Unintended Alliance: The Co-option of Humanitarian Aid in Conflicts

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Pillage, plunder, and theft have long been a part of war. Barbarian armies and marauding bandits used these tactics prolifically. The campaigns of Genghis Khan and Alexander the Great are archetypes of mass armies using plunder as a component of logistical systems. The plunder approach to supply has its modern roots in the speed with which Napoleon's armies raced across Europe during the Napoleonic wars.[1] What is new about the plunder technique of supply procurement is how, on occasion, it has been used against aid organizations, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and other suppliers of humanitarian assistance. During the Cold War, Western states funded and supplied the enemies of the Soviets, while the Soviets aided the enemies of the United States. When the United States and the Soviet Union began to disengage from the many conflicts spawned by the failure of decolonization, particularly in Africa, insurgents and governments had to find new methods of providing for the supply of their armed forces. An increasing influx of humanitarian aid from independent and even state donors, intended to help the collateral casualties of war, often has been co-opted to fill part of the void left by the superpowers.

   In societies characterized by ancient traditions of rebellion and banditry, accompanied by the established military practice of raiding and pillaging, co-option of humanitarian aid has become a natural extension of military doctrine, as is the case with any other available resource. Since the factions involved in such conflicts either believe they are fighting for the well-being

of their own ethnic or cultural group, are attempting to deny rivals spoils, or are political and economic opportunists, the moral dimension of depriving noncombatants of aid is not an issue for them.

Despite being widely known, the utilization of the humanitarian aid system as a logistical support system for war is one of the most overlooked constituent tactics of modern warfare. As such, it has not received adequate research or public attention. The lack of consideration of this tactic has had a significant effect on the failure of interventions in many of the world's conflicts. Indeed, this unorthodox approach to military logistics should be considered as one of the factors that contributes to intervention failures, as in Somalia in 1992 or Rwanda in 1994. The cunning co-option of the massively valuable resources of the humanitarian aid system is how many militaries and para-militaries have continued to support their soldiers and campaigns despite the loss of military assistance. The determination of aid organizations to remain neutral, however noble, enables local commanders to continue to pillage aid resources intended for those who suffer. Those with guns never go hungry.

When compared with the exploitation of natural resources or narcotics, which are geographically dispersed, the co-option of international humanitarian aid has likely become one of the most reliable sources of funding for belligerents. Because people in the West feel guilty, or obligated, when they see suffering masses on their television screens while enjoying their own comfort or even opulence, they open up their checkbooks and send money.[2] The well-intentioned aid and relief organizations in turn are determined that regardless of the political situation they will use the donated money or supplies to provide for the many innocents who are harmed by the conflict that rages, for whatever reason (and there are many). Relief organizations may be only marginally successful in reaching a portion of the civilian population; the rest of the time they may be controlled, manipulated, and bullied by the local tyrants (including governments) whose war is producing the suffering that relief providers intend to alleviate. The combatants, well aware of how aid organizations operate, abuse the shortcomings in the system and funnel resources from donors into their war machines. The huge number of aid agencies clamoring for support from the same pool of donation money and material supplies must show how they are aiding those who suffer. Often in their haste to secure funding, aid organizations rush into war zones without

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"Those with guns never go hungry."

thoroughly assessing their potential impact. It is this dynamic that the intelligent field commander of a local militia or opposition group exploits.

It is the goal of this article to describe one aspect of the many evolving tactics of war and to provide background for potential interveners, be they military or civilian. This description should not be misconstrued as a disregard for the value and benefit of humanitarian aid.

The Tactical Level

The tactics of misappropriating aid to support war are quite simple.[3] The primary tactics employed are direct theft and coercing aid providers to believe that combatants are actually noncombatants. Both of these activities have been widely documented by Human Rights Watch and other aid organizations. In its 1993 report on "Civilian Devastation—Abuses by All Parties in the War in Southern Sudan," Human Rights Watch described how armed parties, unable to confiscate aid directly, devised schemes such as food diversion and moving civilians near military base locations in order to facilitate access to aid.[4] After battles, many fighters arrived at refugee camps or international aid clinics claiming to have been innocently caught in the middle of the fighting.[5] Due to the low-tech nature of the wars into which most of humanitarian aid is delivered, commanders of units of platoon size and smaller are given much more freedom to operate than is typical of major state armies. As a result, many criminal acts become a part of the operational effectiveness of the armed force.

Insurgent forces often convince aid workers or journalists of the nobility of their plight. With such support, the small units are able to access resources easily. This is illustrated vividly in the work *Emma's War*, which describes the life of an aid worker (Emma McCune) who falls in love with a leader of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA). The author writes, "Aid makes itself out to be a practical enterprise, but in Africa at least it's romantics who do most of the work."[6]

Fighters often use the fact that they have easy access to good supplies, most acquired through the means discussed above, as a coercive method of recruitment. In areas where war or natural disasters have caused severe famine, the control of aid supplies is very important, often so significant as to spark wars or escalate them. The images from Operation Iraqi Free-

dom of Iraqi civilians rioting and fighting over the few supplies the British forces had brought into Basra is the norm, not the exception, when it comes to aid distribution during conflicts.[7] When people are hungry, morals are less observed, survival becomes paramount, and people act on instinct; it is human nature to fight to survive. As a member of an armed force, resources can be acquired for oneself and one's family with more ease than can be done as a noncombatant. As a result (among other reasons) young men are particularly prone to joining militia forces.

Within refugee camps, militant groups often operate in the manner of organized crime, employing extortion and strong-arm tactics to manipulate the refugee population. Dr. Stephen Keller, a former World Food Program aid worker, described the political situation in the camps along the Thai-Kampuchean border during the early 1980s as "similar to Chicago during Prohibition."[8] Armed gangs, constituents of rival warring factions, skirmished for control of the camps. The Thai army would periodically enter the camps located in Thailand and take what they desired. Thai soldiers would erect checkpoints where they would let aid supplies pass only for a consideration. At night, when aid workers were required by the Thai government to leave the camps, armed factions would enter—pillaging, raping, and fulfilling the "needs" of an insurrection force.[9]

Because of the power that local factions hold over refugee camp administration, they are able to manipulate the system through which food aid is dispersed. Typically, ration cards are used to indicate who is a legitimate recipient of aid. These ration cards are the indicators the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and most aid organizations use to determine the level of aid required at a camp. The number of ration cards rarely reflects the actual number of refugees requiring aid, however. Most often the card numbers are inflated.[10] The gap between the number of ration cards and the actual refugee population is caused by several factors. One is double registration, where individuals or families hold more ration cards than they are entitled to. Additionally, sometimes there are many people who obtain ration cards but never take up residence at the camp. Temporary absences and repatriation also skew the numbers. In a report for Save the Children Fund (UK) regarding several refugee camps in Ethiopia during 1989, the authors found that "seventy percent of the families in Hartisheikh [a refugee camp along the Ethiopia-Somaliland border] had more than one ration card."[11] The majority of supplies obtained above basic need are often acquired by the militant factions that control the camps, or are sold on black markets, where illegal trade is often converted into the means for war.

Refugees are not only vital as a catalyst for maintaining aid levels, but they can also function as human shields, protecting garrisons that are spe-

cifically located near refugee camps for that purpose. In *Frontline Diplomacy: Humanitarian Aid and Conflict in Africa*, John Prendergast writes that "civilian feeding centers or distribution points and the agencies serving them act as a protective cover; when they are attacked, the attack is not just against a military garrison but also against the entire aid system."[12]

The Strategic Level

The manipulation and co-option of humanitarian aid exists at the strategic as well as the tactical level. Paramount among strategic activity is the use of aid to direct population movements as well as using population movements to influence the locations where aid is provided. Aid organizations base their assessments of need on the number of people in a particular area who require assistance. In order to acquire the resources of NGO aid, militant groups must somehow convince the NGOs that there is a need in the areas that the militants control. They do this by using scare tactics to drive refugees and internally displaced persons into localities they control, thus creating an actual need. They also loot and pillage areas so as to remove the necessities of life for the civilians, leaving the NGOs to provide even more assistance than if there were just a normal refugee population. For example, warring factions often induce drought and famine through the use of scorched-earth tactics. They consequently receive the spoils of the pillaging as well as the subsequent increased aid.

The benefit of having refugee camps as bases of operation and supply is important for many insurrections. Since aid levels are a function of the number of refugees in particular camps, it is in the interest of warring factions to keep camps populated. For insurgents this is important because they directly use the aid resources; for governments, humanitarian aid is important because it frees up finances for the purchase of arms, mercenaries, and the payment of soldiers. In his *Foreign Affairs* article "Feeding Refugees or War?" Ben Barber documented how in refugee camps "guerrillas used physical and psychological coercion to keep [refugees] in the camps."[13] After the Tutsi Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) ousted the genocidal Hutu regime of the late Habyarimana and his Coalition pour la Defense de la Republique (CDR), the Hutu militias, who relied on the refugee camps along the border with the Congo and Zaire, often withheld news of the Rwandan (RPF) government's promise of safe return and instead spread propaganda, warning that Tutsis would slaughter the Hutus if they tried to return home.[14]

Another strategic consideration of belligerents is how the injection of humanitarian aid enhances the illicit economies synonymous with war. The borders of warring states are often porous, resulting in heavy illegal trade which in turn can support both sides at conflict, particularly insurgents. In a

discussion of the economies of the Horn of Africa, Paul Henze described this phenomenon:

> Even during the past decade of acute authoritarian mismanagement and consequent deterioration of the economies of all three major countries, extralegal and informal trade (i.e. smuggling) between them has flourished, and borders that central governments have been unable to control have proved economically porous. . . . The same has been true in large part of the borders of Kenya and Uganda and, to some extent of the sea trade between Ethiopia, Djibouti, and Somalia with Yemen. Djibouti has been a major focal point of all this trade and has functioned, in fact, as the hub of an informal Horn of Africa free trade area.[15]

What has become known as an "aid economy" can develop when people become dependent on large amounts of humanitarian aid for extended periods of time. The aid economy provides work for locals as laborers on aid projects and in supporting positions throughout the aid infrastructure, such as trucking, shipping, protection, or translation. The theft and resale of vehicles and other equipment provides another source of aid-related income in states that become aid dependent. The maintenance and leasing of housing to aid workers also accounts for a significant level of wartime income. Also, as has been seen in East Timor and Somalia, many shops, restaurants, bars, and other entertainment establishments (often prostitution and drug related) tend to follow aid operations. Not only do locals benefit from the needs of the many aid workers and journalists who inundate war-affected states, but as occurred in East Timor once the UN mission began, many foreign business people (which included a mix of profiteers and legitimate businesspersons) set up restaurants, hotels, and other enterprises. Of course, to allow such an economy, the faction that controls the area in which the businesses are established either levies taxes on them or charges for protection. Oftentimes the entertainment businesses, such as brothels and bars, are run directly by organized crime rings that support militant factions.

In similar fashion, refugee camps themselves can be havens for insurrection groups. Much like the hinterland that enables guerrilla factions to establish protected areas, refugee camps can become sanctuaries for combatants. In an essay titled "Refugee Warriors at the Thai-Cambodian Border," Cortland Robinson describes how insurgent factions utilized the many refugee camps there as sources of medical supply, food, and safe haven for their families. He describes how the Khmer Rouge would relocate camps from the Thai-Cambodia border into more obscure, mountainous regions, making them more suitable as bases from which to launch insurrections. "From September to October 1988," he writes, "the Khmer Rouge moved more than 5,400 people from O'Trao, an evacuation site in Thailand, to 'hidden border'

camps across the border."[16] Aid organization staff can do little to combat the will of the groups that control the camp system. As Tom Stadler, UN Border Relief Organization (UNBRO) co-coordinator commented, "Nobody seems to have the will and/or the power to oppose the DK [Khmer Rouge] in their moving their population back."[17] Oftentimes camps are maintained very near combat zones, and battlefields are even chosen for their adjacency to refugee camps. Refugee camps have even been found to save insurgent movements from defeat, as "in 1988 with the creation of several refugee camps between the Jigjiga [an area of the borderlands of Somalia and Ethiopia] and Somali frontier, which Issaq guerrillas could use as a sanctuary for the usual purposes, such as food supply, recruitment, and medical treatment."[18] When confronted with the choice of turning away injured people due to their likely involvement in fighting, most aid organizations see assisting some combatants as the lesser of two evils—assisting combatants rather than leaving a noncombatant to die. Sadako Ogata explained the reality of having many combatants mixed in with civilians in refugee camps in her address to the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly in 1997. Commenting on the refugee camps of Eastern Zaire, she said:

> The civilian nature of refugee camps—a fundamental tenet of refugee conventions—was not compromised by humanitarian action, but by the failure of states to provide political, material, and military support to separate armed elements and political extremists from refugees. It was this failure—not the providing [of] food and shelter to the refugees—which eventually put humanitarian action on an inevitable collision course with the security concerns of states in the region.[19]

Refugee camps also provide an ideal environment for the recruiting of soldiers—and particularly child soldiers. Although the laws of war prohibit the use of children as soldiers, many children who live in refugee camps are enlisted by the same militaries that have pledged to protect them.[20] It is in this manner that child soldiers and the tactics of humanitarian aid co-option are connected. Child soldiers are ideal for many aspects of guerrilla warfare. They are particularly effective in asymmetrical conflicts since they can go places adult soldiers cannot, both because they are smaller and also because the enemy often refuses to see children as a threat. A child soldier from Burma/Myanmar described how he was used in this way: "I was in the front lines the whole time I was with the opposition force. I used to be assigned to plant mines in areas the enemy passed through. They used us [child soldiers] for reconnaissance and other things like that because if you're a child the enemy doesn't notice you much; nor do the villagers."[21]

Because children are easily intimidated and vulnerable, they make for very obedient soldiers; they can be told to do the riskiest tasks. Often drugged

into complicity, child soldiers carry out some of the most horrific of tasks, such as burning villages and setting booby-traps. The use of child soldiers is quickly becoming one of the most serious human rights violations currently plaguing conflict-ridden states, and this phenomenon is enhanced by the poverty-stricken reality of the refugee camps and the dependency developed in societies that have grown accustomed to massive influxes of international aid dollars and resources. More widely, the use of child soldiers has become one of the more important tactical elements of nontraditional warfare, much like the co-option of humanitarian aid has become an increasing element of military logistics strategy. The refugee camp system also has been corrupted by the use of rape and scare tactics in order to coerce refugees to locate in certain areas that are strategically important for belligerent factions.[22]

Another aspect of the strategic nature of the manipulation of the humanitarian aid system is how aid can legitimize local factions. When a local commander or warlord makes it appear he has secured assistance, it makes it seem that his particular warring faction is benevolent, thus resulting in the support and acceptance of the people, particularly when those people are suffering from famine and the ravages of war. The winning of the "hearts and minds" of the local people is essential for insurrections to succeed. Similarly, the support of locals is equally essential for the counter-insurrection efforts of governments. The gaining of local support has become accepted guerrilla and counterinsurgency doctrine. Since the Malayan Emergency of 1948-1960, the notion of mixing repression and reform credited to Sir Gerald Templar has had a significant effect on the military thinking of insurgents and governments alike.[23]

Regional geopolitical issues also are a component of how warring factions, whether governmental or insurgent, develop a strategy to manipulate the humanitarian aid system for their benefit. By destabilizing states, insurgent groups often convince the governments of sympathetic states to support, or increase support, for their insurgent movement. In a different way, governments can use the logic of maintaining regional stability to legitimize the use of more brutal force, or to persuade regional or international organizations to enter as intermediaries. Often the entrance of international organizations favors the interests of the established state authorities, since the sanctity of borders and the preservation of sovereignty has long been an important international norm.

A 1995 African Rights report, "Imposing Empowerment," discussed the logic inherent in warring factions' strategies of aid co-option. When aid is appropriated, significant anger and tension among the local populations rarely erupts because "civilians have weaker property rights over aid supplies than over their own produce."[24] Because humanitarian aid arrives in

bulk it can be collected in bulk, requiring fewer human and military resources. The administration of bulk supplies also is much easier than if small bands of fighters were dispatched to loot and acquire local produce and livestock. It is also simpler than taxation. By acquiring goods in bulk, often from refugee camp storehouses or dockside warehouses, the control of supplies is centralized at a relatively high level of command and control, which assists in maintaining discipline among combatants who are often accustomed to personal profiteering during war. The report also comments on how "using aid supplies reduces the security risk to the armies of transporting commodities, as regards both the interception and the tracing of suppliers."[25]

Insurgents vs. Governmental Authorities

Despite the similarities in the tactics and even the strategies of insurgent forces and government forces, there are important distinctions between how these two groups co-opt the humanitarian aid system. Insurgent strategy is typically a form of guerrilla warfare similar to that developed by Mao Tse-tung.[26] What Mao called "protracted war" contains several stages, each of which can be amended to the conditions of a society dependent on foreign aid. Refugee camps can provide the bases from which guerrillas set up sanctuaries. Refugee camps can even be used as sanctuaries. Factions often direct population movements into remote areas of the country suitable for guerrilla bases, such as mountains or jungles, so that aid groups will feel compelled to provide aid to the areas militant groups intend to use as sanctuaries. Some insurgent groups have gone as far as building airstrips near areas where they have diverted refugee movement to make it easier for aid organizations to bring in resources.[27] If a movement is intent on framing goals in an ideological, ethnic, or nationalistic manner, refugee camps provide an ideal situation to politicize the population. Just as Giap in Vietnam[28] or Castro and Guevara in Cuba,[29] the leaders of modern insurrection movements adapt the military strategy of Mao and other guerrilla strategists, like T. E. Lawrence, to fit their particular circumstances.[30] In the case of the conflicts where NGO aid is prevalent, military leaders would be remiss if they did not recognize the advantage of readily available resources, and use them.

Governments tend to be less faithful to a particular type of military strategy when it comes to their manipulation of humanitarian aid systems. Some governments attempt to develop programs of counterinsurgency on the British model of "repression and reform" applied with success during the Malay Crisis of 1948-1960. Sometimes governments see aid as an element of the reform aspect of counterinsurgency strategy. Other times, realizing the importance of humanitarian aid for insurgent groups, they manipulate the aid system to repress the population among whom the insurgents find support.

The movement of refugee camps into centralized locations and sending government troops to patrol and wreak havoc on those who seek refuge in camps are attempts to repress popular insurgent support. Refugee camps enable governments to maintain control of populations, while not spending money on the basic needs of displaced persons in the camps. Governments can view aid as resources that will enable them to divert financial resources into military development. North Korea is often cited as an example of how some governments spend fortunes on military equipment while their people starve. In countries like North Korea, humanitarian aid often becomes a primary source of sustenance for the civilian population, freeing up government resources for military purposes.[31]

Governments also use aid in a similar fashion to the insurgent groups. They often bolster the work of NGOs or intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), using aid as a tool to convince the people that they should support the government in its struggle. In this sense it is obvious that regardless of side in internal conflict, all factions realize that if they are to gain control of a country they require the acceptance of the population, whether tacit or active. The efforts of the Sudanese government during the late 1990s to bring "Operation Life-Line Sudan" (OLS) more tightly under its control through its "Peace From Within" strategy is reminiscent of hearts-and-minds counterinsurgency strategies used by other governments. By linking the provision of aid, aid workers, and other aspects of humanitarian assistance to the government, the Sudanese government benefitted from the appearance that it was a major reason for the aid, rather than the likely truth that the aid was being received despite the government. "Going beyond the normal liberties taken by governments, the Sudanese regime [deployed] this comprehensive 'peace from within' strategy in areas of significant opposition—armed and unarmed—[while] harassing, imprisoning, and executing those who [did not] comply."[32]

In considering how governments act in the aid/conflict dynamic, it is important to keep in mind that there are numerous subsidiary objectives and agendas on the part of government actors. For the sake of brevity and clarity of this discussion on strategies and tactics, a wider analysis of these sub-interests is not included. A more in-depth investigation could provide crucial information for practitioners trying to mitigate the flow of aid into the wrong hands.

Bandits, Profiteers, Looters, and Organized Crime

Unlike governments or insurgents that fight for control of states, reform of governments, or secession of territory, there are many people and groups involved in war that are interested solely in personal financial gain. These groups play an important role in the interaction between humanitarian aid and war. They often work on behalf of or in contract with warring factions,

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both governmental and insurgent alike—sometimes both at the same time. Many such individuals become mercenaries; on occasion they are even hired by NGO workers for protection.

The most serious examples of profiteering and banditry during war have occurred in clan or tribal societies, like Somalia, or in countries where there are significant natural resources (including narcotics). In his work "Somali Armed Movements," Daniel Compagnon comments that when the young militiamen of the revolutionary forces of the United Somali Congress (USC) "had tasted life in the big city [Mogadishu], with almost free license to loot, kill, and rape, and had come to enjoy it, . . . the distinction between USC combatants and bandits (mooryan) became blurred."[33]

Even if conflicts begin with revolutionary purpose, they often descend into profiteering ventures. The profits derived from war can motivate leaders to desire its continuation, particularly in localities where there are few natural resources to profit from should a particular group or individual gain control of the state. In some cases pillage and looting predominate because chains of command are weak. In these instances soldiers are not controlled in a manner that prohibits theft, rape, or other crimes of war.[34] Officers may use the prospect of confiscated and stolen goods as an incentive to retain forces; otherwise many of the combatants will simply leave or take up arms for the faction that can provide enough reward. Combatants who make decisions in this way can conceptually be considered mercenaries. Aid causes a protraction of war in these situations because as long as war is ongoing, aid flows; if the war ends, so does the aid, and without aid many profiteers lose their livelihoods—thus it is logical for those who benefit to desire a continuation of the conflict. Understanding that most societal forces are driven by some form of economic behavior, the assertion of Clausewitz that "war is a continuation of politics by other means" might be more appropriately phrased as "war is a continuation of economics by other means."[35]

Wars themselves often produce a descent into more and more profiteering. Much like the "War Trap" described by Alex De Waal, the more de-

struction and desolation a war causes, the more likely people are to resort to activities focused on economic gain or sustenance. David Keen explains this cycle in his essay "Incentives and Disincentives for Violence":

> Civil wars are not static over time. A growing proportion of civil wars appear to have started with the aim of taking over or retaining the reins of the state or of breaking away in secessionist revolt and appear to have subsequently mutated (often very quickly) into wars where immediate agendas (notably economic agendas) may significantly prolong civil wars: Not only do they constitute a vested interest in continued conflict, they also tend to create widespread destitution, which itself may feed into economically motivated violence.[36]

Death Squads, Ethnic Cleansing, and Genocide

The infrastructure of the humanitarian aid system is often used, unwittingly, as an aspect of the strategy of retribution, ethnic cleansing, and even campaigns of genocide. Refugee camps can, in effect, become concentration camps that facilitate the administration of ethnic cleansing.

With the expansion of the humanitarian aid industry, combatants have adapted their tactics to include utilizing the refugee camp system to facilitate their strategies of genocide and retribution. By directing particular groups into camps that are thus exposed to extreme conditions of deprivation, particular groups can be starved out of existence. An example of such efforts occurred during the 1980s in Sudan, when the regime of the time forced Nuba living in Khartoum off their property and into refugee camps in the south, in many cases back to the rural areas from which they had originally emigrated. It has been estimated that during the 1980s more than 500,000 Nuba were relocated to desert camps, "where, according to a UN official, not even a locust can survive."[37]

During the Bosnian War, when aid convoys broke through to the enclave of Srebrenica, the UNHCR decided to evacuate most of the people, which served the purposes of the Serb forces that had laid siege to the city with the intention of removing the Bosnian Muslim population; the ethnic cleansing thus was conducted at little or no expense to the Serbian army. By deciding to evacuate the civilians from Srebrenica, "aid agencies were confronted with the moral predicament that they could contribute to the ethnic cleansing."[38]

The registration schemes required to allocate food aid and to effectively organize refugee populations, in particular for future repatriation, also provide an ideal resource to identify specific people or groups for retribution. Refugees who are registered and controlled in a camp setting exist in a reality analogous to the systematic registration and detainment of Jewish people by the Nazis. Death squads can easily acquire the identity of persons at camps

and wreak their vengeance. Aid organizations have little power to protect the refugees, as they are often controlled by local militia groups or militaries. Often aid workers are not even allowed in the camps after dark, with the logic possibly being that there will be no witnesses to nighttime thefts, killings, or abductions.[39]

Two Firsthand Accounts

Some aid workers are quite disillusioned by the dilemma they see from day to day in their struggles to provide assistance to those in need. Their disillusionment is often due in no small part to the deception and coercion employed by local commanders and combatants.

In Southeast Asia

Dr. Stephen Keller, who has worked extensively with the World Food Program in Southeast Asia, explains that "in every conflict situation in which I have been involved, food was significantly used as a resource by combatants." His stories of the relief efforts along the Thai-Cambodian border during the 1980s are particularly telling. At that time, three so-called "liberation" groups (one of which was the Khmer Rouge), along with the Thai army, were competing for aid resources. Keller explains that all these groups used similar tactics to divert and siphon aid into their cause: "All were willing to lie, provide false numbers, and even create sham riots in order to disrupt rational and orderly distribution of food or the ration cards needed to receive it." Such efforts are not surprising considering the value of food in wartime, famine-stricken economies—Keller noted that there were rumors suggesting that in some parts of Cambodia rice was being traded at par for gold. "Food was valuable enough for many people to risk walking through minefields to take it back into Cambodia to [the] black market," he wrote. Keller describes how the Thais would blackmail the UN and shut down access to the camps unless something was "coughed up." According to Keller the abuse, misuse, and direct theft of all aid resources, not just food, was rampant. Vehicles, construction materials, and cash were often confiscated. All this occurs because the local military leaders know that the only threat the aid organizations can make is that they will pull out, and the military leaders know that they will not do this; it is in this scenario where the ethical dilemma of providing aid becomes a troubling factor.

Keller also described similar experiences in Pakistan along the Afghan border:

The Mujahedeen factions controlled the camps and the distribution of ration/ID cards. Without aligning yourself with one thuggish group or another (none of

which had any substantial legitimacy before the Afghan Diaspora) you couldn't live at all. Question anything and you were killed. Numbers were greatly inflated and surplus resources marketed to the Pakistani public. Also, people registered with more than one faction, and so on.

He continued to explain that there is no feasible way to determine the accurate number of those in need of aid, and that many organizations are comfortable with inflated numbers because they must show a need to their donors:

> Resources for fictitious people are off-the-books, which donors can never check with any accuracy. After, all who is going to see if the Kachigari camp has 10,000 [fewer] people than the "Commander" says? Even if he wouldn't kill you for trying, how could you check without incredible manpower for a census?

Sacks of food with aid organization logos on them and other obviously stolen aid agency resources frequently turn up in places they shouldn't, and Keller explained that most aid organizations conclude, "That's the price of admission, and if anyone makes a fuss all access will be denied."[40]

In Ethiopia

Samuel Molla, Oxfam Canada's project coordinator in Ethiopia, who grew up in Southern Ethiopia, has had firsthand experience with how aid impacts and lengthens war.[41] His insights are informative as they represent the perspective of both an aid worker and that of a civilian caught in the middle. He recounted one particularly striking story of how refugee camps can be havens and bases of operations for insurgent groups and violent gangs. He described a family that had just arrived at a camp where he was working, coming from a remote, drought-prone area of the Eritrea-Ethiopian border. The family soon experienced the coercive recruiting tactics of the government forces. The family was approached by recruiters and asked if they would be willing to send their son to the armed forces. When the father abruptly said no, the cadre of the local ruling party challenged him by saying, "How do you say no? After all, your son is grown by the food aid that the government is bringing and your entire family is dependent upon."[42] After being challenged the father ceased his resistance and allowed the soldiers to take his son, who upon hearing his father's decision angrily said, "You prefer the food aid to your son?"[43] This family, as were many, was forced to choose between starvation and sending a child to fight. Fortunately, the young man returned home because of a medical condition that rendered him ineffective as a soldier. If such coercion is not successful, many armed groups resort to violence and scare tactics, including threats to kill or rape family members. Samuel explained that many young boys were forced into service this way, and are forced to remain on the threat that their families would be cut off from support.

Such stories demonstrate the military tactical realities that have a significant impact on the ability of people to achieve stability. Firsthand accounts of aid co-option by combatants are significant because they provide eyewitness evidence of how combatants usurp and corrupt the humanitarian aid system.

Conclusion

Recognizing that there are significant shifts in how low-intensity warfare is being conducted, particularly in the developing world, more work is needed to understand exactly how humanitarian aid interacts with war. A specific approach to the analysis of war that considers resource and logistical tactics is required. Through developing a typology of new low-intensity tactics, the deeper realities of the aid/war dynamic may be discerned. In many cases, a practical view of war must be taken, considering that many wars are not predominantly "the continuation of politics by other means,"[44] but an extension of economic behavior and self-preservation.

The study of the interaction of war and humanitarian aid offers a significant opportunity for the development of empirically based assessment models. By developing such models, the aid community may be able to develop better cost-benefit approaches to the provision of aid. There are many elements critical to developing a better model of the aid/conflict dynamic. The lack of accurate data on the distribution of aid and other resources, along with erratic documentation of refugee camp management, results in significant information gaps that seriously limit the ability to develop new approaches which could mitigate the abuses that occur. However, the assessment of the level of harm relative to the amount of good done will remain a highly subjective exercise. Due to the ethical and practical dilemmas present in providing wartime humanitarian aid, a more comprehensive understanding of how aid and war interact is crucial to doing more good than harm. This article deals with only two of the important actors—combatants and humanitarian aid organizations. There are many other factors and actors involved.

If aid organizations can develop a better understanding of the tactics used to manipulate them, perhaps they can produce more effective counter-strategies. Aid organizations should more actively challenge the principle of impartiality, thus enabling flexible solutions to the problem of aid co-option. This is the first step to developing a truly collaborative effort between governments, NGOs, the UN, militaries, and other local actors. Only through such collaboration can greater steps be taken toward causing more good than harm.

Any suggestions on how to alleviate the problems associated with the provision of wartime humanitarian aid must recognize the associated meth-

odological and practical difficulties. Gathering the data suggested above is problematic since militant groups are secretive. Also, the conditions within refugee camps and other aid distribution centers are not conducive to methodical record-keeping. There is, however, room for progress to be made between the current state of affairs and the ideal. Also, the collaboration between interveners, although essential, faces the challenge of reconciling various, often conflicting, interests.

Napoleon Bonaparte said that "an army marches on its stomach." In the case of the combatants in many of the complex wars that have characterized the post-Cold War period, many armies march on the guilt and goodwill behind humanitarian aid. The humanitarian aid system, particularly in the form of food aid, medical aid, and the refugee camp system, has unfortunately provided combatants with significant levels of logistical support. As Oscar Wilde stated in *The Soul of Man Under Socialism*, "Charity creates a multitude of sins." The challenge for people, nations, and organizations of good will is to mitigate the inevitable sins that plague the provision of humanitarian aid in conflict situations.

NOTES

1. See Peter Paret, "Napoleon and the Revolution in War," in *Makers of Modern Strategy*, ed. Peter Paret (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1986), pp.127-28.

2. For an interesting discussion, see Michael Ignatieff, "The Stories We Tell: Television and Humanitarian Aid," in *Hard Choices: Moral Dilemmas in Humanitarian Intervention*, ed. Jonathan Moore (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998).

3. In the case of the co-option of foreign aid, the distinction between strategic and tactical becomes important, as the manipulation of humanitarian aid occurs differently at each level of action. Understanding something as strategic or tactical is critical for the analysis of nontraditional warfare. Per Clausewitz, tactics are the use of forces in the battlefield, including maneuver of men and equipment, while strategy is how one uses battles to win a war. Today strategy is more than using battles to win a war, however, especially since the end of the Cold War. It has become the use of tactical victories to achieve a political or economic goal. See Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. and ed. Anatol Rapaport (London: Penguin Classic edition, 1982).

4. Human Rights Watch, "Civilian Devastation—Abuses by All Parties in the War in Southern Sudan," Human Rights Watch Report, December 2002, http://www.hrw.org/reports/1993/sudan.

5. Daniel Compagnon, "Somali Armed Movements: The Interplay of Political Entrepreneurship and Clan Based Factions," in *African Guerrillas*, ed. Christopher Clapham (Oxford, Eng.: James Curry, 1998), p. 77.

6. Deborah Scroggins, *Emma's War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2002), pp. 17-20.

7. BBC reports on www.BBC.com, May, June, and July 2003.

8. Stephen Keller, "Kampuchean Refugee Relief," unpublished paper, p. 5.

9. Interview with Dr. Stephen Keller, former World Food Program coordinator in Southeast Asia, November 2002.

10. See figure in John Ryle, "Notes on the Repatriation of Somali Refugees from Ethiopia," *Disasters*, 16 (June 1992), 164.

11. Cited in Ryle, pp. 162-64.

12. Jon Prendergast, *Frontline Diplomacy: Humanitarian Aid and Conflict in Africa* (London: Lynne Rienner, 1996), pp. 20-21.

13. Ben Barber, "Feeding Refugees, or War?" *Foreign Affairs*, 76 (July/August 1997), 11.

14. Ibid., p. 13.

15. Paul Henze, "The Primacy of Economics for the Future of the Horn of Africa," in *The Horn of Africa*, ed. Charles Gurdon (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), pp.18-24.

16. Courtland Robinson, "Refugee Warriors at the Thai-Cambodia Border," *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, 19 (April 2000), 23-37.

17. Ibid., pp. 23-24.

18. Compagnon, pp.76-77. Also see George Klay Kieh, Jr., "The Somali Civil War," in *Zones of Conflict in Africa: Theories and Cases*, ed. George Klay Kieh, Jr., and Ida Rousseau Mukenge (London: Praeger, 2002), pp.124-36.

19. Joel Boutroue, "Missed Opportunities: The Role of the International Community in the Return of Rwandan Refugees from Eastern Zaire," cited in Robinson, p. 36.

20. Human Rights Watch, "My Gun Was as Tall as Me: Child Soldiers in Burma," Human Rights Watch Report, October 2002, http://www.hrw.org/reports/2002/burma/index.htm.

21. Human Rights Watch, "The Voices of Child Soldiers," http://www.hrw.org/campaigns/crp/voices.htm. Also see Rachel Brett and Margaret McCallin, *Children: The Invisible Soldiers* (New York: Radda Baren, 1996), p. 127.

22. See Vincent J. Goulding, Jr., "Back to the Future with Asymmetrical Warfare," *Parameters*, 30 (Winter 2000-2001), 21-30. Also, Todd A. Slazman, "Rape Camps as a Means of Ethnic Cleansing: Religious, Cultural, and Ethical Responses to Rape Victims in the Former Yugoslavia," *Human Rights Quarterly*, 20 (May 1998), 35.

23. See Richard Stubbs, *Hearts and Minds in Guerrilla Warfare* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1989), particularly chaps. 6 and 7.

24. African Rights, "Imposing Empowerment," Discussion Paper No. 7, December 1995, p. 6, cited in Prendergast.

25. Ibid., p. 54.

26. See Mao Tse-tung, "On Guerrilla Warfare," in *The Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung: Vol. IX*, ed. Brian Basgen (Maoist Documentation Project, 2000), in the Mao Tse-tung Reference Archive at www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/works/1937/guerrilla-warfare/index.htm. Also see Lawrence Stone, "Theories of Revolution," and Bruno Shaw, "Selections from Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung," both in *Revolutionary Guerrilla Warfare*, ed. Sam C. Sarkesian (Chicago: Precedent Publishing, 1976).

27. Prendergast, p. 20.

28. For a discussion of Giap's strategy, see Sam C. Sarkesian, *Unconventional Conflicts in a New Security Era: Lessons from Malay and Vietnam* (London: Greenwood Press, 1993), pp. 75-95, 166.

29. For a discussion of Guevara's and Castro's strategies, see J. Moreno, "Che Guevara on Guerrilla Warfare: Doctrine Practice, and Evaluation," in *Revolutionary Guerrilla Warfare*, pp. 395-410.

30. See Charles Townshend, "People's Wars," in *The Oxford History of Modern War*, ed. Charles Townshend (Oxford, Eng.: Oxford Univ. Press, 2001), pp.178-93.

31. See Mika Aaltola, "Emergency Food Aid as a Means of Political Persuasion in the North Korean Famine," *Third World Quarterly*, 20 (No. 2, 1999), 371-86. Also see World Food Program News Service, "Korea: US Food Aid Successful Even if it Feeds the Military (AFP, 28/7/00) and more . . . " a compilation report of news and other source reporting on North Korea's use of food aid.

32. Prendergast, pp. 32-33.

33. Compagnon, p. 79.

34. David Keen, "Incentives and Disincentives for Violence," in *Greed and Grievance: Economic Agendas in Civil Wars*, ed. Mats Berdal and David M. Malone (London: Rienner Publishers and the International Development Research Centre, 2000), p. 27.

35. Ibid.

36. Ibid., p.25.

37. Cited in Frances Stewart and Emma Samman, "Food Aid During Civil War: Conflicting Conclusions Derived from Alternative Approaches," in *War and Underdevelopment: The Economic and Social Consequences of Conflict*, ed. Frances Stewart, Valpy FitzGerald, and associates (Oxford, Eng.: Oxford Univ. Press, 2001), p. 175.

38. Quoted in David Shearer, "Aiding or Abetting? Humanitarian Aid and its Economic Role in Civil War" in Keen, pp. 192-93.

39. For a discussion of the tactics of death squads in the El-Salvador context, see Neil C. Livingstone "Death Squads," *World Affairs*, 146 (No. 3, 1983-1984), 239-48.

40. Material in this section is drawn from interviews with Dr. Keller conducted in November 2002, and from correspondence while he was in the field in Laos until March 2003. The dialogue was conducted in person or via e-mail.

41. Interviews were conducted with Mr. Molla during his visit to St. John's during the launch of Oxfam's Fair Trade Coffee campaign, 2002.

42. As recounted by Molla during interview.

43. Ibid.

44. See Clausewitz, *On War*.

Responding to global conflicts and humanitarian crises is an integral part of NATO's security and crisis management intervention. In addition to military intervention, NATO's response to global conflicts are based on establishing peace, sustainability, deterrence, and conflict prevention. Canada should continue to send humanitarian aid in dangerous settings to promote international peace, security, deterrence and conflict prevention. It reflects the commitment Canada shares to providing assistance to those displaced by conflicts and circumstances beyond a citizens control, whether as a result of extremism, radicalization, or other causes. The Alliance 8.7 Action Group on Conflict & Humanitarian Settings is a multi-stakeholder group of UN entities, Member States, civil society actors and other stakeholders committed to taking action in these areas. This Workshop provides an opportunity for members of this group to meet together, consider priority areas for research and action, and engage potential partners within the system to advance this agenda. The Workshop will consider options for advancing research and action in each of these areas, including through coordinated action within the UN system or in the context of Alliance 8.7. This may include identification of research priorities and development of a roadmap for the Alliance 8.7 Action Group on Conflict and Humanitarian Settings. This book offers a detailed exploration of three examples of humanitarian uses of new technology, employing key theoretical insights from Foucault. We are currently seeing a humanitarian turn to new digital technologies, such as biometrics, remote… Currency and shipping options will change to reflect those available in the selected region. Pricing and discounts will be adjusted according to the shipping destination based on regional availability. The title will be removed from your cart because it is not available in this region. Good Intentions, Unintended Consequences and Insecurity, 1st Edition. By Katja Lindskov Jacobsen. Routledge.