OUTSIDE ACTORS
WHY INTERVENTIONS?

(AND WHICH TYPES? HOW TO POSITION ONESELF TOWARDS LOCAL ACTORS?)
Topics Last Week

- Types of Intervention:
  - Military (different types)
  - Civilian (different types)
TOPICS

- On the course:
  - Paper (Contents & set-up)
  - Readings: Be up to date
  - No handouts
  - Business organizations email
- Hugo Slim’s article (last’s week follow-up)
- Media
- Donor Governments
- Alex de Waal’s Book discussion
TYPES OF INTERVENTIONS

Military
- Security Council decision
- Department of Peace-keeping Operations (DPKO)
- all other organizations
- ++ Legal (Moral)

Civilian (UN mainly)
- Secretary General initiative
- Department of Political Affairs (DPA)
- all other organizations
- ++ Moral (Legal)

Civilian (NGO mainly)
- no central decision (state sovereignty)
- all organizations (but not SC or SG)
- ++ Moral (- Legal)
CIVILIAN INTERVENTION (WHO DECIDES? HOW?)

- Frequently, no peace accord
- No military
- No well-functioning government that provides its rules for outside actors
- These actors are poised to intervene, no such distinction as jus ad bellum and jus in bello
- What do the criteria in action become, in other words how does an organization position itself in conflict
CIVILIAN INTERVENTION (WHO DECIDES? HOW?)

Hugo Slim’s article

- Why this article?
  - An explosion of intervening actors (NGOs), who
  - position themselves (morally) & function in a sloppy way, e.g., solidarity vs. neutrality without fully understanding neutrality.
  - Mental health/bystander insecurity


- He describes the problems with each concept and how the discussions have evolved
1. Humanity:
   - reductionist: food, water, shelter, & medicine (what)
     - (broader) respect & dignity of human beings need to be incorporated too, e.g., protection
   - non-negotiable (how)
     - however, humanitarian aid must negotiate its place in violence. (Humanitarian imperative vs. the claimed right to wage war)
2. Neutrality:
   - it may stop an organization from taking sides (militarily or ideologically) and protect from public criticism, but it does not prevent an organization from having a principled position based on firm ideals (prevention, abstention, and impartiality)

3. Impartiality:
Many NGOs that reject neutrality embrace impartiality. Impartiality as applying equal terms to the warring parties is a part of neutrality.
3. Impartiality:
Active impartiality (MSF) “speaking out” is not neutral. It is impartial towards persons, but partial towards actions. So, there are forms of impartiality that are not neutral. This is confusing in the article.

4. Solidarity:
This implies taking sides. Question: can you always separate civilians from the armies? Right from wrong? Who is innocent?
Hugo Slim’s conclusion

- He acknowledges that a range of different positions is both inevitable and desirable, but all positions have their problems. Hence, he concludes by emphasizing the responsibility of any outside relief organization to be transparent in its position & to preserve rather than distort traditional humanitarian principles and language. (Some NGOs understand neither humanitarian principles nor the practical problems in applying them and then (wrongly) start looking for the next concept).
Conclusion

- Central problem with interventions: there is no good governance & lack of gvt authority, the question becomes: whose & which rules/principles do you follow?
- International law on (NGO) intervention could be worked out more.
- Absence of local perspectives: what are their coping mechanisms and capacities? Enunciating principles does not mean understanding the local situation & political and ec. root causes better.
- The (confusing) debate continues; a range of positions is possible, but actors should be transparent & know traditional hum. Principles. Training is necessary
Conclusion

- Intervening actors should do their homework; it looks like they are reinventing the wheel, e.g., neutrality. The main question becomes: how are the four concepts used in practice?
- But principles help to understand the different positions of intervening actors better
- Classify different groups of NGOs (see Weiss & listen to Steve’s critique)
- The concepts political and humanitarian are used to easily.
WHICH OUTSIDE ACTORS?

- Media
- Donor Country Governments
- UN system
- NGOs and ICRC
- Military
- Regional Organizations
- Aid Chain and Coordination
Media

- Double Nature:
  - Media can show a lot, but
  - it does generally not show its own limitations (financial constraints, preferences, etc.)

  Paradoxically, we need the media to criticize the media.

- Still, how do we care about people who are not close kin? The ideal of a “common humanity” is recent. The media becomes the intermediary.

- Technologically much more is possible than just in 1980.
Media

Which Complex Emergencies are covered? Why and When?

- Remember the British Press Baron: “One Englishman is a story. Ten Frenchmen is a story. One hundred Germans is a story. And nothing ever happens in Chile”

- Happenstance:
  - One reporter in Dili
  - South African elections before the Rwandan Exodus

- Role of infotainment: need to make a profit. Hence, attention to dramatic events & sensationalized
Which Complex Emergencies are covered? Why and When?

- In-depth reporting on long-term trends and early indicators of disasters generally don’t catch headlines. News is what happens now, it is not predominantly analysis or follow-up.
- Importance of images. No image, now news.
- News feeds on itself: reporters attract reporters
- Not more than 1 disaster at a time (exception?)
- None of the above arguments have anything to do with the actual complex emergency.
How are complex emergencies covered?
Largely, with a standard formula

1. News needs to be condensed: Stereotyped image (starving child, helpless victims), stock phrases (Vietnam Quagmire, Holocaust), common abstractions (nationalizing, Americanizing, individualizing) so that people recognize & interpret the problem but stereotypes don’t disappear easily, and when they are too often used people become “immunized” with compassion fatigue earlier stages of conflict or famine get too little attention
2. Causes and solutions of famine must be simplified as “beyond the control of people” but simplistic causes lead to simplistic solutions and tend to exaggerate the role of Western aid and minimize indigenous effort.

3. The story as a morality play: the hapless victim (preferably children & women), the heroes (white doctors) and the villain (corrupt politicians or businessmen, UN bureaucracy) but what if the political situation is far more complicated as it generally is? For example, with cruel child soldiers & ethnic hatred?
4. Images must be available
So, censorship, shortfalls in budgets, other disasters can mean the end of the story, e.g., Sudan
Donors: Reactions by Governments

Is there a CNN effect?

- They don’t act:
  - powerful actor involved, e.g., China in Tibet
  - negative interpretation
    - Kaplan’s chaos theory
    - Rwanda after Somalia
    - Bosnia as Quagmire
    - compassion/donor fatigue just like the general public
  - Govts allow humanitarian action as smoke-screen, but don’t address root causes or support larger intervention
Donors: Reactions by Governments

- They lack understanding, e.g., Somalia
- Finally (when it is often too late)
  - small groups (idealists & foreign policy wonks) can “shame” government into action;
  - governments act when their legitimacy and (ir)responsibility are challenged
  - some governments (cultures) are more activist than others (e.g., Nordic Countries)

It is important to come up with remedies that transcend the simplistic humanitarian/political divide, that make addressing root causes & working with the local population feasible.
Donors: Reactions by Governments: Actual Funding

- Bosnia-Herzegovina
  - Funded beyond capacity for good management
  - Short-term funding & Delays in funding
  - Faddish nature; linear programming; not participatory; not building on local initiatives
  - No overhead, no recurrent costs
  - Heavy reporting requirements
  - Also legal problems & issues w. local governments!

- L.t. capacity building or direct service delivery: chances for democratization were wasted.

- Even donor org. that suffer themselves from these problems make the same mistakes to other organizations

- Greener pastures; repeating mistakes?
Conclusion

- Good reporting is difficult and not always profitable
- Too little attention to prevention & understanding the root causes
- Media comes late. Hence, intervention also comes (too) late & preparedness is not emphasized
- “Simplistic formulas” Our interpretation matters; it’s more than just pictures: how do we relate to other people and to the developing world in general.
- Once again, absence of local voices. This can lead to a lack of understanding of root causes & ill-conceived action.
Conclusion

- Parallel with the international system: the set up of the international system was ill-suited to complex emergencies.
- The media in its turn provides insufficient information to timely address the long-term problems.
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  (last’s week follow-up)
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