework is to provide a practical way of looking at the peace building process. If one aims to study these processes, one needs an operational definition of *sustainable peace*. The absence or presence of sustainable peace can be assessed by looking at the output or the installation of the pre-conditions of sustainable peace (Reychler *et al*, 2004b).

Output-sustainable peace is characterised by:

- Absence of physical violence;
- Eradication of unacceptable forms of political, economic and cultural discrimination;
- Self-sustainability;
- High level of internal and external legitimacy or approval; and
- Constructive management and transformation of conflicts.

### *Pre-conditions*

The essential requirements or pre-conditions, cited in the peace research literature, for creating such a sustainable peace can be clustered into five peace building blocks: an effective system of communication, consultation and negotiation, peace-enhancing structures and institutions, an integrative political-psychological climate, a critical mass of peace building leadership and a supportive international environment. The underlying assumption is that these five peace building blocks are mutually

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<sup>1</sup> The term «security community» was introduced by Karl Deutsch and refers to a group of countries that feel mutually secure.

reinforcing and therefore need to be present or installed simultaneously. The lagging of one of these building blocks can seriously undermine the stability or effectiveness of the entire peace building process.

The first building block focuses on the establishment of an effective communication, consultation and negotiation system at different levels between the conflicting parties or members. In contrast to the negotiation styles used in most international organisations, the negotiation style within the European Union is predominantly integrative. Ample time and creativity is invested in generating mutually benefiting agreements. Without win-win agreements the Union would disintegrate.

The second building block emphasises the importance and nature of peace-enhancing structures. In order to achieve a sustainable peace, (conflicting) countries have to install certain political, economic and security structures and institutions. The political-legal reform process should aim to establish consolidated democratic structures, based on the rule of law, and an independent and effective justice system. The economic reform process envisions the establishment of an economic environment that stimulates sustainable development and economic growth and reduces vertical and horizontal inequalities. The security structures should be able to safeguard and/or increase the population's objective and subjective security by effectively dealing with both internal and external threats. It is crucial to note that the transition from one state (e.g. non-democratic structures) to another (e.g. consolidated democratic environment) is not without difficulties: the devil is in the transition (Reychler, 1999).

The creation of an *integrative climate* is the third necessary building block for establishing a sustainable peace process (Reychler *et al*, 2003b). This building block stresses the importance of a favourable political-psychological and social-psychological environment. Although the climate is less tangible and observable than the other building blocks, it can be assessed indirectly by looking at the consequences. An integrative or disintegrative climate can express itself in the form of attitudes, behaviour and institutions. Characteristics of an integrative climate are, for example, the expectation of an attractive future as a consequence of cooperation, the development of a «we-ness» feeling or multiple-loyalties and reconciliation.

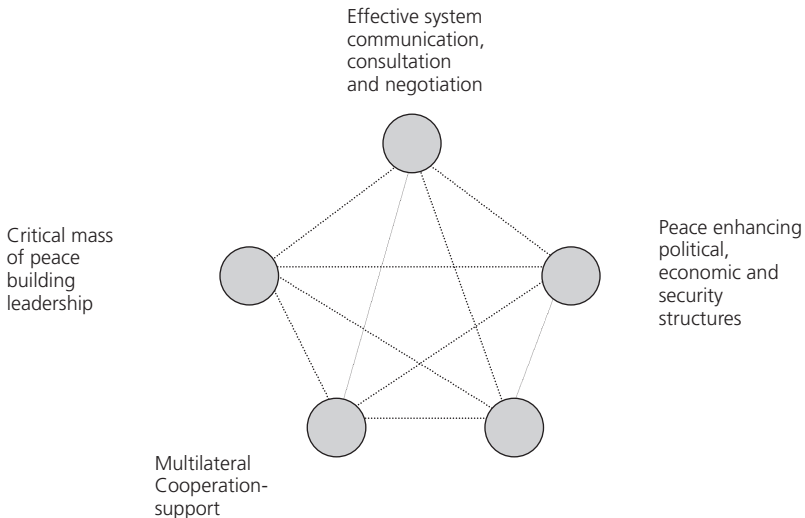
The fourth building block is a supportive regional and international environment. The stability of a peace process is often crucially dependent on the behaviour and interests of neighbouring countries or regional powers. These actors can have a positive influence on the peace process by providing political legitimacy or support, by assisting with the demobilisation and demilitarisation process or by facilitating and stimulating

regional trade and economic integration. However, these same actors can also inhibit the progress towards stability, for example, by supporting certain groups that do not subscribe to the peace process. Likewise, the larger international community plays a crucial role in most post-conflict countries. The international community by means of the UN agencies or other international non-governmental organisations often provide crucial resources and funding or even take direct responsibility for a wide variety of tasks such as the (physical) rebuilding process, humanitarian aid, development cooperation, third-party security guarantor, etc.

The fifth building block is the presence of a critical mass of peace building leadership. There are leaders in different domains: politics, diplomacy, defence, economics, education, media, religion, health, etc. Leadership can be situated at different levels: the elite, middle and grass root level (Lederach, 1997). The top level comprises the key political and military leaders in the conflict. The middle-range leaders are not necessarily connected to or controlled by the authority or structures of the major opposition movements. They could be highly respected individuals or persons who occupy formal positions of leadership in sectors such as education, business, religion, agriculture, health, or humanitarian organizations. The grassroots leaders include people who are involved in local communities, members of indigenous nongovernmental organizations carrying out relief projects for local populations, health officials, and refugee camp leaders. Finally, there are external and internal leaders.

The way in which these different building blocks are established or are dealt with, will affect the outcome of a peace process (see Figure 3). Important issues in this respect are for instance; the timing, the internal dynamics and progress, the sequence and prioritisation, and the mutually interdependence and interaction of the various building blocks. The design or *architecture* of these reforms or transformation processes is often the result of an ad hoc and to some extent technocratic decision-making process. Therefore, the collision of objectives and the negative or inhibiting influences of one building block on another are rarely anticipated and prevented. In order to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of peace building, we need to pay more (research) attention to the architecture of these peace processes.

In addition to the above-mentioned peace building blocks, we need also appropriate support systems and humanitarian aid. The installation of the building blocks needs to be backed up by the development of appropriate educational (media), legal, health and technological support systems. The humanitarian aid is indispensable during the conflict and in part of the post conflict phase. The aim is to provide help to people, who have been victims of man-made disasters (wars, conflicts,

**Figure 3**

Pentagon of sustainable peace building

outbreaks of fighting) or structural crises (severe political, economic or social breakdowns). According to the EU, the focus is mainly on providing goods and services (e.g. food supplies, medicine, vaccinations, water conveyance, psychological support, minesweeping, clothes, shelter, rehabilitation). The aid is also preventive (planting of trees to counter floods, etc.). Its sole aim is to prevent or relieve human suffering. This assistance is directed mainly towards vulnerable people and, as a priority, to those in developing countries. A key point is that it is accorded to victims without discrimination on the grounds of race, religion, sex, age, nationality or political affiliation. Humanitarian aid decisions are to be taken impartially and solely according to the victims» needs and interests. There are therefore no criteria or conditions for the aid, which is non-refundable.

### Humanitarian aid in conflict zones

The activities of the humanitarian aid community in conflict zones has been praised and criticized. The predominant image of HA however is positive.



The **positive image** suggests there are a great number of governmental and nongovernmental organisations delivering humanitarian aid in a very professional and business-like way, who:

- respond/ react to violent conflicts very effectively;
- succeed in reducing the pain and suffering of the victims;
- are conflict sensitive and undertake efforts to reduce the negative side effects of humanitarian aid on the conflict and peace building process. Mary Anderson book «do no harm» (1996) is taken seriously.

On the basis of this positive image, we could congratulate ourselves and continue to do more of the same. The HA community has come a long way, but it has considerably more potential to contribute to sustainable peace building. This brings us to the second image.

The more **critical image** conveys weaknesses or challenges, such as:

- the HA community tends to be more reactive than proactive;
- it reacts very effectively to human disasters, but is not very proactive;
- they are more proficient in relieving / curing human suffering, than in preventing it;
- they are conflict sensitive and doing serious efforts to do no harm, but could do much more to increase their peace added value;
- they are specialist, and not enough generalists;
- in the medical sector, doctors become generalist before they become specialists. In the field of peace building we notice the reverse;
- they are neutral or impartial and disengaged from the sustainable peace building process; and
- they have been misused by donors, e.g. (a) to relieve the suffering of innocent citizens caused by the unintelligent sanctions, (b) to reconstruct vital infrastructures that was destroyed during regime change, (c) to absolve the international community of the blame to do too little too late to prevent violent conflicts.

In the mid 1990s several analysts drew the attention to the negative consequences of well-intended interventions in conflict zones.

Peace keeping in Bosnia and Rwanda	The constraining mandate and light weaponry of the blue helmets in Bosnia hampered the prevention and containment of the ethnic cleansing of the Muslim population. In Rwanda the withdrawal of the Belgian blue helmets signaled to the perpetrators of the genocide that the international community would not intervene effectively to stop the genocide.
Construction of houses in South Africa	The distribution of houses in poor suburbs caused a lot of tension initially and in some places violence broke out.
Elections in Angola	After the elections in Angola in 1993, the winner took all the power and the civil war broke out again. No power sharing negotiations were held before the elections.
Refugee camps in Thailand, Pakistan and Congo	In Thailand, Pakistan and the Kivu area in Congo, the refugee camps were used by the armed forces as a «safe haven»; a place for recruiting fighters and a base from which to operate.
Food aid in Somalia	Aid agencies paid militia to transport the food to the hungry and thereby provided the warlords with moral and material support to run their conflict enterprises.
Export of agricultural products	The export subsidies provided by the European Union for agricultural products had a negative impact on the rural development in many developing countries.
War memorial in Burundi	A decision to build a memorial for the victims of war became the source of considerable unrest.
Food aid	Foreign food aid reaches hungry people when local farmers have harvested consequently destroying the local food market.
Water projects in Angola	In Angola water projects have caused tensions in ethnically mixed areas, because people were afraid that they could not have access to the boreholes.
Staff recruitment in Sri Lanka and Nepal	Many development projects in Sri Lanka and Nepal were recruiting local staff solely on the basis of qualifications, thereby disregarding the ethnic, religious or cast composition of their staff and thus supporting only groups from one conflict party or from dominant groups.
Financial stabilization	The price of public transport in Guatemala City doubled as a result of subsidy cuts imposed under an agreement with the IMF. This was followed by mass demonstrations against the increases (Carbonnier, 2000).
Democratic elections	The stipulation in the Dayton Peace Agreement that elections should be held within nine months after signing of the treaty resulted in the democratic legitimization of the extreme nationalist parties.

**Figure 4**

Well-intentioned interventions can do harm (Reychler *et al*, 2004c)

Three types of unintended negative effects of humanitarian aid can be distinguished. The first two have been described by Mary Anderson (1996) in her book «Do no harm».

*First type is associated with unintended negative effects through resources transfers.* Anderson (1996) shows that aid's economic and political resources affect conflict in five predictable ways:

- Aid resources are often stolen by warriors and used to support armies and buy weapons;
- Aid affects markets by reinforcing either the war economy or the peace economy;
- The distributional impacts of aid affect intergroup relationships, either feeding tensions or reinforcing connections;
- Aid substitutes for local resources required to meet civilian needs, freeing them to support conflict; and
- Aid legitimizes people and their actions or agendas, supporting the pursuit of either war or peace.

Second type is associated with unintended effects through implicit moral messages:

- Arms and power: hiring armed guards conveys the implicit message that it is legitimate for arms to decide who gains access to food;
- Disrespect, mistrust, and competition among aid agencies convey the message that it is unnecessary to cooperate with people they do not like;
- Aid workers and impunity: when aid workers use their goods and support systems for their own pleasure, they convey that if one has control over resources, one can use them for personal purposes and pleasure;
- Different values for different lives: the ethical message is one of inequality;
- Powerlessness i.e. the message is powerlessness: bad actions can be explained as the fault of someone else's decision, order, or pressure;
- Belligerence, tension, suspicion: reactions that increase tension and suspicion heighten the likelihood of a violent conflict; and
- Publicity: the use of gruesome pictures to raise funds demonises one side of the war.

Third type of unintended negative consequences are through political impacts:

- Neutrality in asymmetric conflicts is partial in its consequences; it implicitly endorses the behaviour of the strongest party or the might is right principle;
- Humanitarian aid can make unintelligent sanctions (for example against Iraq) more acceptable, by taking care of the collateral damage, it band-aids unintelligent policies;
- Asymmetric aid packages prevent a constructive transformation of the conflict. In the conflict between the Palestinians and Israel, the donors give only humanitarian aid to the Palestinians. The Israelis receive considerably more and in addition also military, economic, communication diplomatic aid;
- The distinction between first-, second- and third class victims reinforces the perception of humanitarian inequality. First class victims get most of the media attention, and do not have to wait for adequate aid to relieve their suffering. Second class victims get less attention and the provision of aid is less effective. Third class victims tend to be invisible, the aid comes too little, too late, and they tend to become chronic victims. First class are e.g. American and Israeli victims; second class the Bosnian- and Palestinian- victims, and third class the Congolese victims;
- Focusing most of the attention on direct (internal and physical) violence tends to veil the complex fabric of violence;
- The tendency to publicly see no evil, hear no evil and speak no evil makes the humanitarian community accomplices of silence;
- The HA community spends more time on the anticipation and remediation of human suffering, than on the prevention of violent conflict. This is a political decision;
- The critical is a somewhat simplified caricature, but it draws attention to some challenges and invites us to reflect on these issues. My feeling is that the HA community is doing good work, however, it could do better. How could HA increase its peace added value?

## **Measures to raise the conflict sensitivity and peace added value of Humanitarian Organisations**

### *1. Reflective measures*

One of the most important steps for HA organisations is to make their implicit theories about peace explicit. In most cases NGOs don't tell/ specify their audience. Peace is kept vague. I think this is unaccept-

able, because you cannot build peace with other actors, if you don't know what you want to build. Not only should the organizations at the level of the headquarters make their theories explicit, but it would also be useful that the people working in the field reflect on their own thinking about conflict, violence and peace building. Mental models shape how we act. But they are generally invisible to us until we look for them. Answering the following questions help to make explicit the underlying assumptions about the role of HA in conflict transformation and peace building:

- How do you define violence?
- What kind of peace are you trying to help to build ?
- What are the causes of violence?
- What is necessary to build peace?
- Why do they think, HA has a positive impact on the peace process?

## 2. *Analytic measures.*

People who run HA programmes should be familiar with the theories and research findings about conflict transformation and sustainable peace building. This implies knowing how to map conflicts; how to anticipate conflict dynamics, and how to fit there efforts into a sustainable peace building architecture. Peace architecture invalidates «the law of the hammer», exposes the negative side effects of well intentioned efforts, and makes it clear that adding up different kinds of efforts (peace keeping, HA, development cooperation, democratisation, etc) will not automatically lead to a sustainable peace building. In many conflicts these efforts result in huge piles of peace building stones, instead of sustainable peace building processes. The Great Lakes region and the Middle East are examples of bad peace architecture.

All the actors involved in conflict zones should embody a Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment System (PCIAS) in their organization (Reychler *et al*, 2004c). PCIAS is a process of identifying the relevance and future consequences of an ongoing or proposed intervention on the conflict dynamics and peace building process. The assessment is systems oriented and proactive. It intends to raise the conflict-sensitivity and the peace added value of intervention. The peace and conflict impact assessment system could play a useful role at the different levels of intervention (project-, program-, sector- and broad policy-levels), by increasing the awareness of the potential or actual impact on the conflict dynamics and peace building process, and by helping to de-

sign more coherent interventions which do not only «do no harm», but have a higher peace added value. PCIAS can be used for improving the design and the implementation of humanitarian efforts that take place in situations of latent and manifest violent conflict or in the aftermath of a violent conflict or war.

Methodologically speaking, peace and conflict impact assessment is a difficult exercise. Firstly, there is the complexity of root causes of conflict and its dynamics. Secondly, we are confronted with the difficulties of assessing the causal link between an intervention and the achievement of intended and unintended positive and negative effects. Thirdly, we have to not only monitor the impacts, but also anticipate them. Fourthly, there is an added difficulty for peace projects as many times the objective i.e. «peace» does not have an operational definition.

#### A NINE STEP MODEL

The PCIAS process starts with **preparing** for a single PCIA or the introduction of a PCIA-System. This step constitutes elements such as awareness building about PCIAS, getting commitment from all involved stakeholders and clarification about the objectives of the specific PCIA(S). Moreover, a first implementation plan which results in the «Terms of Reference» for the PCIA(S) is to be established and the PCIAS-team also needs to be built into this phase.

The second step of a PCIAS is the **peace and conflict analysis**, which is one of the crucial elements of a PCIAS and forms the basis of the process to follow. It is important to analyse both, the conflict and the peace-building context of a country or area. For an overall policy PCIA we analyse the macro conflict setting and the status of the peace building process. For a project PCIA we briefly analyse the overall macro conflict and peace situation of a country, however, we focus on the analysis of the conflict and peace building situation in the intervention area.

The third step is the **deficiency assessment**. The objective of this step is (a) to specify what conditions ideally tend to enhance peace building in a particular situation (country, sector, programme, project); (b) to check the reality against this ideal framework; and (c) identify the peace building deficiencies. For an overall policy PCIA, checklists have been developed to assess deficiencies in all building blocks for sustainable peace. For a sector PCIA, sectoral checklists exist (e.g. ideal media situation in a country). In this assessment step attention could also be given to mapping the peace building potential (opportunity assessment).

The fourth step is **mapping the existing or planned interventions** (objectives and main activities lines).

The fifth step is the **peace building relevance assessment**: The objective of a peace building relevance assessment is to assess whether the overall direction of a program or project (objectives and main activities lines) is contributing to the peace building needs. This step assesses how relevant a planned or existing intervention is for reducing violent and building peace.

Step six is the **conflict risk assessment**, in which the impact (real or potential) the conflict situation or peace building efforts have or could have on an existing or planned intervention.

Step seven **assesses the impact of an existing or planned intervention** on the conflict and peace building context (impact of intervention on peace and conflict).

Step eight is about giving **recommendations** on how to improve the peace building relevance, conflict sensitivity and the peace added value of an intervention. Or giving recommendation on how to introduce a comprehensive, integrated Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment System as part of routine planning, monitoring and evaluation of a project, programme or even organisation.

Step nine is a **post-step** which includes discussing the results, development of a joint action plan, writing the report and deciding on follow ups.

### 3. *Political measures*

Providing humanitarian aid is a political activity with political consequences. The intention to take impartial decisions does not always lead to impartial behaviour and to perceived impartiality. Some types of unintended negative impacts have been identified. In order to reduce the negative impacts and raise its peace added-value, the humanitarian aid community should:

- be aware that of its positive and negative impacts;
- make explicit and reflect upon its assumptions about the impact of HA on conflict and peace;
- make comprehensive assessments of the fabric of violence;
- look at the big picture of sustainable peace building;
- recognise that HA has political consequences;
- assume political responsibility and resist pressures to become politicised;
- continue to respond to the interest of its main constituency «the victims of violence»; and
- do more to prevent violence.

If the HA community really wants to prevent human suffering, it needs to be more involved in the prevention of violent conflicts. This implies not only anticipating and reducing of the victims of human violence, but also advocating «sustainable peace building». They are the frontline witnesses of bad peace policies. They know the people who bear the costs, and the ones who profit from violence. They could share their field information with trusted others and cooperate with other IGOs and NGOs in the peace building process. They should recognise that they are not a-political or neutral actors. They could also make the decision-makers aware that a great deal of the violent conflicts are not only caused by internal factors, but also by external actors and the inequities of the international political economic system.

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# Conflict Sensitive Humanitarian Assistance: Building Capacity for Mainstreaming

Maria Lange

## Introduction

Violent conflict is a permanent reality for humanitarian work around the world and agencies are no strangers to conflict issues or to the inevitable impacts that these environments have on their programmes, staff and partners. However, it is only in more recent years that donors and implementing agencies have begun to undertake a more structured and conscious reflection, and to review of their role in and impact on conflict. While a responsibility to «Do No Harm» (Anderson, 1996) and avoid, where possible, negative impacts of conflict is now widely recognised, there is less agreement on the appropriateness and ability of humanitarian agencies to «Do Good» in terms of aiming to have a positive impact on conflict dynamics. Overcoming contradictions between long-term programmes that directly address conflicts and shorter-term relief programmes remain a key challenge. However, research and experiences from conflict-affected areas around the world support the assertion that «conflict-sensitive» humanitarian action can provide important support for longer term integrated conflict resolution and development programmes by contributing to strengthening the ability of local populations to address their own needs and by minimising their vulnerability to future humanitarian threats. However, realising this potential requires building capacity to analyse and understand the conflict context and to act upon this understanding. This in turn demands substantial changes in agencies» organisational structures and ways of working. This article builds on International Alert's<sup>1</sup> recent

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<sup>1</sup> International Alert is a London-based conflict resolution NGO working to strengthen the capacity of individuals, peace networks, constituencies and organisa-

research and interviews with policy and programme staff on their agencies» approaches to and experiences of working in conflict-affected areas. It summarises insights on how humanitarian agencies, in keeping with their mandates and principles, can contribute to conflict resolution and goes on to examine the institutional capacities that agencies need to mainstream a «conflict-sensitive» approach. Finally, it examines the concept and practice of partnerships with local organisations as a key aspect of conflict-sensitive assistance.

## Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance

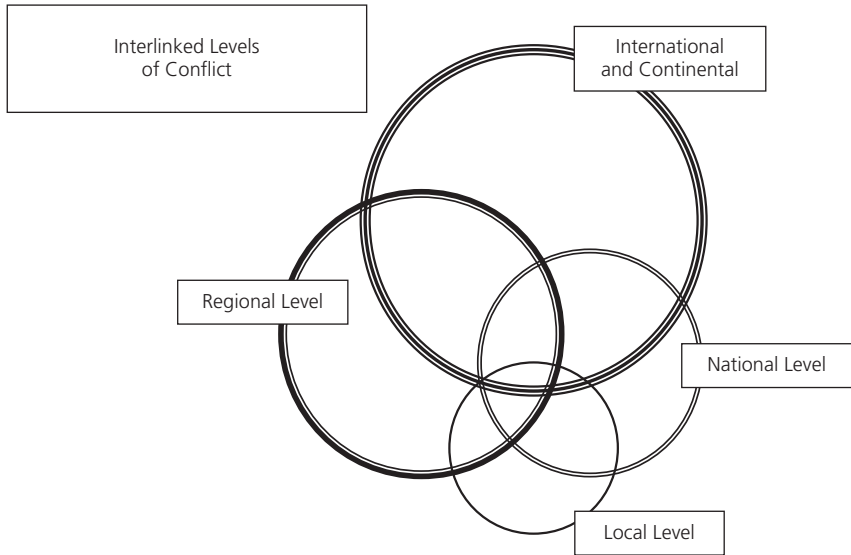
Staff of humanitarian organisations, working in places such as Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), are engaged in a fight against not only extreme poverty and humanitarian need, but also against prolonged inter-group violence that exploits and instrumentalises religious, ethnic and social differences between communities and states. Different levels of conflict, illustrated in Fig.1 below<sup>2</sup>, often overlap and interlink, creating complex patterns of conflict.

In DRC and elsewhere, violent conflict is a core cause of humanitarian need and undermines development. Although agencies intervene in these situations with the best of intentions, the very flow of much-needed humanitarian material (food and non-food items) into conflict-affected areas, when some of these conflicts are fuelled in part by unequal access to resources, invariably have a very real impact whether positive or negative. Just as it is dangerous and misleading to think that humanitarian assistance alone can bring peace or create war, it is also incorrect to believe that it does not have any impact on conflict and peace. This is illustrated by, for example, the well-known case of the Rwandan refugees in eastern (then) Zaire following the 1994 genocide.

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tions to build sustainable peace. We work in the Great Lakes region of Africa, West Africa, Nepal, Sri Lanka, the Caucasus, the Philippines and Colombia. Research and advocacy work on conflict-related issues including small arms control, gender issues, the relationship between development and conflict and the role of the private sector in building peace aims to bring the voices and perspectives of those affected by conflict to the attention of policy makers.

<sup>2</sup> A version of this model is represented in «Conflict-sensitive Approaches to Development, Humanitarian Assistance and Peacebuilding - A Resource Pack», Saferworld, Forum for Early Warning and Early Response (FEWER), International Alert, Consortium for Humanitarian Agencies (CHA), Centre for Conflict Resolution (CECORE) and Africa Peace Forum (APFO), 2004.



**Figure 1**

«Conflict-sensitive Approaches to Development, Humanitarian Assistance and Peace building - A Resource Pack», Saferworld, Forum for Early Warning and Early Response (adopted from Saferworld, 2004)

Armed groups that perpetrated the genocide used the camps set up to respond to the humanitarian needs of the refugees as a basis to recruit members and launch attacks into Rwanda. Faced with continued attacks and the failure of the international community to separate genuine refugees and armed elements, disarm the groups and/or relocate the camps away from the border, the new Rwandan government eventually attacked and dissolved the camps (Gourevitch, 2000). The experience illustrated the need for coherence in the strategies adopted in the politico/military and humanitarian domains, as well as the need to provide political responses to the underlying problems of such crises rather than leaving the problems in the hands of humanitarian agencies (Danida, 1996).

Faced with this reality, NGOs and donors alike are increasingly concerned about the links between aid and conflict and some have started to put in place policies, methodologies and operational guidelines for humanitarian assistance in conflict-affected areas (Saferworld, 2004). Sceptics argue that these efforts are linked to a trend of donor govern-

ments using aid as a foreign policy tool in areas of little strategic interest. The availability of donor funds for non-traditional humanitarian programming is certainly a motivating factor for NGOs, although these funds are very limited. However, agencies» attempts to ensure that humanitarian assistance contributes positively to reduced tension and the building of local capacity to withstand and address humanitarian threats are motivated by a desire to increase the effectiveness of their assistance in the face of complex, on-going conflicts. The attempts reflect agencies» own response to the changing realities of their work and their realisation that any effort to respond successfully to humanitarian need depends on addressing conflict and supporting opportunities for sustainable peace.

## Defining Conflict Sensitivity

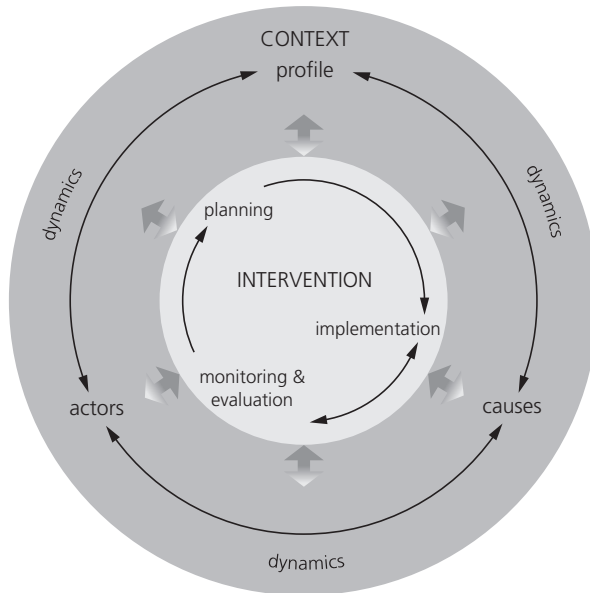
Conflict sensitivity means understanding the context in which you operate (including the conflict situation) and taking pro-active steps to ensure that your organisation and programmes do not adversely affect the situation but, as far as possible, contribute positively to reduced tension. In concrete terms, this means combining needs assessment with analysis of conflict on local, national and regional levels to understand both the particular humanitarian needs, the wider context of the situation (including its causes and effects) and the links between this situation and your planned intervention. Based on this understanding, the particular programme should be planned, implemented, monitored and evaluated to minimise negative impact and maximise positive impact.

This process can be illustrated as follows:<sup>3</sup>

The «actors» include warring parties, governments, factions and social groups directly and indirectly involved in or affected by the conflict. The «causes» are the structural (underlying) and proximate (immediate) factors as well as triggering acts or events that can set off or escalate violent conflict. The «profile» is the political, economic and socio-cultural context of the conflict (ibid). Situating the humanitar-

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<sup>3</sup> Diagram in «Conflict-sensitive Approaches to Development, Humanitarian Assistance and Peacebuilding - A Resource Pack», Saferworld, Forum for Early Warning and Early Response (FEWER), International Alert, Consortium for Humanitarian Agencies (CHA), Centre for Conflict Resolution (CECORE) and Africa Peace Forum (APFO), 2004.



**Figure 2**

Conflict Sensitivity Process

ian programme in relation to these factors and assessing the (negative and positive) impact of the programme on these and *vice versa* enables agencies to plan, implement and adjust a «conflict-sensitive» programme. In order for this process to function, agencies need not only an analytical framework that connects directly to their programming cycle, but also sufficient institutional capacity, including the necessary human resources and appropriate policies and organisational culture. These factors are discussed in the following section.

### Developing Institutional Capacity for Conflict Sensitivity

Recent research into processes of organisational learning and development on conflict within 13 large international NGOs (Lange, 2004) demonstrates that integrating this analytical process into existing planning and operational frameworks rather than setting up separate processes, which put extra pressure on already over-burdened staff, is of key importance. The «Conflict-sensitive Approaches to Development,

Humanitarian Assistance and Peacebuilding - A Resource Pack» (Safe-world, 2004) highlights how this can be done by strengthening the social and political dimension of needs assessment, to:

1. Move beyond the description of poverty and ask for its reasons, examine the impact of power and powerlessness on poverty and establish the sources of power in the particular community;
2. Refine understanding of group membership and group identity and how they affect vulnerability (e.g. persecution, exploitation);
3. Examine how wider political instability and conflict influence institutions and relations within the community and understand processes of dominance, alignment and exclusion; and
4. Link local processes, such as displacement, to political and economic interests and strategies at different levels, for example land appropriation and the war economy.

Several methodologies and tools exist for conflict analysis, participatory assessments, rights-based planning etc. and many agencies have developed their own tools or have adapted existing ones to their needs. For example, the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC) has adapted the «Do No Harm» framework (Anderson, 1996) to their «Better Programming Initiative» and CARE has developed a «Benefits Harms» tool-book. However, there are several institutional challenges to actually using these —and similar— approaches which need to be addressed if agencies are to really be sensitive to conflict in their work. The challenges largely relate to the following four areas:

1. Information gathering, analysis and translation into action;
2. Human resources;
3. Sector-based work or mainstreaming; and
4. Partnerships (Lange 2004).

Gathering, analysing and acting on information about the evolving situation, i.e. «learning lessons and applying them» is the backbone of conflict sensitivity. The issue for agencies is how to ensure that collected information is relevant and available to those who need it, when they need it. While most agencies have elaborate reporting systems in place, few have developed comprehensive systems for analysing the often very large amounts of information collected, making it useable, disseminating it (through both formal and informal means throughout the organisation) and storing it where all staff can access it. Analysis of raw data and making it accessible is particularly important because of the information overload faced by agency staff. Another related prob-



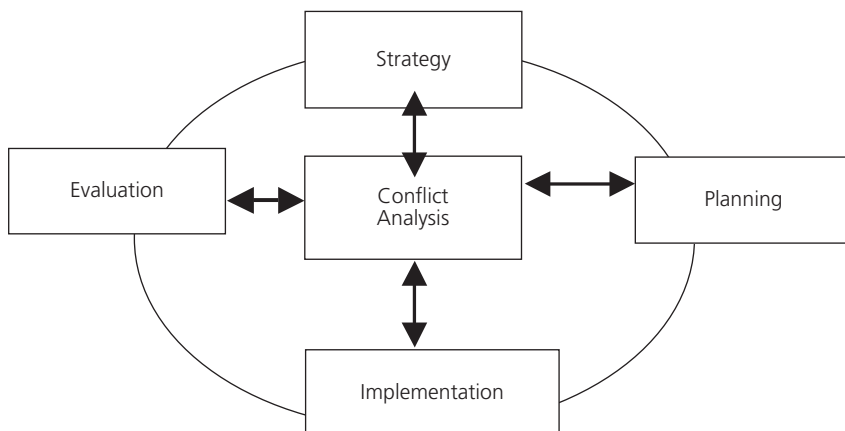
lem is that of applying lessons learnt in one place to other geographical areas. While part of the problem with cross-regional learning is applicability, insufficient communication flows between staff in different countries and between headquarter and field staffs also cause a lack of awareness of whether or not there is learning to be had.

Given the time constraints staff operate under, part of the solution to these problems is experimenting more with intranet and web-based information management systems, including establishing cross-organisational list serves and electronic databases where everyone can access and discuss evaluations, lessons learned reports etc. However, staff in some areas may have very limited internet access and so establishing clear personal focal points for information gathering and dissemination can be a solution. Good examples of where this has been done are the Catholic Relief Services and World Vision cases. Catholic Relief Services has «regional technical advisors» for peacebuilding and World Vision has established regional «centres of learning». World Vision's experience is summarised below.

### **World Vision (WV) Regional Centres of Learning and PAXnet**

WV has established local «Centres of Learning» in the Asia-Pacific region (in Mindanao, the Philippines, and Sulawesi, Indonesia) and in East Africa to help apply peacebuilding and Do No Harm principles and practice in the development context. The centres share lessons learned around the organisation, including on conflict and the use of the Do No Harm framework. They serve as repositories of learning from project evaluations and provide an interface between staff in different countries within the region. In addition, WV has developed three regional peacebuilding networks in the Asia-Pacific region, the Greater Horn of Africa and the Balkans. The regional networks seek to integrate peacebuilding and conflict analysis within relief, development and advocacy programmes by devising regional strategies for peacebuilding projects, building staff and organisational capacity for national offices, applying tools and designing projects, doing training, and organising conflict-analysis workshops. The regional networks are part of a larger global network within WV known as PAXnet, which links the peacebuilding programming on the ground with policy and advocacy efforts at national, regional and global levels. PAXnet coordinates the regional networks, disseminates learning and information through a web-based communication system, and links peace and conflict staff and issues to other major advocacy groups on global economic justice and child rights. Other regional networks are envisioned in the future (Lange, 2004).

Translating information into action in terms of planning (before), monitoring (during) and evaluation (after) relate to the inherent difficulties of judging cause and effect in complex and dynamic conflict situations. However, inconsistent application of lessons learned also has to do with weak analytical skills and strategic planning systems. If you know what you are looking for, it becomes easier to recognise indicators of success as well as understand problems and failures. It is therefore important for agencies—and their donors—to invest far more in consistent, on-going planning than has been the case in the past. Conflict analysis should inform every step in the project cycle as follows:



**Figure 3**

Conflict analysis and the project cycle

Conflict analysis must inform all stages of strategising, planning, implementing and evaluating an intervention. A baseline conflict analysis should be undertaken prior to the intervention and then updated continually. This need not be a particularly arduous task - and should be made as straightforward as possible.

Individual skills are often seen as the predominant factor in programme success, which underlines the importance of staff recruitment, retention, incentives, reward and development. High turnover of staff—a particular problem in high-intensity conflict areas—is a major constraint to organisational learning. In addition, when it comes to expatriate staff, agencies tend to value technical skills in humanitarian aid delivery above language skills and understanding of the local situation.

However, conflict resolution and peacebuilding work requires specialist staff in key posts on different levels of the organisation and training and investing in broader skills development for all staff. Some humanitarian agencies working in conflict-affected countries underestimate the value of employing people with knowledge and experience of conflict issues and/or investing in the development of such skills. Employing people with knowledge and experience of conflict/peace issues and of the particular local context is essential to conflict-sensitive humanitarian assistance. Many agencies, for example Oxfam, have in the last year begun employing conflict advisors at different levels. However, these appointments are fairly new and their impact is yet unknown. The degree to which strong links are forged between these people and the rest of the organisation is crucial. Some agencies adopt training programmes as ways of raising awareness of conflict in the organisation and ensuring appropriate skills development.

The overarching challenge for agencies is how to integrate a peace and conflict angle into all programmes, including —and in particular— traditional humanitarian programmes. Several interviewees felt that there is a lack of policy development in relation to conflict-sensitive humanitarian programming. That is, planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating humanitarian programmes where «conflict resolution» or «peacebuilding» is not a primary objective but where the programmes may have unintended impacts on conflict.

As a response to concerns about humanitarian impact and effectiveness in conflict-affected areas, agencies have often chosen to develop add-on peacebuilding projects rather than integrate a peace and conflict angle into their core humanitarian and development work. For example, a large humanitarian agency operating in Eastern DRC recently funded various peacebuilding activities by local NGOs in one province but did not seek to link this to their long-standing and predominant humanitarian work in the surrounding conflict-affected areas. This approach is unfortunately symptomatic of many NGOs» and donors agencies» response to the challenge of mainstreaming conflict sensitivity and reflects the general tendency of the humanitarian system of working within sectors. Peacebuilding, however, should not be approached as another sector. While there can be a dilemma between targeting specific groups to increase efficiency and using wider beneficiary groups as a means to diffuse conflict, it is increasingly recognised that a peacebuilding project also has to bring something concrete to the communities in order for it to be effective. Agencies should prioritise the integration of conflict-sensitive principles into all forms of programming and, where explicit peacebuilding programmes are estab-

lished, ensure close linkages to humanitarian programmes and to the work of other agencies in the same and surrounding areas. It should also be noted that even programmes labelled «peacebuilding» can have negative impacts on conflict if they are not planned to be conflict-sensitive. For example, tensions at a dialogue workshop bringing together warring parties, which was organised by an NGO in Sudan, deteriorated into open violence between participants. This might have been avoided had the NGO carried out an in-depth analysis of the conflict situation and assessed the way the planned workshop could impact the situation.

While it can be hoped that learning from pilot projects, reviews etc. will ultimately inform all programmes, this tendency to perceive peacebuilding as a separate sector risks weakening the mainstreaming of conflict sensitivity. While there is nothing to suggest that humanitarian agencies are necessarily misplaced to engage in what one may call «pure» peacebuilding such as mediation, they are certainly a lot better placed to apply a peace and conflict lense to the humanitarian programmes they have ample experience and knowledge of. They can do so with potentially much greater positive impact than can be gained from ad-hoc peacebuilding activities. Sensitivity to conflict is less about making fundamental changes to existing programmes than describing and thinking about programmes differently. It is primarily about the quality of policy and context analysis, including conflict analysis and analysis with partners, mechanisms for applying this analysis and for learning across programmes and organisations.

However, internal organisational processes, policies, funds and structures cannot in themselves guarantee successful mainstreaming of conflict sensitivity without an enabling external environment. This environment is made up of relationships with a range of interacting actors, including national governments, donors, local partners and other NGOs. The multiplicity of organisations working in conflict-affected areas and a frequent lack of understanding and coordination among these mean organisations may unintentionally undermine the work of others. Conflict sensitivity is therefore as much a question of capacity building and coordination among agencies as it is one of internal organisational development. While many agencies share some information on conflict indirectly through for example joint security sessions in particularly tense environments, very few carry out joint context (or conflict) analyses. This is due to inter-agency competition over scarce resources, concerns about sharing sensitive information and competing views on who can legitimately facilitate joint analysis and disconnected planning cycles. However, developing closer relationships with

other agencies operating in the same area(s), and with research and advocacy organisations that can complement an agency's knowledge and skills, can contribute greatly to strengthened conflict sensitivity. In particular, agencies' relations with local partners are of outmost importance. This issue is explored in the final section.

## **Humanitarian Partnerships for Peace?**

International NGOs' understanding of the social, political and economic actors and dynamics where they work is intimately linked to the nature of their relationships with local partner organisations. These partnerships are also in themselves important to NGOs' impact on these dynamics and so the nature and dynamics of partnerships between local and international NGOs are an important factor in the conflict-sensitivity of the wider response.

Terms such as partnership, empowerment and civil society capacity building dominate the international development policy agenda. This signals, at least at a declaratory level, a shift away from a purely instrumental view of local partners which has made some in-roads in the humanitarian community, as reflected in debates about strengthening local disaster response capacities. The debate partly expresses the need to ensure longer-term sustainability with capacity building of local organisations being seen as an exit strategy for internationals. In a broader sense, it reflects a realisation that a strong «civil society» is a prerequisite for long-term development and peace.

While the concept and practice of partnerships, in particular the gap between rhetoric and reality, has long been the focus of intense discussion, little has so far been said about the impact on conflict of partnerships between international and local NGOs. In conflict-affected areas, strong and equitable relationships between international and local NGOs can have important benefits for the conflict resolution and peacebuilding capacity of local «civil society». International NGOs can strengthen the capacity of partner organisations working for peace, promote the use of local models for conflict resolution and peacebuilding and generally strengthen the role of civil society in peacebuilding. Conflict resolution NGOs often focus on creating spaces for dialogue and strengthening local groups and networks working for peace while development and, in particular, humanitarian NGOs have traditionally not seen capacity building for peaceful resolution of conflict as part of their mandate. However, with the increasing focus on «conflict sensitivity» come questions about the need to re-think the concept and prac-

tice of partnership. Debates about strengthening participation in humanitarian assistance (ALNAP, 2004) and increasing the effectiveness of development assistance have touched on various aspects of the nature of development and humanitarian partnerships. But the emphasis has tended to be mainly on the effectiveness and characteristics of the partnerships themselves, rather than on the impact on the wider context.

Despite the emphasis on equality, the term «partner» is often used by the more powerful party in a relationship to describe the less powerful counterpart. For instance, government donors refer to international NGOs as their partners and international NGOs use the term to describe local organisations. Local organisations, however, often see the international NGO as a donor and international NGOs also do not term their relationship with donors «partnership». Power is a clear variable and determinant in a partnership to the extent that some argue that only relationships with an equal distribution of power can rightfully be termed partnerships. However, relationships where funds are involved are inherently imbalanced and recognising and openly dealing with this is a prerequisite for a well-functioning partnership. In addition to funding, factors such as language often skew the power balance in favour of the international NGO whose working language is often used.

Given the well-known difficulties of developing genuine partnerships, what are the reasons for organisations to pursue them? The primary rationale for operating in partnership is to increase programme impact and sustainability through developing local ownership and capacity, ultimately allowing the international NGO to leave. In addition, there is a normative rationale for enabling the people affected to have their own voice. Finally, operating in partnership with local organisations is seen to increase security and access. NGOs often give as a rationale for working in partnership the imperative to strengthen the capacity of civil society. But what is meant by «capacity building» and whose capacity is being built? The term «civil society» is as unclear as it is over-used. A classical definition sees civil society as consisting of «organised groups operating in the sphere between the family and the state». It may, however, be more useful to define civil society by way of its assumed function, as «actors or institutions seeking to define, generate support for or promote changes in the political order». The key role played by civil society as a link between populations and state institutions (providing space for popular voices) and as a perceived necessary element of democratisation processes is what makes it a target for so-called capacity building programmes, as well as peacebuilding interventions. However, NGOs and others often assume that civil soci-

ety is inherently «civil», forgetting that it also includes groups that have a negative impact on peace. Rather than perceiving it as something purely positive, INGOs need to critically analyse the different components, power dynamics and countervailing forces within civil society. In a conflict situation, civil society more often than not reflects the tensions and divisions of the society as a whole. Organisations that do not have a sophisticated analysis of these complexities risk inadvertently supporting groups not working for —or actively working against— peaceful change.

The meaning of the term «capacity building» is also unclear. It is sometimes seen as a means to an end, for example strengthening the financial management capacity of a local organisation in order to improve programme delivery. In other cases, it is seen as an end in itself, supporting individuals and groups to take control of and find their own solutions to their problems. Furthermore, actors at different levels (individual, community, and organisation) have vastly different capacity needs. Capacity building of civil society organisations as opposed to individuals, for example, requires engagement with explicitly political issues and a good understanding of the wider (conflict) context. This highlights the need for humanitarian agencies engaged in such «capacity building» activities to analyse and understand the roles and positions of local partners in the conflict context.

## **Practice and Challenges of Humanitarian Partnerships**

Key characteristics of humanitarian partnerships often include the following:

- Emphasis on standard protocols which limits integration of population concerns, capacities and initiatives.
- Lack of staff continuity which impacts negatively on trust building. Need to give greater responsibility to local staff (link w community and continuity).
- Lacking language and context knowledge of international staff who do not necessarily have a self-interest in building the capacity of local organisations.
- Negative impact of donor funding conditions (lack of time) on participation.
- Operational challenges to capacity building, including time pressures in crisis situations, leading to direct interventions rather than longer-term capacity building.

None of these issues are new but they often result in failure to understand and strengthen local capacity and links between communities - or they may even lead to reinforcing community divisions, which is particularly problematic in conflict contexts. In traditional service delivery oriented humanitarian programmes, there can be a strong tendency for local partners to become sub-contractors who implement programmes with little or no influence on strategy and planning. Instead, local partners should be seen as valuable sources of information for agencies about the situations they operate in, including conflict actors, causes and profile. Disregarding this information source may lead to agencies failing to achieve their stated objectives and/or having negative impacts. At the same time, agencies that work closely with local organisations without analysing the conflict situation face numerous potential pitfalls, including the knowledge vested in these organisations potentially being partial and one-sided. However, establishing and maintaining strong, longer term partnerships with local organisations has many benefits, including gaining rich knowledge about customs, needs, norms and values, and strengthening elements of civil society working for peace through sharing of resources and exchange of ideas and knowledge. This in turn is as crucial to effective humanitarian assistance as it is to sustainable peacebuilding efforts. Local organisations should benefit from their increased capacity to become more effective at addressing the factors that gave rise to conflict and human suffering in the first place.

A key question becomes how to identify local partner organisations that are legitimate and representative of their community? Although no ready remedy exists, suggestions include making good use of existing links and, where no previous links exist, resisting the pressure to sign contracts with local partners immediately before understanding the situation. Agencies should also consider the track record of potential partners including their role in the local crisis response prior to the arrival of international agencies.

## **Concluding remarks**

Conflict-sensitive planning and delivery of aid is both a challenge for donors, in terms of the types and modalities of funding they provide, and for all humanitarian actors including NGOs, in terms of strategies, mandates and ways of working. Conflict sensitivity profoundly challenges the established institutional and discourse boundaries of the humanitarian and development «enterprise.» However, it is important



to retain a sense of modesty and realism about what conflict-sensitive development and humanitarian action can achieve in the absence of concerted and coordinated long-term engagement by actors focusing on other aspects. Humanitarian aid, in particular, is a relatively blunt conflict-management policy instrument when used on its own. Above all, conflict sensitivity poses a moral challenge in terms of building local capacity to respond to crisis and to engage in peacebuilding and conflict resolution. Only the people affected by humanitarian crisis and violent conflict can in the end bring about sustainable peace and development and the role of international agencies should be to facilitate this through support and accompaniment of local efforts.

### *Comments*

This article is based on research on institutional capacity building conducted by the author for International Alert in 2003-04 as well as the joint programme on conflict sensitivity carried out by the UK-based NGOs Saferworld and International Alert in partnership with the Centre for Conflict Resolution (Uganda), Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies (Sri Lanka) and Africa Peace Forum (Kenya). For more information on the latter programme and access to the Resource Pack produced as part of it, please go to: <http://www.conflictsensitivity.org>

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# Towards a Better Understanding of the Culture and Heritage of War

Brigitte Piquard

## 1. Introduction

Humanitarian interventions, in conflict-affected areas, have become increasingly complex with varying direct and indirect affects impacts on the duration and intensity of the conflict, and the nature of the relief. This is why a precise analysis of the conflict becomes a prerequisite for any quality humanitarian intervention. Too frequently humanitarian actors ignore or underestimate the culture of war and the conflict's heritage both of which are necessary to understand the context of the humanitarian intervention. By neglecting war culture, relief operation may fuel and feed the conflict. This begs the question; what part should «promoting a culture of peace» have in relief operations and conflict transformation processes.

The anthropological approach to conflict analysis draws attention to François Laplantine's concept of «global social fact» (Laplantine, 1996). Invariably, conflicts are caused by a multitude of factors, including; political economy, control over the physical environment, cultural identity, catalytic event and symbolic order (Piquard, 2004: 73). Conflict, as global phenomena, touches all aspects of social life or of construction of identities. The culture of war and conflict heritage will affect the way a society expresses its crises, reacts to it or resolves its conflicts. Adopting a holistic and anthropological approach to conflict analysis, taking into consideration the culture of war, will help to frame a global and sustainable positive peace process, i.e. a peace process that includes the social, economical, spiritual, symbolic or cultural dimensions of social life.

Many cases including: Afghanistan, Lebanon, Great Lakes Africa etc. demonstrate how peace and rehabilitation processes can be per-

ilous and complicated. Unsuccessful peace processes frequently spill over state boundaries to affect neighbouring states. Unrest frequently spreads through feelings, values and emotions. A weakened peace process serves to undermine society's confidence and hope/ trust in the process, and also serves to legitimise the use of violence and retain weapons. This article investigates the diverse dimensions of the culture of war in order to propose a way to transform it as a vehicle for peace. It focuses on two associated issues namely: Islamic NGOs in Afghanistan and Lebanon; and the demobilisation demilitarisation and resettlement process. Key study questions include: how to win over forms of suspicion? How proposing an endogenous peace process can lead to a sincere feeling of national belonging based on a stakeholder consensus?

## 2. Culture and Heritage of War

### 2.1. *Culture of war*

The psycho-anthropological approach to conflict lies in the relation between crisis and everyday life. The related concept i.e. the «culture of war» is relatively new. It emphasises all the dimensions of the cultural construction of war (perceptions, identification, values, etc). Associated psychological characteristics include feelings of insecurity, fear, suspicion, and loss of self-esteem. Associated social characteristics include limited access to objective information, arbitrary decision-making, impunity and speedy judgements. Everyday hardships such as lack of water, housing, health, education, work and forced displacement serve to create an atmosphere where critical distances and rational decision-making are difficult and even sometimes impossible. A whole range of different behaviours and perceptions may be witnessed in a war context. Most tensions are dealt with violently. Economic behaviours are based on short-term investment or overnight benefits. Rules of societies are evaluated according to one's own judgement of risk-taking. Aliens or outsiders are potential enemies. Attitudes towards violence are completely different. The use of physical violence is considered as legitimate and frequently regarded as the only means available to keep the community alive.

Decision making in wartime and strategies for coping are based not only on the obvious calculations of cost/benefit analyses, consideration of danger and effectiveness but these decisions are also influenced by feelings, emotions, memories of past conflicts or displacements (real or

mythical), identities, and social networks (again real or mythical). Decisions and coping strategies can lead to creation and innovation of new social behaviours, social links, new structures, values and beliefs, as these conflict situations may not have been previously experienced. Coping with conflict may need a full re-creation and re-adaptation to a new context. This understanding of coping mechanisms breaks from the classical «tropical caricature» (Rufin, 1992) of the «helpless victims», the passivity of the civilian population during a conflict and the treating survivors as children. Populations during a war are frequently dispossessed from their own historical process, but start re-organising their lives according to their own social framework and adopt coping mechanisms to improve their livelihoods. If a successful adaptation to conflict requires new skills, new knowledge and new leaders, the replacement of the old ones may disrupt social links or social values and social sense. It can create new tensions, new cleavages and new disparities among people of the same communities, given that some people adapt easier or quicker than others (Piquard, 2004, 73).

## 2.2. *Contagion of conflict*

The culture of war concept is also relevant when studying the volatility and contagion of conflicts in different times and different spaces. If diplomacy or world politics can keep a war or a wave of violence away from neighbouring countries the culture of war can also spread easily and may settle among the most vulnerable population of neighbouring countries or regions<sup>1</sup>. This is how one may find a gun culture, illegal trafficking and the spread of domestic violence in neighbouring areas officially at peace. Culture of war can be transmitted, taught or «tamed». It is important to pinpoint the important role that formal and non-formal education or the media (mainly the electronic ones) play in the transmission of the culture of war. Education and media are key factors for promoting either peace or war. Education before, during and after a war often promotes war-oriented curricula. This supersedes the issue of illiteracy. Reference to the conflict is used in reading materials, nationalist songs, alternative interpretations of history are constructed, sometimes paramilitary trainings are given, and hate values are promoted. Alternatives are needed without imposition of ex-

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<sup>1</sup> Mentioning neighbouring areas and countries does not only refer to places having physically or geographically borders with the area at war. It also includes places of cultural proximity with the place at war: shared beliefs or religious tradition, ethnic origins, common past, etc.

ternal values and culturally irrelevant ideals. In such volatile contexts, authorities cannot control all the forces on their territory. Parties to the conflict (fighters, relief organisations, IGOs, ideological groups, political movements) are increasingly international and even transnational in nature. Indeed, activities carried out by those external actors often cross borders without directly involving state institutions. Actors, actions and their ideological roots are partly transnational. Values and discourses are mobilised across borders. This does not only concern relief or diplomatic agencies but even fighters or political violent movements, which are increasingly organised as transnational networks. That does not mean that all actors or all activities are transnational but most of them carry some transnational elements (Pouligny, 2000, 5). Countries at war and their neighbours face similar difficulties.

Effects of the culture of war last long after a peace settlement or a cease-fire, or even after the material reconstruction takes place. New social relationships can remain problematic. The war heritage (souvenirs, feelings, behaviours) has to be taken into account and dealt with in conflict analysis and while framing a peace process. Peace will only be sustainable if the culture of war has been transformed into positive understanding and memories of the past and responsibilities for the future. Reconstruction of social networks is a pre-condition for a sustainable passage to a culture of peace.

### 2.3. *The use of violence*

Social identities are often referred to in psychosocial explanations of conflict, not only in defining who we/ others are, but also as a guide for actions. Conflicts based on identities may occur when a community perceives feelings of threat. Those threats (real or mythical) are constructed and maintained by imaginary, myths and are mobilised by groups or ethno-leaders. This may lead to different kinds of violence present in each and every conflict (Piquard, Petiau, 2004).

Frequently costs of war are evaluated according to the results of physical violence (casualties, wounds, disability) but other kinds of violence exist in a conflict and have sometimes much more dreadful and lasting effects on a community: psychological, political and symbolic violence. Psychological violence refers to traumas caused by politics of terror, by the feeling of powerlessness or vulnerability created by the conflict. Political violence refers to denying a specific group(s) its political rights. The symbolic violence is harder to define. It refers to a more invisible, «soft» violence (Bourdieu, 1980, 219). Symbolic violence occurs when a certain group or individual perceives situations as unbear-

able because values (religious, moral), power relations, or one's world vision are felt threatened. Whether such threat actually exists is not an issue when assessing the effects of symbolic violence. If there is a common understanding and belief that those threats really exist and jeopardise life in society, there is without doubt symbolic violence. If the person or the community feel this as unbearable, there is symbolic violence. The symbolic violence leads also to feelings of vulnerability, weakness or powerlessness. It creates its own dynamics and its own social sense (Augé, 1994a). It gives new meanings to power relations and can serve to legitimise the use of physical violence. This can also lead to a fear of disappearance, fear justified and manipulated by movements or «ethno political entrepreneurs» (Piquard, Petiau, 2004). As a vicious circle, the death (symbolic or physical) of the «threatener» is a pre-condition for the group's survival. In most conflicts, those feelings of threat are reciprocal. François Thuau (1995, 45) refers to this logic as the «logic of Caïn». Emotions and their manipulations then become one of the major roots of conflicts.

### 3. Islam, Humanitarian Interventions and War Culture

There is a general trend among western analysts and journalists to link Islamic humanitarian actors systematically to the close definition of *jihād* i.e «holy war» and even to terror. This confusion often comes often from the fact that most of the Islamic relief actors play an incontestable role in the sphere of predication (*da'wah*). For them, saving bodies make sense only if souls are not endangered. They do not reject the use of violence if the community of believers is threatened by external forces. The misunderstandings of the notion of *jihād* in western countries and the underestimation of the culture of war have led to feelings of suspicion over most of the Islamic NGOs in the West over the Western NGOs among the Muslim populations.

One should question why such movements, radical or not, exist and grow in places of need, closely linked to grassroots population who legitimize and support them especially in contested or failed states where official organisations lack authority. Identities, feelings of mutual threat, of victimization and loss of social sense<sup>2</sup> are often used to justify

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<sup>2</sup> «Sense» here must be understood in the framework of the concept of «social sense» as defined by Marc Augé «a meaning of social life and social relationships understandable by those to whom it is addressed because it is based on their own social situation» [Augé: 1994, 50]

their action. The legitimacy of humanitarian action derives from that same thinking. Immediate relief to safeguard the community due to a universal threat becomes an absolute emergency. Humanitarian, political or military actions are seen as solutions to respond to the failures, the limitations or mistakes of the State that proved itself unable to secure its population and to take care of the needy. There is also a lack of sovereignty and endogenous solutions that advocate a re-Islamization and re-socialisation of the downtrodden. This removal from Islamic ways of life is perceived as the consequence of a western-oriented or at least heterogeneous process of development imposed on the population. Added to this is the feeling of «universal plot» against Islam and the collapse of ideologies such as nationalism or populism; former responses to the lack of democracy and the general pauperisation of the society.

The notion of *jihâd* is another concept that needs to be clarified to understand Islamic humanitarian action. Two classical understandings of the notion of *jihâd* prevail. Firstly, traditional schools make distinctions between the defensive *jihâd* and the offensive one. The defensive *jihâd* relates to the defence of the *Umma* or the *dar-al-Islam* when it is threatened by external non-Muslim forces. This effort must be a collective one. The offensive *jihâd* is related to the expansion of Islam. If a Muslim cannot participate in the collective effort, he must contribute as an individual by helping the community to provide the means to the *jihâdists* (Khosrokhavar: 2003, 25). More recently, modernists have described the differences between the small *jihâd* (*jihâd asghar*) and the major *jihâd* (*jihâd akbar*); the former meaning the war against non-believers, and the latter refers to the struggle of each Muslim against the transgression of divine laws (Khosrokhavar: 2003, 26). In most of the modern interpretations, the notions of defensive *jihâd* and internal struggle for the respect of Islamic precepts are the most accepted meanings. «*Jihâd stems from mercy, and means the repelling of aggression and the establishment of justice against tyranny*» (Abu Zahra, N.D., 8). For Muslim humanitarian workers, the main *jihâd* is the struggle for restoration of social justice that is seen as a collective responsibility that may ask for sacrifice of one's own belongings and even of one's own life (notion of martyrdom) if required<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> The notion of martyrdom, *Shaheed-al-Islam*, is really central in the Islamic ideology. Between the hero and the saint, the martyr is seen as the person who sacrifices himself for the noblest cause possible: the support, development or safeguard of Islam and the community of believers. [Khosrokhavar:2003]



*Jihâd al-bina*<sup>4</sup> is mentioned as a struggle for reconstruction. The *Umma* should propose collective responses to problems faced by Muslims and particularly by taking care of the needy and the most vulnerable ones, through relief, assistance, political actions, Islamization and even military means if necessary. *Jihâd al-bina* serves as a legal justification for post-war reconstruction, but also construction of orphanages, hospitals, schools, infrastructure for the most vulnerable among the believers when the State is not fulfilling its duties. According to some, *ulamas*, *jihâd al-bina* can be done by non-Muslims if they are not trying to drive Muslims away from their faith. It can be addressed to non-Muslims providing that they live in peace with Muslims and respect some codes of conducts<sup>5</sup> while interacting with Muslims. If the notion of charity is central in the Christian views, the notion of social justice holds comparable importance in the Islamic ideology.

There is also a close connection between exile and *jihâd*. If one focuses more deeply on the religious legitimacy of the flight, it can be noticed that the notion of *hijrah* (exodus) and *jihâd* (holy war) are two different sides of the same phenomenon. The religious duty when it becomes impossible to fight back is not to surrender but to leave the country in order to go to a safer environment from which resistance can be organised. The humanitarian *jihâd* has to be understood in its defensive way, helping harmed communities mostly through relief. This is why most of the Islamic movements have different wings to tackle the issue of conflict management or reconstruction in a holistic way. There is a need for balance between political, social, cultural, spiritual and humanitarian actions, and military actions where necessary. Most Islamic actors share a dual vision of the world; the good against the evil.

It is largely because of this concept *jihâd*, that Islamic relief actors working in conflict situations tend to acknowledge the culture of war even when others ignore it. There is a trend for other actors to deny that culture of war, reject the use of violence, and retain a classical notion of the war-torn society characterised by: the clear separation of belligerents and civil population; beneficiaries of relief are primarily considered only as victims and not as actors of their own development etc.. Islamic relief actors acknowledge the behaviour of the local popu-

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<sup>4</sup> *Jihâd-al-bina* is also the name given to the reconstruction branch of the *Hizbollah*, in Lebanon or in Iran.

<sup>5</sup> It can be the respect of the dressing code, mostly for women who sometimes are asked to wear a veil or at least to dress «modestly», not to provoke male attraction. It can consist also in the respect of some food habits, the prohibition of alcohol, etc.

lations, use the same political culture and language and act in terms of dignity, responsibility, authenticity and proximity. They do not attempt to artificially distance themselves from the realities on the ground. On the contrary they encourage the affected population to establish a set of meanings that serve to legitimise their own actions and behaviours and those of the relief system that fit their understanding and perceptions.

The cases of Afghanistan, Pakistan and Lebanon are relevant to illustrate this understanding of conflict and culture of war. The case of Afghanistan is mostly relevant when investigating the identity process of the Afghan refugees. During the time of the Soviet occupation (1978-1988), the refugee camps became, what Jean-Christophe Rufin (1996: 28) called «Humanitarian Sanctuaries», or in other words «open bases for fighters situated in a neighbouring country, protected not only by the border but mostly by the presence of civilians and representatives of the international community». This concept of humanitarian sanctuary directly links the notions of relief, *hijrah* and *jihâd*. Such a concept is difficult to be accepted by western organizations as it puts into questions their principles of neutrality and even impartiality.

According to Centlivres & Centlivres-Dumont (2000: 423), the Afghan refugees appeared to define themselves along three ideological models. Firstly, the foreign-driven representation of the notion of refugees (as defined by the Geneva Convention) has been manipulated by the refugees themselves in a purely opportunistic way. This notion gave them international status and access to aid delivered by international actors. Secondly, they refer to their tribal identity and the tribal code of honour, the *Pashtunwali*, in which norms of temporary shelter (*nana-watia*) and hospitality were among the key values. Finally, most importantly, the *muhâjir* refers to the religious dimension of exile. The notion of being a refugee as understood by western organisations, i.e. a mass of unarmed and helpless individuals defined according to humanitarian law, was not something that they associate with. They considered themselves to be beneficiaries of the traditional hospitality offered by the Pakistani *Pashtuns*, with whom they shared their cultural background and as *mujâhidîn*. Also this mythified image of Afghanistan and the religious legitimacy of the flight had to be nourished by the war culture to keep the recovery possible. The Geneva agreement was signed on April 15, 1988. After 1989, the *jihâd* was supposed to be won. But instead of a peace settlement, former groups of *mujâhidîn* or new war lords, with varying levels of political organisation, were fighting each other. The notion of *hijrah* lost its religious ground as there was no virtual threat to Islam in Afghanistan. This threat had to come

from other sources for example the international presence in the camps and in Afghanistan itself. Even so, ever since 1989, a love/hate relation with the West had started to dominate the camps and among some Afghans inside the country.

The Culture of war<sup>6</sup> concept is also at the origin of the legitimacy and development of the Lebanese Hizbollah. The Lebanese civil war has its origin in the confrontation of the numerous confessional identities, crystallized in radical discourse by political parties and militias. The two waves<sup>7</sup> of forced migration of Palestinian refugees have confused the situation even further. Today, the population is still completely shaped by the culture of war. They generally feel that their fate is limited to negative events, a fate on which they have no hold or no mean to act. For them, violence seems something inherent to their very nature. They have also a mythical image based on pre-war Lebanon. According to their own perceptions, the responsibility of the dreadful events that marked the past has to be found in the negative side of the population itself. Indeed, for them, there is no feeling of common good. Local leaders and rulers are also held responsible. There is a total crisis of legitimacy and confidence in the State, its institutions and its representatives. Responsibilities lie also with external forces: Israel, Syria, the West and the Palestinian refugees. The Hizbollah is regarded today by a large part of the population (it does not only include the Shia community but also a large Christian population are Hizbollah sympathizers), as the last personalisation of hope. Hizbollah's actions are considered as the reason for the Israeli retreat of South Lebanon. The Hizbollah also provides internal explanations for the war and culture of war, by a series of precepts and practices based on Islam, seen as the only hope for restoration of morality, ethics and understandings among Lebanese. Finally, the Hizbollah remained attached to its military branch, perceived as the only guarantee against the Israeli threat. In South Lebanon, the Hizbollah is considered, since its creation in 1982, as the main resistance group and the main source of relief through its foundations: *Jihâd al-bina*, *Al-shaheed*, *al-Jareeh*, etc. In the 1980s, inhabitants from South Lebanon were sending their children to Hizbollah schools, sourcing medicines or drinking water through Hizbollah channels, felt them-

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<sup>6</sup> On the Lebanese culture of war, see «après-guerre et désespoir au Liban: le lit du Hezbollah ou «parti de Dieu» en arabe» a note of *ireness* drafted by Matthieu Ollagnon, ND, <http://www.ireness.net/fichiers/fiche-experience-45.html>

<sup>7</sup> The first one at the creation of Israel in 1948, the second one —more massive— in after 1970 «Black September» massacre in Jordan.

selves secure and defended by its militia and also sought to be represented by them at the national assembly.

In exploring the notion of conflict volatility or conflict contagion, Pakistan is an excellent example of the vicious circle between the vulnerability of the Pakistani social set-up, the war in Afghanistan and responses founded by Islamic movements through social means for action. Indeed, Zia-ul-Haq's eleven-year dictatorship de-structured the social link and brought Pakistani society to a certain evolutionary point different from the rest of the Muslim world. One of the main distinctions between Pakistan and the other Muslim countries is the growing influence of Islamic movements at the state level or at least their association to power. This potent symbolic efficiency should not be neglected due to the real effects on the social fabric and tangible changes brought about by the creation of groups and lobbies open to Islamic slogans. The anti-western feelings and the emotional strength of the Islamic movements should not be under-rated either<sup>8</sup>. This created a climate of insecurity and violence. Zia also introduced what is called the «Kalashnikov culture», resulting in weapons and drugs penetrating into Pakistan, leading to a criminalisation of society and a political power struggle together with a loss of confidence in the democratisation process. This digression by the Islamization process in Pakistan gives a good idea how the Afghan war and the Pakistani dictatorship have been feeding each other. The Islamization in Pakistan introduced a whole political and social set-up that enabled *madrasas* and the *Taliban* ideology to develop. In the same way, the Afghan war introduced extreme Islamic movements coming from the Gulf, the war culture and a drastic need for an alternative discourse to replace the *muhâjir Imujâhid* semantic couple. It also provided the need for new processes perceived as authentic and sovereign instead of foreign-driven.

An emblematic example of those Islamic movements is the *Minhaj-ul-Quran* foundation created by Tahir-ul-Qadri<sup>9</sup>. In October 1980,

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<sup>8</sup> In Pakistan, the wound is even deeper as the situation is on the borderline with schizophrenia. The government follows politics dictated by international organizations such as the IMF or the World Bank and by the USA, though the masses are rejecting the American imperialism and the way of life of this *maghribzada* (westernized) elite whose frantic rhythm of consumption is envied by the poorer who will never be able to follow them even partly. This elite does not worry about social justice, equity and is not longer burdened by nationalism.

<sup>9</sup> Dr. Qadri is a theologian, a predicator and a political figure known in most of the Muslim countries. He is the author of more then two hundreds publications translated in many languages. Those writings concerned Koranic commentaries on embryology, ecology, education, Islamic banking, etc.

he created in Lahore (Pakistan) his foundation whose religious objectives were the promotion of consciousness and knowledge (through education), the revival of the spiritual values of Islam, the improvement of the morality of Muslims, the organization of a worldwide *da'wah* and the recognition of the universality of the *Umma*. *Minhaj-ul-Quran* that established more than 5 000 boys and girls primary and secondary schools, specialised colleges (medical sciences, administration, computer sciences); vocational training centres and a university «to create a real force for social change». Apart from those educational activities, *Minhaj-ul-Quran* is also offering medical facilities, including: free of charge dispensaries in some downtrodden neighbourhoods, mobile medical units in isolated zones or rural areas, ambulance services, projects against drugs abuse, hospitals, blood bank, etc. Only in the Punjab, *Minhaj-ul-Quran's* projects comprises more than a million and an half persons. The foundation is also present in approximately seventy countries all over the world. The activities abroad are concentrated over three sectors: fundraising, *da'wah* and social actions. Finally, the social and humanitarian activities, for which *Minhaj-ul-Quran* is adopting the techniques used by every relief NGOs, are concentrated in Muslim countries in crisis: Bosnia Herzegovina, Kashmir, Afghanistan, Palestine, Chechnya, Ethiopia, Iraq, Bangladesh and lately the Indonesian province of Aceh and the earthquake-touched areas of Kashmir and NWFP. Refugees and displaced populations programmes have been put in place, as well as a service of legal assistance for asylum seekers in the West (Piquard: 2001, 79).

#### **4. Keeping the Weapons Silent: First Step Towards Establishing a Culture of Peace?**

DDR (Demobilization, demilitarisation and resettlement) is a two-fold process resulting from and promoting a peace-process. But again, this first step only makes sense if a culture of war is acknowledged because alongside the operational aspect of DDR lie all social, political, economical, psychological and symbolic dimensions included in the culture of war. If DDR is increasingly in vogue, the reality of its conception and implementation remain quite vague. Generally, the question of the demobilisation of former fighters is linked to a number of factors including: the return of displaced populations, security measures and/or the establishment of an electoral process. There are many commonalities between those different processes. The diverse populations affected share common characteristics: need to be gainfully employed,

social links, need of re-allocation of land or a place to live, and the need for recognition. Psychological problems are also similar: PTSD, use of domestic violence, apathy, high rate of suicide, depression or loss of self-esteem. These are also pre-conditions for the election process in order to have representative constituencies and no security threats for political candidates or pool stations. Without DDR, the armed factions remain «a state within the state». It is difficult to have an endogenous and efficient state-building process if control over the legitimate means of coercion is not exercised by public powers and the authorities that are mandated to represent the civilian population.

Demobilisation and demilitarisation requires a comprehensive transformation of the war instruments (weapons and fighters) in order to strengthen social peace and citizen-based society. Reintegration is a concern not only for fighters but for the whole community. This is why peace must be the goal of individuals (victims, fighters, leaders) as much as communities (by relinquishing the identities, the emblems and the symbols that have fuelled the conflict). It is not always easy for a war-torn community to accept the return of former-combatants who have sometimes committed great hurts including the cruellest forms of violence. DDR is also relevant to security policies and it is integral to the establishment of regular armed forces and the phasing-out of militias.

Former fighters tend to be completely driven by the culture of war. The legitimacy for the regular use of violence is a good example of this. When existing in an authoritarian system, it becomes habitual to submit unconditionally to the hierarchy, adopt a passive approach, and over-valorises or become accepting of the presence of weapons (in terms of power, virility, personality or economic value). Veterans are touched by the lack of recognition from civilian and non-fighters. The Veterans of the Vietnam war, though believing that they were defending democratic values and their nation, were rejected on their return to America. A similar fate greeted the *Afghansis*, i.e. the former Soviet combatants in the Afghanistan war, and even those currently returning from Chechnya. They feel abandoned and forgotten. They expect positive and affirmative treatment, however, this is not what happens. They remain touched by the feelings, the values and the ideology that brought the community to war: the feeling of threat, victimisation, the nationalism, the ethnic and religious identities, though the rest of the civil society has moved-on. Their expectations focus on their own community even though the very rare responses often come from the international community. Some former fighters were displaced further increasing their feelings of victimisation. In contrast, certain warlords may be treated as heroes and are offered high positions with many re-

sponsibilities in transitional administrations. They are driven by the culture of war, and even continue to head their own militias, while playing a very ambiguous role in the peace process.

The feeling of being forgotten causes an explosion of emotions that include: loss of confidence, discipline or moral values. This loss of social sense and self-esteem alienates those former fighters, demobilised or not, and positions them as potential recruits for mercenary groups or criminal organisations, feeding off the violence or the contagion of conflict.

The success of the DDR process requires accurate timing i.e. not too quick or not too late. On one hand, a speedy demobilisation immediately after the peace agreement is needed in order to tackle the issues of weapons smuggling and trafficking, the violence against returnees and minorities, and the enrolment of mercenaries in neighbouring countries. However, if this process happens too quickly it may be manipulated or neutralised by vested interests for political reasons to: create of a unified national army; to establish an electoral process that may revive tensions and polarisation; or to exploit the presence and strengthen peace spoilers that may use the negative feelings of former fighters. In terms of timeframe, it can be concluded that the sooner the infrastructure is established to take care of the demobilised fighters the better to build trust in the general peace process and to establish the conditions for political transition.

Demilitarisation consists of the removal of weapons from former fighters or groups of belligerents. However, this is far from being a rubber stamping exercise. Weaponry has a commercial value in situations of scarcity of resources and income. But the symbolic value is even greater: weapons are part of the identity of the fighters, an emblem of their social position. There will be no real willingness to give up weapons if there is no sincere trust in the peace process. Frequently, demobilisation will take place with no demilitarisation or with a very partial surrender of weapons. Often it concerns only the heavy war weapons. Light weapons are frequently overlooked even though they remain prevalent in the warring territory including in the homes of «civilians». These weapons provide one of the most important threats to security or law and order. However, liberation groups and resistance movements believe that these weapons are the only tool to provide security and protection against barbarians, evils or threatening practices.

When DDR is enforced or imposed instead of openly supported by the population, resistance can result in form of secret armies or hidden reserve of weapons. If the demobilisation process is restricted to official or regular military the balance of power can change completely and all

tensions can excuse a return to war. The peace process can completely lose its legitimacy.

## 5. From a Culture of War to a Culture of Peace

Reducing the side effects of the conflict heritage and working on the evolution from a culture of war to a culture of peace are essential first steps in conflict transformation. It is important not to limit proposals or expected reforms to structural/ procedural ones (elections, choice of political system) and/ or the reconstruction process to its material form (infrastructures...). While those types of work are important, there are not enough. The most important part of societal rehabilitation concerns the «soft» side of it including social link, search for truth and understanding, addressing memories. Those operations are time-consuming and effects are difficult to measure. Pilot ideas include; the «truth and reconciliation» commissions in El Salvador, Chile or South Africa or other new forms of transitional justice. Consultations, negotiations, confrontation of experiences and knowledge are essentials. Education and media have a strong role to play in this process. Experiences of special TV, theatre or radio programmes have been established in different countries to awake the population to the difficulties and the importance of dialogue between different factions. Those processes are rarely smooth. They can sometimes be violent. Places of communication, spaces where new social sense can be discussed are important.

War perspectives are often short-lived and based on survival tactics at the micro level (limited to the individual or the close kin or community). Another key issue is to establish faith and confidence in the peace process in order to foster long-term vision and behaviour. Notions such as dignity, ownership and responsibility are central to the process. Population must not be stuck in a victimisation process or become overly dependent. It is important to re-create a public space and to give sense to the civil society.

Conflicts are part of the regulation of human interaction and essential for social changes. Violence is often a key element in it. Avoiding conflict can be considered alongside avoiding to allow the society to evolve. The real stake of conflict transformation is to avoid the conflict escalating to uncontrollable levels of violence with excessive disruptive consequences. The major issue lies in the importance of conflict sensitivity and a more informed understanding of the very conflict process on one hand and the overall context within which the conflict emerged on the other; in order to elaborate more appropriate responses to the



crisis. Only interventions that are backed by a comprehensive knowledge of the concerned actors, their actions and the contexts in which the crisis is grounded will generate hope for harmless relief, conflict transformation and steps towards sustainable solutions.

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# The Initial Challenges of the Kosovo Experiment

Richard Cox

## The context

If post Dayton Bosnia presented the international community with a challenge and a chance to experiment in terms of rebuilding peace, State structures and the economy in a post-conflict situation, Kosovo was to take that challenge and experiment even further. First, the status of the Province under UN Resolution 1244, which recognised Kosovo's administrative and military independence while maintaining its belonging to the State of Yugoslavia was to provide a permanent headache to the UN administration (UNMIK) and donor organisations - one which is still not resolved and unlikely to be in the foreseeable future. In other words, what was the international community legally allowed to do when operating in the Province? Then there were the other unique parameters that had to be faced. The international community was dealing with a territory where all skilled labour from the Albanian ethnic majority had been removed from employment over the last ten years and had to be re-trained and re-integrated into economic life, where the ethnic majority had to be re-integrated into mainstream life and slowly abandon its tradition of parallel societies, where the ally «rebel army» —UCK<sup>1</sup>— was suddenly a terrible inconvenience and had to be disbanded, where the oppressor ethnic groups were now the hunted (the Serb minority and their gypsy allies), and where the land was suffering more from lack of investment over the past years than even war damage. Indeed, «empty» is the word which best comes to my mind when thinking back to my initial entry to Kosovo. It was: empty of people; empty of organisational structures and public serv-

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<sup>1</sup> Ushtria Clirimtare E Kosoves translated to the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA).

ices; empty of authority and law and order; empty of skills; empty of water and electricity; and empty of places to eat.

When so much has to be done in parallel simply to normalise a place, where its people actually ended up returning very quickly, was potentially a vertiginous challenge. For this reason, the need for UNMIK to set itself up quickly and effectively and for the donor community to identify the right priorities and rapidly mobilise its resources became essential. All the more so when only four months were available in order to prepare vulnerable members of the population for the severe winter weather. The international community had been responsible for deeply shifting the parameters of the Kosovo problem but it now had to prove that the change was ultimately for the better.

### **Fixing the priorities**

In the absence of local authority and government interfaces the donor community was initially left to its own devices to try and identify the main needs. KFOR, which was basically running the public services from operating the power stations to collecting rubbish from the streets, proved an invaluable source of information on what the immediate requirements were. Otherwise, damage assessments were sub-contracted by the likes of the European Commission (EC) and UNHCR, which focused initially on housing. Approximately 120,000 houses in Kosovo had been damaged during the conflict of which around one third were lightly damaged, one third heavily damaged and one third destroyed. The housing damage assessment prepared by the EC provided the basis of the first donors' conference in July. With only four months to shelter people from temperatures that eventually reached  $-20^{\circ}$  C there was a real urgency to mobilise resources, identify necessary construction materials as well as the implementing partners. A division between humanitarian «emergency» shelter and longer term reconstruction through hard materials had to be defined according to vulnerability and damage level criteria and coordination between donors so that NGO implementing partners were not being used several times for the same task.

I was taken by KFOR by helicopter to visit the higher altitude villages that would be struck first by the winter snows and general cold and several were prioritised for the start of housing reconstruction operations. In one village named Cabra, each and every house of this ethnic Albanian enclave in the north of Kosovo had been destroyed brick by brick so as to eradicate the village from the map. This village was

to become infamous as an example of the depth of the existing inter-ethnic hatred whereby the physical existence of a people is literally dismantled. Upon one of my visits there in September 1999 when I saw returnees pitching tents on the remains of houses, it was decided to prioritise this village due to the symbolic value of regenerating life in an area that had been utterly destroyed.

The housing reconstruction exercise proved to be a good example of coordination amongst the donor community in terms of needs identification, the repartition of resources and the identification of the most appropriate partners, international or local. Was the operation successful? No-one died that year from exposure or hyperthermia.

Without power, the Province was going to suffer from a humanitarian standpoint and not be able to reconstruct itself economically. There were only two lignite powered power stations just outside Pristina that could potentially provide the source of the 750 Megawatts required to serve the 1.6 million population. The first, Kosovo A, was a 1960s Russian built station in its dying days. The second, Kosovo B, was a German 1980s station but was more severely damaged than A. Moreover, the open face lignite mine feeding the stations was in an equally deplorable state with much of the machinery either obsolete or broken down. The challenge to UNMIK and its main sponsor in this sector—the EU—was going to be to play with the Units inside these stations in order to extract as much power as possible from these precarious buildings which required huge, long term investments whilst emergency reparations took place. However, rarely did the Mega wattage reach 300 meaning that Kosovo spent most of its first two years of «independence» with frequent power cuts. No electricity during the long, cold winters proved a challenge for all those not fortunate enough to have their own generators.

A visit to Kosovo A and the surrounding lignite mines will forever remain engraved in my memory. It was like going back in time to Zola's «Germinal», a black world of dust, fire, smoke and danger at every step with essential mechanical parts clearly in their last throes of existence. The lignite mines resembled a burned lunar landscape of epic proportions, with the cadavers of oversized machinery scattered around and looking miniscule in comparison. It was a miracle that any energy was produced from this medieval looking set up.

Water was also scarcely available. Pumping stations were either bomb damaged or in a poor state of maintenance and, of course, without power from Kosovo A and B, the water could not be pumped in any case. When water was available, the population had to fill every available receptacle in the home to build up a reserve. Indeed, it be-

came an obsession, particularly for expatriates that used to taking this utility for granted. Those who could afford it installed their own water tanks. Many wells in rural areas had been poisoned and even had dead bodies thrown in. These obviously needed to be cleaned and made safe, as was the priority for many NGOs working in the rural zones.

Mobility in the Province was hindered by damaged or destroyed roads and bridges that were temporarily repaired by KFOR. But with the increasingly heavy traffic of goods and people on the road network it quickly became an imperative to provide adequate and safe main roads and railroads that would help speed up the reconstruction effort and boost the trade economy of the country. These four sectors of housing, power, water and transport were to be the corner stone of the immediate reconstruction effort.

### **The urgency of institution building**

Clearly the toughest challenge lay ahead in the form of institution building that went from paving the way for proper central and local government to getting the Kosovars to pay for water and electricity. Ten years of being excluded from mainstream society and having survived through parallel structures, the Albanian ethnic majority had to be brought back into mainstream life be it from a social, economic and legal standpoint.

The thirty municipalities of Kosovo were strengthened with local and expatriate staff, either from the UN or under a European twinning scheme bringing in European administrators. But little budget was available for their functioning. The four pillars of the UNMIK administration saw the Department Heads shadowed by local representatives. Public enterprises such as the KEK power company and PTK post and telecoms saw former employees and Directors reinstated and given the benefit of the doubt. The donor community under the guidance of UNMIK had to carefully balance the meeting of investment needs with the necessary technical assistance and training to ensure that hard investments were sustainable. The UCK rebel army had to be urgently disbanded and reintegrated into some formal structures or risk turning into an armed mafia and source of ongoing instability. A keen sensitivity to the symbolic value and pride of the local population in the UCK was picked up on by UNMIK and a solution was found in turning this entity into a civilian emergency service, complete with uniform and military grades: a type of unarmed «gendarme» force. All those recruited



received training and a stable salary and many weapons were quickly recuperated.

The issue of salaries was to plague the reconstruction effort. With a Province unable to fully generate its own running costs and relying almost entirely on the recently established customs service for its revenue, salary shortages and the threat of workers in the power plants and other key public services stopping their respective activities hovered menacingly over the Province on a regular basis. To make matters worse, the very significant expatriate presence was to bring a terrible distortion on salaries with masses of local staff being recruited as local technical staff, secretaries, interpreters, drivers and guards. Some drivers and guards were being paid as much as 800 Euros per month, as much as the shadow ministers inside UNMIK. The «brain drain» effect was startling with former university professors becoming drivers for donor organisations. In my view, this was the single biggest damage the international community would bring upon the Province.

The challenge for UNMIK was that so much institutional activity had to take place in parallel. Bearing in mind that most Kosovars had all official documentation either confiscated at the borders during the refugee exodus or destroyed in burned out homes this huge administrative vacuum had to be quickly resolved. Registration of persons with new ID cards had to be undertaken. This was particularly important in the light of forthcoming municipal elections; new car registration plates had to be issued; property issues resolved and illegal buildings pulled down. An accurate billing system needed to be put in place as well as VAT on high value goods to allow Kosovo to cover its running costs. The ever accumulating rubbish on the streets had to be collected and dealt with appropriately in upgraded waste disposal sites. A local police force had to be gradually put in place after extensive training and investment. Progress was noticeably lacking in establishing an efficient, competent and fair judicial system and penitentiary facilities, this being institutionally the most delicate, complex and sensitive part of the institution building process.

## **The economic challenge**

In a Province where underinvestment was used as a deliberate weapon against the local population, rebuilding the economy presented itself as a gargantuan task. To complicate matters, the legal boundaries for what was legally allowed as economic reform under UNSC Resolution 1244 meant that all initiatives had to be cleared by

the UN legal services - a complex and time consuming process. For instance, privatisation was a disallowed vocabulary in a socialist run country and this was circumvented by UNMIK adopting «Corporatisation». Factories were usually damaged, vandalised or obsolete and had been victim to the under-investment policies of Belgrade. The huge industrial complex of Trepca near Mitrovica in the north, which had once been one of the economic mainstays of the Yugoslav economy (70% of Yugoslavia's mineral wealth) with its lead and zinc mines and battery products was now falling into serious disrepair and even becoming an environmental hazard with the continuous flooding of the mines and pollution of the underground water table.

A trip to Trepca made the energy power stations seem safe and sophisticated in comparison. The metal cage tumbled to the guts of the main Stari Trg mine, with its glittering veins of lead, zinc, cadmium, gold and silver, its stagnant pools of water and muck, its steamy blasts, its miles of dank, gloomy tunnels and its vast stretches of Stygian darkness. As the iron box rattled and squealed on the ear-popping journey, dropping at 18 feet a second, the thought that I would never get out alive crossed my mind on several occasions. Branimir Dimitrijevic, one of the mine's managers, waded through a corridor filled with water, slime and mud that reached up and wrapped itself around his black rubber boots. A huge Swedish iron-cutting machine, one of four in the mine, whirled and belched like some deep-sea monster. Spotlights mounted on its cab lit up a vein of ore, and as the minerals oxidized, creating a suffocating heat, the miners were left gulping for air. The workers, bare-chested and blackened with grime in the vast sweat house, stood aside when a trolley loaded with chunks of rock rumbled down a tunnel on the iron tracks. The estimated worth of this mine is 5 billion Euros but attracting the investments and restructuring of the overall conglomerate would be long and arduous, particularly from a legal standpoint.

There was no banking system and even no official currency (later to become the Deutschmark and then the Euro). One of the immediate measures taken by UNMIK, supported by the donor community, was to declare the DM the official currency, set up the UNMIK customs service and to provide the necessary regulation to set up the first commercial bank (Micro-Enterprise Bank). Until that time, some of the organisations operating in the Province had to undertake the stressful task of cash management whereby tens of thousands of DM would be carried about in plastic bags to undertake salary payments or major purchases.

The most promising enterprises were subtly broken up and their management tendered out under the corporatisation process, which

saw international firms taking majority stakes in Kosovar companies. Agriculture was re-boostered through the repairing of tractors and irrigation channels and the importation of appropriate seeds and livestock. The reconstruction process itself brought business to local suppliers of construction tools and materials. Indeed, the mere fact that some 15,000 civilian international staff was living in the province was calculated to be bringing in some 30 million Euros per month to the Province. Clearly, it was the tertiary economy that benefited the most from this whereas ultimately it was the more sustainable primary and secondary economies that needed rebuilding. And as for Trepca, once UNMIK was able to physically get access to the complex with the help of KFOR (local workers were not prepared to give access to the plant) the twenty or so «parts» of the complex were broken up and foreign investors encouraged buy shares and become stakeholders in the viable elements of it.

### **Filling the social welfare vacuum**

Healthcare, welfare and education was in a ruinous condition as the other sectors of Kosovo. The aged had to rely on family and community support where possible. Education had been barred at all levels from the ethnic Albanian majority and was carried out in private homes using literate adults as teachers. The healthcare system ranked with Albania's as being almost sub-Saharan standard in terms of the qualification of staff and the availability of modern equipment. Clearly long term reforms and gradual overhaul combined with some immediate investment was going to be required to provide an adequate social safety net, bring the medical profession into the modern era and lay the foundations for a Kosovar youth able to compete on the local and regional job market. But these sectors were not to benefit significantly in this initial reconstruction phase due to the complexities of the sectors concerned and the resources required. Pristina and Mitrovica hospitals received some upgraded equipment and some international technical and medical staff.

### **After 18 months intervention**

The overall picture as I left Kosovo was a mixed one. If one is to look at the progress on a «humanity» level the picture is bleak. Regular killings and riots continued to take place between the ethnic groups

and one experiment to allow gypsies back to an Albanian village to rebuild their homes lead to the assassination of five of them after the first night. Ethnic Serbs continued to live in protected enclaves and in Pristina, where only 50,000 of them remained, even their shopping could only be undertaken by being transported in the back of British military vehicles. Outbreaks of violence continued to occur when ethnic Albanians were spotted crossing through Serb villages. The lack of progress on the human front would be the biggest regret of SRSK Kouchner at the moment of his retirement from the Governorship of the Province after what was largely reckoned to have been a successful leadership. He is quoted as having admitted that Kosovo, more than anywhere, is where he had learned the real meaning of hatred.

Crime levels were also worrying, although the murder rates had fallen from 50 to 5 per week, it was clearly still too high considering the population ratios involved. Drug trafficking, historically linked to the KLA, as it had helped it to finance the war of the Serb authorities, continued quite intensively, with Kosovo being on one of the main drug trade routes between Afghanistan and western Europe and clearly many individuals or former KLA members were finding it difficult to change profitable bad habits. The relatively porous borders of the Province, due to a shortage of border guards and difficult terrain, made it ideal as a passing point for drug barons. General theft was rife and even the home I was living in was targeted five times in the 18 months I was down there. The amount of cash brought into the region by expatriates and the salary levels of many international staff was a source of real temptation for many locals. All in all, there was a race against time to restore law and order to a land that had been used to living beyond the law and unfortunately only KFOR was able to make a difference as CIVPOL, the UN run police was hopelessly inadequate in terms of numbers and generally consisted of retired sheriffs from the US or recruits from distant lands such as Jordan and Nepal, which was moderately appreciated by the locals, to say the least.

From an economic standpoint, the Province was still benefiting from the artificial economy created by the mere expatriate presence and the reconstruction exercise itself. It should be mentioned that never before in the history of aid and cooperation had so many funds been disbursed per head of population. But this was at least something as Kosovars were quick to capitalise on the potential business of both these elements. But the primary and secondary economies had not yet rebooted meaning that there was a large gap between those who were working for international organisation and those doing business compared to those in rural areas who struggled to survive.

All in all, the Province had dramatically changed. People were enjoying their newfound freedom; they were generally more prosperous than in the past and life had returned with a vengeance to this desolated corner of the World. But the socio-political dimension and emotional history was far from resolved or dealt with.

### **The success of deconcentrated aid implementation**

The manner in which the aid was implemented under the European Commission Taskforce for the Reconstruction of Kosovo (TAFKO), later to become the European Agency for Reconstruction (EAR), was experimental and intended to answer all the lessons learned from the fairly disastrous reconstruction exercise which had taken place in Bosnia four years earlier. The EC Bosnia operation was criticised for its slowness, its lack of relevance to the in-country evolution and to the exaggerated reliance of consultancy companies to undertake the reconstruction exercise with the accompanying overhead expense that that entails.

TAFKO was to allow the EC to «deconcentrate» its aid operation to the field. The advantages of this were several fold. There was a direct and faster identification of priorities by having staff in the field negotiating the programming directly with other international organisations, UNMIK and KFOR. The implementation of the projects was done more efficiently as tendering processes and contract negotiations could be launched from the field directly which cut out a lot of Brussels Headquarters bureaucracy. Contracts were signed in the field and payment requests processed from there as well. Considering the vast budget that had to be committed and disbursed in Kosovo, the deconcentrated method of working proved highly successful with commitment and disbursement rates at record levels for such an operation. To illustrate this, the housing programme largely met the winter deadline by joining hands with its sister organisation ECHO. Crucial funds were mobilised to keep the power stations functioning, albeit at reduced outage. Key roads and bridges around Kosovo had been fixed within one year whilst SMEs were being supported by a specific bank operation. The main strategy of TAFKO and the Agency was to focus on a limited number of essential sectors and deliver rapidly on those. The EU Court of Auditors would later acknowledge the success of this approach.

Moreover, the combination of having EC officials combined with external consultants recruited as EC temporary staff, there was the perfect combination of those who knew how the organisation worked and those who were specialised in specific sectors. This limited the

amount of outsourcing the EC required from external companies. The success of this manner of working has since encouraged the EC to decentralise its programme operations to its field delegations, whilst the EAR itself has expanded its operations to Serbia, Montenegro, FYROM and possibly Cyprus in the near future.

As far as I was concerned, it felt a privilege to be part of this experiment, as TAFKO General Coordinator and later EAR Head of Programming. There was a sense of satisfaction to see problems and needs at first hand and be able to translate them into projects at relatively short notice. Clearly, the success of a donor also depends upon progress at a political and policy level as well as other parameters not under the donors» direct control. For instance, a donor can make large investments in the power sector, but if cost recovery mechanisms and salary issues are not resolved, the investments will have a short-lived impact. This is what was frequently witnessed in Kosovo where TAFKO and the EAR made vast investments in the physical infrastructure of the Province but where policy, legal and general institutional matters were not yet in place to allow for the full sustainability of the intervention.

## **Humanitarian Action as Peace-building: Some Reflections over the East Timor Process**

Kjell-Ake Norquist

East Timor makes up half of the island Timor, one of the easternmost islands in the chain of islands that begins in Indonesia, south of Java and via Bali continues eastward to Timor, and finally reaches Papua New Guinea, the next state after East Timor. The other half of the island is West Timor, a region within Indonesia (Nusara Timor). In brief, Portugal has held East Timor as a colonial territory since the 1500s, and left it abruptly in 1975. In December the same year, following a brief civil war in East Timor, Indonesia occupied the territory. This acquisition of territory by force was never recognized by the UN and became subsequently a political and diplomatic problem for Indonesia over the years. Following the demise of Gen. Suharto in 1998, his successor B.J. Habibie offered in January 1999 a «popular consultation» to be held in East Timor, in order to decide the territory's future. Under UN auspices this was organized in August 1999.

In this paper, a reflection is made on the relationship between humanitarian action (HA) and the concept and reality of peace-building (P-B). They belong to each end of an imagined continuum that often is used to describe a conflict's development, from its inception to its sustainable settlement, in one way or another. The issue for us to deal with here is basically the question: is it possible to link these two concepts in a practically meaningful way?

The crimes against humanity that took place in East Timor following the referendum on August 30, 1999, became the first cases of application of the definitions of such crimes according to the 1995 Rome Statute, which establishes the International Criminal Court (ICC). Thus, East Timor is a test case for this aspect of the newest international legal instrument on crimes against humanity, in its applicable parts.

The killings and atrocities at large, that took place in East Timor in the weeks after the result of the referendum was publicized in early September 1999, does not in numbers match major humanitarian crises during the 1990s, such as the ones in Somalia or Rwanda. Even if numbers should not count when injustice is done, the humanitarian crises concept as such, has a quantitative dimension to it, often expressed in terms of «systematic» and «indiscriminate» actions.<sup>1</sup> More than 250 000 East Timorese fled/were forced to flee to Indonesia, mostly to West Timor, as part of an organized attempt to undermine the emerging state, basically carried out through resources put at the disposal of some 13 major militia groups, by the Indonesian military, TNI. These groups were set up from late 1998 and mainly in 1999 for the event that Indonesia should face the risk of «loosing» East Timor. Through intimidation and destruction before the referendum, the strategy was to coerce the East Timor population to vote for autonomy within Indonesia.

In addition to the forced uprooting of about 1/4 of the total population, some 1400 cases of murder committed in 1999 have been identified according to the UN Serious Crimes Unit (SCU) set up in Dili, East Timor's capital, by the United Nations in the interim period between the referendum and independence in 2002. In addition to this are cases of torture, rape, and other HR violations. The Serious Crimes Unit, SCU, is part of the Special Panels for Serious Crimes (SPSC) that were set up by the UN in early 2000 for dealing with crimes against humanity in East Timor. Besides the SCU, there is the Defense Lawyers Unit, and the Judges. In addition, a Court of Appeal that is also covering the regular court system's appeals, has been established.

Without going into the legal dimensions in detail here, the purpose of this system, as well as of UN's efforts in East Timor as a whole, has been to deal adequately with the crimes, and to build a domestic East Timorese capacity to deal with the legal demands the situation may require in the future. This goes for the court system and the processes concerning serious crimes, as well as for other civil society sectors.

As the UN, after having made one prolongation decision, now is likely to close its work in East Timor following the end of May 2005, as

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<sup>1</sup> The referendum offered the options of «autonomy within Indonesia» and «independence», respectively. 21.5% opted for autonomy, and thus 78.5% for independence in a referendum with a very high registration and participation rate. The story behind East Timor's history including the Indonesian occupation 1975-1999 is now, after the country's independence in May 2002, being told in several books. (For some examples, see list of literature.)



the current Security-Council decision implies, what can be said about the «transferability» of the existing work of the SCU and related mechanisms? Before answering the question, we shall look at the relation between humanitarian action (HA) and legal measures, on the one hand, and peace-building, on the other.

### **Is a legal process Humanitarian Action?**

If humanitarian action (HA) is confined to the physical dimension of saving lives through immediate action, then legal action is not humanitarian action. However, as soon as survival is secured, for instance in a post-conflict situation, the questions of Why? Who? and With what right? are immediately posed. Humanitarian action cannot stop at the physical/survival dimension of human life, but has to recognize the need for linking with a process of peace-building in order to secure its own results and in order to contribute to a sustainable development as early as possible in a peace-building process. This puts in focus the linking mechanisms between HA and peace-building. A possible link can be the concept of *transferability*, which identifies the aspects of HA that can and should be brought forward into the subsequent stage of development.

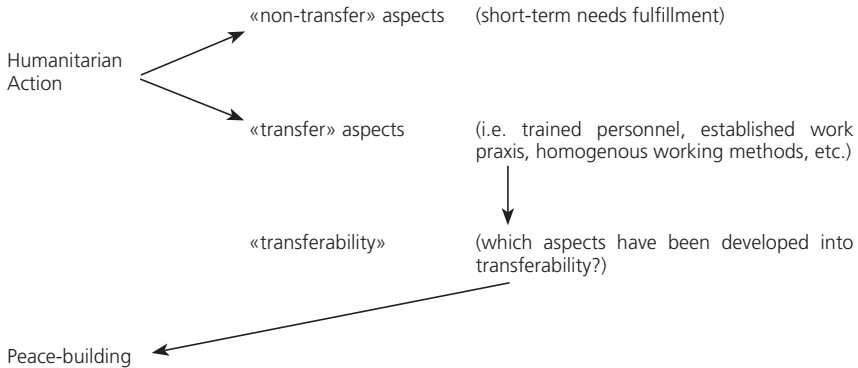
Legal action, that is, credible prospects of legal action in response to, for instance, violations of human rights, as part of a broader social (re-)construction —something that for instance often is beginning in refugee camps— is a very important trust-making dimension. It gives reasons for a victim to think that there is at least a credible chance that one's own case will be reviewed and —equally important— that there seems to be no need to take justice into one's own hands. Without this signal from an emerging state structure, the risk is high for justice to be made in the streets rather than in the courts. This puts the fundamental trust in «justice to come» into the category of being very important, early life-saving instruments that are —or should be— part of international humanitarian actions.

### **Linking HA with peace-building and sustainability**

In line with this view of the role of legal measures, I would then argue, that for the assessment of the quality of HA, the possibility to transfer, in physical and social terms, its achieved results into a situation of self-supporting structures makes more justice to the conditions

for HA then does a direct linking of HA to peace-building and sustainable development. There has to be a bridge-building concept between these two concepts, as was mentioned above, but here we will develop somewhat more: the concept of «transferability».

The idea is, that humanitarian action may include non-transferable aspects, as well as transferable. The figure below is an illustration of the approach.



**Figure 1**

Transferable and non-transferable aspects of humanitarian action

The idea is briefly, that those aspects of HA that in themselves have a long-term possibility to exist effectively, should be developed so that they can be transferred into a peace-building mode of operation. This recognizes that HA very well may have only and very short-term kind of components, but those that are not, can be building blocks for long-term processes. In the following the case of East Timor will be used as an illustration of this model.

**East Timor and the transfer of legal action**

In the wake of the violence in East Timor the UN set up an International Commission of Inquiry in East Timor in January 2000. At this time, the violence —with its peak in September 1999— had been quelled by INTERFET, the Australian-led international force, mandated by the UN to restore order in the territory. At the same time, UNTAET was about to begin its work, although formally established in October

1999.<sup>2</sup> The International Commission found, that systematic and widespread crimes against humanity had taken place in East Timor and recommended an international tribunal to be established, along the lines of Rwanda and former Yugoslavia courts. Indonesia, however, reacted strongly against this proposal and argued for a national solution to the situation, which materialized in the creation of an Ad Hoc Tribunal in Jakarta, with the purpose of dealing with the same atrocities. The Secretary-General, while accepting this, also made it clear that the UN intends to review the process at a later stage. Such a review has now taken place, through the establishment of a UN Commission of Experts, which should assess the Ad Hoc Tribunal in Jakarta, as well as the Serious Crimes Unit, in Dili, East Timor.

### **Transferring the Serious Crimes Unit process**

There are four goals for the UN's involvement (in East Timor), goals which also provide the basis for a legal system's «good transference». With respect to East Timor this implies that it should:

- deal adequately with the atrocities connected with political violence in East Timor 1974-1999;
- include capacity-building effective enough for take-over;
- provide a unified and complete legal basis for the work; and finally
- provide adequate material resources identified and possibly secured for the future.

The first goal above is in principle «non-transferable». Instead, once and for all the violators of atrocities should be brought to justice, they should be tried and sentenced according to relevant international standards, and when this work is finished, these sorts of work should hopefully not be need again, in East Timor or elsewhere. To fulfill this goal is the challenge no. 1 for the SCU in East Timor. Has dealt adequately with the atrocities? Its period of operation is planned to end in May 2005 and in 2004 it was estimated that half of the murders committed in 1999 only, had not been investigated. In addition to this, there was a reduction of the SCU's resources in 2003 as compared to the first years of operation. If we add to this the fact that only 1%

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<sup>2</sup> INTERFET stands for International Force East Timor, and UNTAET is short for United Nations Transitional Administration East Timor. Its Head was the late Dr Sergio Vieira de Mello, Special Representative of the Secretary-General.

of all killings in the period the SCU was mandated to work with took place in 1999, it seems obvious and necessary to say that the Serious Crimes Unit has not been able to adequately deal with the atrocities connected to political violence in the period 1974-1999 in East Timor.

It may have been a too optimistic wish when the first goal above was set, and maybe it would be an acceptable «remedy» if there was the capacity in place to deal with the past, from a legal point of view, if and when the SCU ends its work. Now, was this the case?

According to the Deputy General Prosecutor at the SCU, there will not be a national capacity prepared to take over investigations on crimes against humanity when the SCU ends its work.<sup>3</sup> There has simply not been enough people to train for this purpose, provided by the Ministry of Justice.

On this point we should make the observation, that irrespective of East Timor's capacity to provide adequate legal staff for the task, it has not been a priority from the Government to support the work of the SCU. Also President Xanana Gusmão has often criticized the SCU for its indictments of high-level Indonesian militaries, according to him jeopardizing the sensitive relations between Indonesia and East Timor.

Irrespective of the sensitivity of the case, there is not in East Timor a capacity provided by the UN for continued investigations of serious crimes, including crimes against humanity, after the ending of the work of the SCU.

Coming to the third goal above, about a complete legal basis, we can observe that there was a controversy over which legal system should apply in East Timor. In a well-known case (dos Santos) that went to the court of Appeal, it was rejected that the first verdict, based on an UNTAET regulation, could be applied to an act committed before the regulation went into effect. Instead the judges ruled that Portuguese law should apply, and not Indonesian which was commonly expected. UNTAET created a large number of regulations. However, their relation to Indonesian law was never systematically mapped. Later, the Parliament of the independent East Timor ruled, that Indonesian law should apply where there was a lack of regulations from UNTAET. In this way, the Parliament ruled against the verdict of the judges in the Court of Appeal.

Obviously, it was not a harmonized legal system that the UN left for East Timorese to take over on the day of independence, May 20, 2002.

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<sup>3</sup> See The La'o Hamutuk Bulletin, Vol 5, No. 3-4, 2004, p. 3.

It suffices to note this, at this point. The Parliament will gradually regulate unclear areas, as it has started.

When it comes to the final point of resources, it is enough to note, that in a country with such weak administrative, human and physical resources as East Timor, a continued support for administration and training is very necessary. Not the least jails, and the burden of keeping prisoners for decades as some verdicts imply from the SCU, is part of this.

### **What was transferable in the East Timor case?**

Besides the material and human resources, it is clearly the legal system, a comprehensive legal system that is the most transferable dimension. By systematic work, based on previous/existing laws and practices, it is possible to develop a comprehensive coverage of law, open for modification by subsequent parliaments, but in principle a complete legal whole when transferred.

To avoid allowing for a legal gap, which undermines belief in new institutions, and provide at least a basic legal and police system, the two most important measures for eliminating a vacuum in social order has been established.

If humanitarian assistance should save lives, it should also prevent that new lives are taken due to imperfect legal and law enforcement action. The legal dimension is part of this: if a legal/social order vacuum is allowed—as we have seen most clearly in Iraq recently—the best intentions of humanitarian assistance might be lost. Instead, by identifying what can and maybe cannot be transferred into long-term and sustainable structures, we can narrow the gap between the immediate and the long-term in humanitarian assistance and peace-building.

Before closing this discussion, we should return to the level of humanitarian action and peace-building, and remind about the particular character of the situation in which the process takes place, that is analyzed here. East Timor was a case of de-colonization but in most other cases post-conflict peace-building is taking place in societies with a varying degree of ownership of internal matters. «Whatever euphemism is used, however, it is both inaccurate and counter-productive to assert that transitional administration depends upon the consent or «ownership» of local populations» writes Chesterman (2003) and continues: «It is inaccurate because if genuine local control were possible then a transitional administration would not be necessary. It is counter-productive because insincere claims of local ownership lead to frustration and suspicion on the part of local actors.»

Under such circumstances, we cannot expect all goals to be completed, while at the same time always try to reach them.

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