

EUR Research Information Portal

Drawing a Line - Ethical and Political Strategies in Complex Emergency Assistance

Published in:

European Journal of Development Research

Publication status and date:

Published: 01/01/1999

Document Version

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Citation for the published version (APA):

Gaspar, D. (1999). Drawing a Line - Ethical and Political Strategies in Complex Emergency Assistance. *European Journal of Development Research*, 11(2), 87-115. <http://hdl.handle.net/1765/50700>

[Link to publication on the EUR Research Information Portal](#)

Terms and Conditions of Use

Except as permitted by the applicable copyright law, you may not reproduce or make this material available to any third party without the prior written permission from the copyright holder(s). Copyright law allows the following uses of this material without prior permission:

- you may download, save and print a copy of this material for your personal use only;
- you may share the EUR portal link to this material.

In case the material is published with an open access license (e.g. a Creative Commons (CC) license), other uses may be allowed. Please check the terms and conditions of the specific license.

Take-down policy

If you believe that this material infringes your copyright and/or any other intellectual property rights, you may request its removal by contacting us at the following email address: openaccess.library@eur.nl. Please provide us with all the relevant information, including the reasons why you believe any of your rights have been infringed. In case of a legitimate complaint, we will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website.

'Drawing a Line'

- Ethical and Political Strategies in Complex Emergency Assistance

DES GASPER*

Pre-final version of a paper which appeared in 1999 in *European Journal of Development Research*, 11(2), pp. 87-115. A version also appeared as ISS Working Paper 302: <http://repub.eur.nl/res/pub/19047/>.

ABSTRACT

Faced with massive crises in the 1990s, such as in Rwanda-Zaire, aid agencies have had to make ethical and strategic choices of great magnitude. One approach seeks to compare goods and bads from agencies' involvement, and to specify a 'bottom line' beneath which bads outweigh goods so that agencies should withdraw or change their involvement. In a second approach a line is drawn between (a) an agency's area of responsibility and (b) actions and consequences which are the responsibility of others--not a bottom line but a line dividing mine from thine. The paper probes and assesses those approaches, showing problems with both but especially with the second; qualifies them by reference to issues of motivation, feasibility and organisational level, and presents some complementary types of approach; and stresses finally that effective strategic action must be guided by broad causal analysis.

1. ARE RELIEF AGENCIES ACCOMPLICES IN GENOCIDE AND OPPRESSION ?

In a few months in mid-1994, forces organized or encouraged by parts of the then government of Rwanda led the killing of an estimated 800,000 of Rwanda's population of around 7.7 million. Victims included, besides ethnic Tutsis, members of the government and internal opposition parties who were ready to implement the 1993 Arusha peace and power-sharing agreement. Large numbers of non-military Rwandese participated in the massacres, many of them enthusiastically. In response the opposition Rwandese Patriotic Army (RPA) based in Uganda and northern Rwanda resumed the war and gradually captured the rest of the country. Partly due to instructions of the fleeing government, a large minority of ethnic Hutu Rwandese (variously reported as 1.3 to 2.1 million) fled to neighbouring countries: Tanzania and especially Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo). The refugees were in large part led from among those who had planned, initiated, and executed the genocide, and contained a high proportion of their more faithful followers.¹ This was in addition to the evacuation to Zaire of the Rwandese Armed Forces, who ran their own camps there. From Zaire and Tanzania the perpetrators of genocide resumed work: well-armed, they dominated the ordinary refugee camps, exaggerated refugee numbers, and for a long period handled receipt, division and distribution of relief supplies. Based in part on this access to aid resources they

Des Gasper, Institute of Social Studies, PO Box 29776, 2502 LT The Hague, Netherlands; gasper@iss.nl. I would like to thank Howard Adelman, Sipko de Boer, James Busuttil, John Cameron, Jan Kees van Donge, Cristóbal Kay, Sanjeev Prakash and Thanh-Dam Truong for helpful comments on an earlier draft.

prepared for the re-invasion of Rwanda and completion of their plan of genocide, struck already into Rwanda to kill witnesses and opponents and harrass the new government, and killed people in the camps and others outside, who were from the targeted groups or tried to return or otherwise did not accept their authority. The new Rwandan government repeatedly warned it would be forced to act against them. In late 1996 they lost their safe operating base in Zaire, during Mobutu's decline and fall and Kabila's rise to power helped by the RPA. No longer provisioned in Zaire and no longer prevented by their leaders, the large majority of displaced persons were repatriated to Rwanda almost as quickly as they had come.²

In the name of caring for a million Hutus who fled Rwanda in the aftermath of the genocide, a significant minority of whom feared retribution for their part in it, UN and private relief agencies fed, armed and clothed a new monster... Relief agencies, including UNHCR, worked through the political structures of the former Hutu regime, which proceeded to levy taxes on the food aid and salaries of those, including some who had taken part in the genocide, employed by the aid organisations. Weapons were purchased and sometimes ferried in planes hired by the aid agencies. Throughout this time extremists associated with the *ancien regime* in Rwanda used their liaison role with the relief industry to tighten their political grip on the rest of the camp-dwellers. The camps became recruiting and training grounds for the extremist Hutu militia... (Maier, 1998:14-15)³

International measures to prevent or stop the 1994 genocide had been derisorily small. Famously the UN withdrew nearly all its forces at an early stage of the massacres. In contrast, the flood of Rwandan refugees to neighbouring countries provoked an immense relief operation, costing around US \$1 billion in 1994 alone. Over 200 foreign NGOs were involved, propelled by desire to help and, in some cases, to be visible on the delivery front-line for the sake of credibility in the market for relief funds. For two and a half years, aid and relief agencies primarily occupied themselves with the external refugees, not with understanding and addressing the causes of the genocide, revolution and exodus, nor with providing help within Rwanda's shattered society. Their stance was of 'reluctantly accepting that in order to assist the innocent majority it would be necessary to provide assistance to the non-*bona fide* refugees as well' (ODI, 1998:3). Critics propose that 'they effectively made possible the survival of a murderous regime in exile, which has since played a large part in the tragedies in Burundi and what is now the Democratic Republic of Congo' (Middleton & O'Keefe, 1998:156), and in continuing massacres in Rwanda itself (Africa Rights, 1998).

The set of issues arising here applies more widely than to Rwanda. They are standard not exceptional in relief operations in complex emergencies.

In those [African states] afflicted by what is known in aid jargon as a '*complex emergency*' - a humanitarian disaster triggered by military or political conflict - famine has, in fact, become a strategic weapon and international relief the booty. Governments and armed movements which hold sway over significant numbers of civilians attract relief assistance from an international community too ready to substitute cheap food from subsidized Western farmers and transnational grain merchants for proper policy. (Maier, 1998:14; emphasis added)

Part of the discussion in recent years has identified and reviewed series of 'dilemmas' faced by relief agencies: choices where all the alternatives carry great risk or, worse, certainty of doing harm to some cherished values, so that the choice is between different evils. Hugo Slim (1997a,b) warns that the term 'dilemma' has become too loosely used, to refer merely to difficult choices.⁴ This brings a danger that in facing other difficult but not tearing choices, aid agencies or workers will shirk analysis and discussion, claiming that each option is equally bad. Human rights discourse is prone to this premature closure of analysis, when in a form that asserts a right is unconditional and overriding. Yet rights inevitably sometimes conflict, and all rights imply some use of resources which has to be balanced against other uses. Rights can be understood instead as *prima facie*, presumptive priorities, not moral absolutes (Gasper, 1986). Some writers itemize painful choices and then leave them as arbitrary existential gestures, of selection between incommensurables. Slim has been an important exception. After noting many types of risk in emergency relief, he presents a range of ideas for facing difficult choices and dilemmas. We will look in particular at risks to the supposed beneficiaries, if led or supported in a disastrous direction or if help goes in part to oppressive armies and States.

Slim and others have defended most of the actions of relief agencies in cases like Rwanda-Zaire, arguing that their responsibility is to provide relief--on grounds of 'the principle of humanity' or 'the humanitarian imperative'--and not pretend they are all-seeing, all-powerful managers of the world. An imperative leaves no room for argument: it dissolves the dilemma. Alex de Waal (1997:197) suggested that Slim's *Doing The Right Thing* was the only considered defence then available of the mainstream humanitarian agency response in the camps outside Rwanda. It correspondingly receives attention here, together with counter views and the associated debate.

In Section 2 I characterise two possible responses to the Rwandese refugee camp dilemma: (i) choose whether to provide relief resources according to the balance of assessed costs and benefits of doing so; or (ii) provide resources as a humanitarian duty to those in dire need, and do not try to take over the responsibility of others to use those resources appropriately. Section 3 looks at claims and counter-claims in the comparative assessment of these two lines, and while finding the former more cogent, finds both insufficient. We need a wider picture of alternative approaches, helped by examination of further cases. Section 4 discusses possible division of roles between different agencies, the needs for skilled and sympathetic adaptation of responses to cases, and the complementarity of different approaches. While the paper centres on how broad a range of effects should be considered in assessing relief interventions, the less the interest in effects the less also is the interest in causes. Section 5 contrasts intervention approaches which concentrate only on symptoms, with strategic responses that try to understand major cause-effect links in complex emergencies. The paper presents, for both agency staff and a wider audience, some tools in ethical and strategic reasoning, for and through the examination of cases. The cases mentioned are used solely to raise themes, with no claim to have done them full justice.

2. TWO APPROACHES TO RELIEF IN COMPLEX EMERGENCIES

In the first of a set of four case studies, entitled 'scenarios', Slim (1997a) examines the choice whether or not to have provided relief to the Rwandese refugee camps in Eastern Zaire controlled by Hutu soldiers and militia. His title, 'The Ethics of Aid Without Justice', emphasises the question of working with and benefiting past criminals. In one view this moral cost, the failure to attend to retributive justice, can be outweighed by present and future benefits to others (cf. Verwoerd, 1999).

One approach thus seeks to assess and compare the goods and bads of relief agency involvement, and to specify a 'bottom line'. Beneath this, bads outweigh goods and agencies should withdraw or change their involvement.⁵ So: what in fact will be the benefits and costs of 'feeding the devil'? will the resources be misused and how far? Bryer & Cairns (1997) for Oxfam advocate this positive net impact criterion, and conclude that for the camps in Zaire it was probably not satisfied. Slim adopts a bottom-line approach when discussing other, less massive and overwhelming, cases than the Rwandese refugee camps. The fourth of his cases, a generalized scenario called 'The Ethics of Contributing to a War Economy', notes many ways in which aid supplies can contribute to the pursuit of war aims of combatants. For example if relief aid can be relied upon to look after displaced populations then they may be forcibly created without compunction; aid can also be commandeered or 'taxed'. Such costs may justifiably be accepted, says Slim, subject to a specified bottom line concerning the maximum acceptable degree of diversion of resources, to be determined through consultation with the target population and the funders (1997a:17). Relief staff should practice a 'fieldcraft' that includes balancing such costs against the good achieved by relief supplies. 'At the end of the day, the balance between the positive and negative effects of aid in war must be the true test of any intervention' (Slim, 1998a:18). However he does not apply this test for each choice by each agency.

A second approach holds that the assessment and comparison attempted in the first type is beside the point, and perhaps impossible too. The very categories may be in question: is helping others a cost, for example? Relief agencies cannot, and need not try to, predict what other actors will do, it is argued; they must follow their own duty and mandate to provide support to those in need. In this second approach a different sort of line is drawn: a line between (a) an agency's area of responsibility and (b) actions and consequences which are the responsibility of others and which should not affect one's choices; in other words, not a bottom line but a line dividing mine from thine, a line of moral immunity beyond which one cannot be held responsible. For example, when health facilities that relief NGOs in Angola have paid to restore remain unused or without local doctors, some 'justify their [physical construction] approach by simple claims that use of the buildings is the government's responsibility... "It's not our problem"' replied an NGO representative (Christoplos, 1997:16).

For the Rwandese refugees case Slim is one who takes this second type of approach. Subsequent misdeeds by forces coming from the camps are deemed their responsibility, not those of agencies who supplied them with non-military material. Relief agencies' *mission* is simply to supply necessities to relieve people in distress. Slim appears to argue this even if

relief agencies were certain or near certain that the camps-based forces would return to *their* genocidal 'mission'. For: 'To have withheld humanitarian assistance in the hope that the regime might not be able to regroup and might not choose violence again would have meant working on the principle of "doing evil that good may come"--a principle... which would make an absurdity of the humanitarian mandate of relief agencies and NGOs' (1997a: 12-13).

Slim holds in contrast that the United Nations and member states *were* culpable for not taking steps to prevent possible recurrence of the 1994 Rwanda massacres and instead 'allowing a genocidal regime to remain in power over people, so leaving it free to make the kind of moral choices which could pursue violence once again' (1997a:13). Why is the UN held culpable for not acting against foreseeable genocide whereas relief agencies are not? Perhaps because of their respective mandates - an argument to which we return later.

We can call the first type of approach 'comprehensive assessment of the good' (compass); its key question is whether one falls beneath the line of justification. The second can be called 'mission-bounded responsibility' (mission); beyond the line of one's responsibility lies someone (or no one) else's responsibility. Slim adopts both, without explanation, but for different cases.

Levels and boundaries

The 'mission' approach refers to some consequences but not to others. It holds that relief saves lives directly, not merely that it is a morally good gesture regardless of effects. But it ignores indirect effects, as not part of the responsibility of the relief agency. The crucible of the present day relief system--with its legion of UN agencies, international NGOs, and a Red Cross far more activist than in its first hundred years--was the Nigerian civil war of the late 1960s. Aid by foreign NGOs sustained Biafra's attempted secession for a further 18 months: 'Their [the Biafran leaders'] largest and most regular supply of hard currency for the purchase of arms was the money exchanged (at favourable rates) for the relief programmes' (de Waal, 1997:76). On the assumption--refuted by both contemporary and subsequent behaviour--that a Nigerian military invasion of Biafra would lead to systematic massacres, foreign NGOs launched their career of intervention, and fuelled an extension of war that cost perhaps 180,000 lives (Smillie, 1995; de Waal, 1997). Whereas in Biafra international relief sustained a war because it feared a holocaust, in the Rwandese camps it sustained genocidal forces after a real holocaust--as it had in Khmer Rouge dominated camps in Thailand in the 1980s. Thus while de Waal too declares: 'it is morally unacceptable to allow people to suffer and die on the grounds that relieving their suffering will support an obnoxious government or army' (1997:220), he and others ask whether, when dealing with forces that murderous not merely obnoxious, humanitarian agencies do in fact save lives, net.

Consider an objectives hierarchy for two sister sub-projects to provide food and security to displaced people at camps (adapted from Gasper, 1999a). The sub-projects have the same Immediate Objective and Higher Objective. The assumptions mentioned at each level are those required to move to the level indicated from the level below.

Levels of objectives	Feeding sub-project	Security sub-project	Related assumptions
HIGHER OBJECTIVE	Increase in overall safety and nutrition (of wider populace, and over longer-term)		Camp inmates are not: de-skilled/further traumatized /trained in hate and violence / organized for new atrocities.
IMMEDIATE OBJECTIVE/PURPOSE	Fed and safe people (at/in camps)		Food and protection go to those in need. People accept the type of food. Camp guardians don't molest inmates.
OUTPUTS	Food received at camps	Food and people protected from outside forces	Government and other forces don't steal the food or still effect violence
ACTIVITIES	Food distribution activity	Protection activities	Sufficient transport, motivation, etc.
INPUTS	Food, staff, vehicles	Soldiers, equipment	Agencies receive timely authorization & funding

The 'mission-bounded responsibility' stance can match a preoccupation with the Output level or Purpose level. But success in delivering food to camps may furnish resources for some groups to maintain activities of war and causing further war. With fulfilment of the Purpose level shown above, some healthy secure people in camps may be preparing for return to genocide, using resources provided to the camps. Advance support to the potential victims might be a more cost-effective route to improve *overall* safety and nutrition, here stated as the Higher Objective.

Slim (1997c: 345) argues that to present humanitarian assistance's classic principle of humanity as *only* a matter of provision of material help, to--hopefully--keep people alive, is a 'heresy' from that principle, which should also cover the prevention of suffering and the ensuring of 'respect for the human being'. But the 'heresy' has been widespread. And unfortunately, it is not true that direct alleviation of suffering and giving of respect to those directly dealt with by relief activities necessarily brings a net reduction in human suffering and in disrespectful treatment; or that if some people are kept alive then the total of premature death is necessarily reduced.

Consequentialism versus deontology ?

Some might label this contrast between approaches as between a consequentialist and a deontological ethic. *Consequentialist* ethics assess courses of action in terms of their consequences, actual and/or future, as in the 'compass' approach. *Deontological* ethics refer to rules or other principles stated in terms of other features of the courses of action, notably whether they represent fulfilment of an agreement or other duty or right, and/or (as in

Kantian ethics) involve treatment of others with due respect. 'Deontology' is the study of duty; in philosophy it specifically means ethics based on duty regardless of consequences. However these labels necessitate a number of warnings and caveats, for the contrast can easily mislead. First, as we saw, the 'mission' position includes and depends on a claim of good consequences, lives *directly* saved, not only on a claim about duty regardless of bad *indirect* consequences.

Secondly, any significant contrast seems unlikely to be about form, i.e. whether or not a principle is expressed as a duty; but should rather concern the content of the principles.⁶ For example, in distributive justice a more substantive contrast is between future orientation (as in consequentialism), past orientation (as in reference to people's deserts or fairly acquired entitlements), and present orientation. In our case, relief agencies' principle of impartiality is that relief should be distributed solely according to present need: to all needy persons, proportionate to their need (Slim, 1997c: 348-9). It implies allocation regardless of who the needy are, what they have done (past-orientation), and what they might do in the future (consequences-orientation). A needs orientation could also though be applied with a longer time perspective, paying attention to the needs over a longer time horizon of all those who will be affected, including the possible victims of continued genocide.

Thirdly, both consequentialism and deontology can be used in arguments for choosing to continue relief operations or for withdrawing or not starting them. One might argue that relief *will* do future good. We will see consequentialist arguments for continuing, as in Slim's second scenario where he argues that the confident expectation of immediate benefits (from relief aid to Burundi) outweighs a possibility of indirect negative effects. Some agencies in the Rwandese camps argued similarly. Conversely, a deontological case for withdrawal could refer to past misdeeds and lack of desert of the potential recipients.

An important intermediate position exists: *rule consequentialism*. Trying to judge each act by its consequences faces severe problems of feasibility, even with neutral judges, and of manipulation, given judges of flesh-and-blood. Rule consequentialism, as opposed to act consequentialism, chooses in terms of consequences; but not between individual acts, rather between alternative rules that will be used to guide many acts. Thus when Slim defends the Red Cross and Red Crescent *rule* of neutrality between warring parties, he gives a consequentialist justification: 'For the ICRC and for other relief agencies which choose such a position, neutrality is thus a pragmatic operational posture. Far from being unprincipled or amoral, it allows them to implement their ideals', by maximising their access to needy people (1997c: 347). (The counter-argument is that neutrality as between strong oppressors and weak oppressed does not promote need-fulfilment beyond the short run; and that impartial supply to all sides which is then captured by the strong is not neutral.) Similarly when de Waal criticizes the relief agency rule 'we provide, we sustain', by asking what do they in fact sustain, he offers not a 'fieldcraft' balancing case-by-case, but rather an alternative rule--help to build a political contract between the local populace and a (potential) State--based on claims about its desirable consequences. Rule consequentialism remains consequentialist, for no rule is sacrosanct. It abandons any rule if the consequences are unsatisfactory; but no rule is refuted

by a single or few examples of bad consequences, instead it must be judged by its record over the relevant range of cases.

While the particular 'mission' approach discussed here is restrictive in terms of aiders' responsibilities for outcomes, it can be expansive in terms of implied aider duties ('help whenever one sees urgent need'). It sets no conditions in terms of past or future recipient performance or of co-determined outcomes. It is part of a wider approach to international aid as an unconditional transfer payment, just as within national welfare states (Gasper, 1999b). For aid in general, this position has little support amongst the powerful: aid remains a conditional instrument of exercise of power by the rich. To declare an emergency has then been a welcome option for recipients and donors anxious to maintain aid flows in an era of conditionality (see e.g. Middleton & O'Keefe on Kenya). For in the special case of political and natural emergencies unconditional support becomes more commonly the norm: the 'humanitarian imperative, which... stifles any consideration other than providing assistance wherever it is needed [to prevent premature death or extreme suffering], regardless of personal safety or negative potential consequences of involvement' (Weiss & Collins, 1996:16; my interpolation).

3. A PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT OF THE TWO APPROACHES

Arguments against the 'compass' approach (weighing pros and cons), and possible defences

Several doubts concerning consequentialism reflect standard problems in applied ethics and policy analysis (see e.g. Mackie, 1977). First, empirically, the estimation of effects may be a matter of guesswork, given lack of information and lack of ability to predict. Secondly, conceptually as well as empirically, it might sometimes be impossible to sort out effects of one factor from effects of other forces. We then face the related theoretical issue of what degree of responsibility to attribute to the other forces, notably other people's behaviour and reactions (Gasper, 1986). Third, can one meaningfully sum costs and benefits of quite different types into a measure of net effectiveness? Fourthly, especially given the role of guesses and assumptions, is there scope for generating rationalizations for almost whatever one feels like doing? De Waal fears tactics within 'fieldcraft' to always rationalise continuing relief agency involvement. Agencies 'may say they will tolerate only so much extortion--but then, when the intolerable occurs, they proceed to tolerate it' (1997:147) rather than close an operation and jeopardise jobs. Thus they can be manipulated by those more politically skilled and ruthless. One countermeasure is to require specification of the 'break-even/bottom line' in advance, rather than setting it only after seeing the evidence on costs and benefits. But further, besides the standard difficulties, in emergency relief 'the failure to perceive any way forward on the complex, lofty teleological [goal-fulfilment] side may lead to a tilt to worrying about duty instead' (Christoplos, 1998:14).

Despite these various problems, sometimes the relative orders of magnitude of costs and benefits seem clear, for example from relevant comparisons. In retrospectively evaluating the benefits of supplying the Rwandese refugee camps in Zaire, for example, compared to the

real alternatives, one's assessment might be affected by the rapid return to Rwanda around late 1996 of the bulk (reportedly over a million) of the externally displaced persons. This spoke against some agencies' beliefs in their indispensability and about what would have happened to refugees if they withdrew--the foundation for the immense relief operation over more than two years. Instead, when the preconditions for continuation externally disappeared, refugees were repatriated and resumed lives in Rwanda.⁷

Slim's interpretation of his second scenario (1997a) involves just such a claim about relative magnitudes, though of a conditional sort. Should relief agencies have continued to operate in 1996 in Burundi? Was their aid sustaining a violent repressive regime and ongoing suffering? Would not withdrawal have reduced the long-term total of suffering, despite an admittedly probably bloody transitional period? Slim argues that the case for withdrawal holds only if there were certainty about (1) an inevitable and major link from relief agency work to the perpetuation of violence, and (2) the existence of beneficial future effects of disengagement that will be greater than the foregone direct benefits from relief. Since certainty is hardly if ever available, especially about a counter-factual case, his conclusion is: do not withdraw.

To require inevitability and certainty (a term repeated several times; 1997a:14) is excessive. Even if we had certainty about short term benefits, that should not always outweigh uncertain delayed benefits: the balance depends on the relative magnitude, timing, and degree of uncertainty of the delayed benefits (or avoided costs). We could restate Slim's recommendation then in terms of *sufficient* certainty.

That leaves agencies though with the enormously informationally and psychically demanding tasks of assessing, weighing, comparing. Slim's recommendation to not withdraw might then be derived not from a requirement of certainty about effects, nor the previous scenario's transfer of full responsibility to those who misuse the resources given, but from a rule consequentialist rationale: as a working rule that allows agencies to save their energies for other matters, and to sleep more soundly. This has more plausibility for lower operational levels than for policy-making levels.

We saw the view that 'doing evil that good may come' would 'make an absurdity of the humanitarian mandate of relief agencies and NGOs' (Slim, 1997a:12-13). This makes two claims against 'compass', that it involves and accepts doing evil and is anti-humanitarian. The latter claim works only as a tautology, when 'humanitarian' is *defined* in Red Cross style so as to exclude reference to wider effects. Whereas ordinary language and dictionaries specify 'humanitarian' as seeking to promote human welfare, the Red Cross have equated it to their own strategy. For a senior International Red Cross Federation officer: 'Humanitarian does not mean caring, it does not mean alleviating poverty, it does not mean providing relief. It means carrying out actions - which are, and are perceived to be, impartial, neutral and by extension, independent from political, religious or other extraneous bias - for the sole purpose of alleviating the suffering of very clearly identified groups of people' (Walker, 1996:2), those directly supplied. Slim implies elsewhere (1998b) how unwise this narrow definition has been, by excluding other major actors each with their own humanitarian responsibilities.

Further, when we consider the example used of 'doing evil'--withholding relief that would strengthen forces committed to genocide, at the cost of causing suffering to both innocent and guilty people--it cannot be categorized as evil if aid agencies have a budget constraint and would use the resources instead for other humanitarian work which has no similar indirect effects. (While *relief* agencies' budgets might be tied to relief operations, most of their funding may be diversion of donor funds from other aid.) Aid agencies do have shortages of funds, and *can* use the limited funds in numerous less problematic directions, such as help to families of the victims of genocide or natural disasters, conflict reduction before a stage of civil war is reached, and, more widely, education for women and girls, micro-credit schemes, AIDS prevention or AIDS orphans. Those are the sorts of activities whose neglect would genuinely make an absurdity of a humanitarian mandate--in the ordinary sense of the term--yet which remain underfunded. Weiss & Collins argue similarly, and observe that UNHCR's criterion for a successful humanitarian operation--'the greatest good to the greatest possible number of people in need'--is often best fulfilled by attention to the causes and victims of 'silent emergencies', before they erupt into less tractable 'loud emergencies' (1996:167-8).

If there were no budget constraint and no good alternative uses, it would remain open for examination whether withholding relief from the needy, especially the innocent, is an evil which outweighs the evil of fuelling further war and murder, or is on other grounds intolerable. We saw that elsewhere Slim himself accepts such weighing and comparison as an unavoidable and excusable part of 'fieldcraft'.

Arguments against the 'mission-bounded' ('not our responsibility') stance, and possible defences

Slim and some other NGO advocates held the UN but not NGOs to be responsible for not acting against foreseeable genocide - perhaps on the basis of differences in their specified mandates. But most relief agencies nowadays specify their mission as more than sustaining the sick and hungry, and as including conflict prevention, human rights protection and promotion, etc. Let us take the advocacy as implying delimitation of relief NGOs' responsibility by downsizing of their mission statements. and then concentrate on a relief agency with a narrower declared mission.

The 'mission-bounded' approach claims 'it's not our problem' how others use the resources provided. Evaluation of relief aid stops at the Purpose level, or below, and is restricted to intended effects. Disastrous unintended effects, especially at the higher Goal level, become someone else's problem, even when foreseeable and foreseen. By declaring a narrow set of intentions one escapes responsibility for other effects. This is a version of '*the doctrine of double effect*': 'Where one course of action is likely to have two quite different effects, one licit or mandatory and the other illicit, it may be permissible to take that course intending the [former] one but not the other' (Pan, 1979). This handy tool can equally support *non-supply* to the Rwandese camps, since harm to the non-combatant camp-residents is not *intended*.

Pushed hard, as a way of living with the deontological proscriptions of Roman Catholicism, the doctrine has generated much casuistry (such as 'Contraceptive slot

machines labelled “For the prevention of disease only” (ibid.) and corresponding criticism. For if some effects of one's actions are the reactions of other actors, and some of their reactions are considered forced or natural, one is at least partly responsible for them. Mackie went further and rejected the doctrine as follows: ‘if B's action, though neither defensible nor excusable, could be confidently anticipated as a response to A's, then A must take some responsibility for the result, and the more automatic B's response could be foreseen as being, the more of the responsibility for the result must be referred back to A's action’ (1977:164).⁸

Even given a relief-only mission, the conclusion that one should continue providing relief resources regardless of how others (mis)use them looks fallacious for two further reasons. First, the mission should be seen as relief of needy people, not just a subset of them, and not as supply of resources regardless of whether that promotes overall well-being. Defences that relief must be seen as simply a palliative can beg the question of whether in specific cases it does provide palliation and for whom. ‘Relief’ should not be defined *de facto* as performance of certain activities deemed laudable in themselves, or as a set of delivered commodities, regardless of effects (though this is normal practice: MacRae, 1998). It can become relief of rich countries’ guilt and tension rather than relief at the officially stated Goal level of improvement in needy people's lives (Gasper, 1999a, 1999c). Weiss & Collins thus reject ‘the humanitarian *imperative*’, and insist one must also weigh indirect negative consequences of any course of action (1996:99). Second, as mentioned earlier, one cannot ignore whether the resources have worthwhile uses in other types of relief work, not to speak also of conflict prevention and development programmes.

These arguments can be swept aside by emotional compulsions in the donor public, the role of televised epics in the global politics of meaning, the soap opera of wretched-them-noble-us signification, and the zeal and career needs of the relief organizations. A diversionary tactic is to declare the *blame* for misuse as resting with others and hold that if no blame rests with aid agencies then there is no reason for them to change. (Terry, 1999, discusses the variant of blaming the negligent ‘international community’.) Preoccupation with blame rather than with what should be done is ironic, for normally relief agencies see themselves as action-oriented. Agencies cannot be blamed for the misdeeds or omissions of others, but can be held responsible for facilitating these and especially for continuing to do so when knowledge of the linkages has been widely disseminated.

Current restatement of the Red Cross principle of neutrality implicitly accepts the criticisms. Whereas ‘a traditional interpretation of neutrality can be tied to an unwillingness to see how actions may feed conflicts’ (Christoplos, 1997:13), Plattner insists that neutrality must include ‘prevention’, which ‘obliges the organisation to ensure that neither party is able to use the organisation to its advantage’ (cited by Slim, 1997c, p.347).⁹ This is what often fails: ‘abiding by neutrality’s commitment to prevention... seems increasingly unfeasible in the light of what we now know about the manipulation of relief supplies’ (ibid.:348). Most relief agencies lack resources sufficient ‘to negotiate and secure a rigorous position of neutrality in their relief work’, acknowledges Slim (loc. cit.); but, he argues, this does not mean they should criticize the stance of agencies like the Red Cross which have the resources. So, the Red Cross is obliged to ensure that its relief resources are not misused to prosecute civil wars; and

weaker agencies, incapable of ensuring neutrality, should withdraw when relief resources are fundamentally misused (i.e., beyond a reasoned maximum tolerable level) or perhaps find some other line of justification than a neutrality that they fail to achieve.

4. FURTHER VARIETIES OF APPROACH AND THEIR POSSIBLE COMPLEMENTARITY

The debates between consequentialists and deontologists, and its 'compass' versus 'bounded mission' partner, never end, which suggests that both stances might be relevant but insufficient, and that additional approaches and integrative frameworks could help.

We noted rule consequentialism as one integrative framework. Perhaps 'footsoldiers' must simply *believe* in the validity and efficacy of what they are told to do (e.g. supply food and medicine), in order to muster and maintain the energy and will to act in difficult conditions; though they must use fieldcraft, not operate by faith and hope alone. At strategy levels, decision-makers must *not believe*, in the efficacy of any particular method: they must always be open to evidence and comparisons of consequences, when deciding on strategy and on the rules given to lower levels to implement it. But what then provides the strategists with the belief required to act, their motivation?

The question of motivation arises at lower levels too: rules alone do not motivate and may be ignored or distorted, while fieldcraft discretion can be misused. An argument used sometimes for deontology is that one cannot have a moral world that ignores normal moral feelings; one cannot stand aside when faced by seas of refugees, because of hypothetical calculations and expectations. But it can be dangerous for a humanitarian impulse to be absolutized as a humanitarian imperative.

Let us look in turn at arguments for the relevance of *both* 'bounded mission' and 'compass', if adopted by different actors, and then at arguments for additional approaches, that might sustain motivation while yet providing a more flexible, subtle handling of cases.

Arguments for both types of approach: a moral division of labour ?

Slim's third scenario (*'Truth-Telling versus Humanitarian Aid'*) concerns the mid-1980s famine in Ethiopia. How far should relief agencies have spoken out against forcible and punitive resettlement of people from the famine relief camps in the north, away to the south of the country, and thereby have jeopardised their ability to continue helping people in the camps? Médecins Sans Frontières (France) spoke out and were expelled by the government. Save The Children Fund stayed quiet and continued providing help. The case attracts much attention, so rare is it for an agency to court expulsion. It continues to rankle and disquiet NGOs: who were the heroes? who failed in their duty? who have unfairly claimed credit or criticized others?¹⁰ Having presented the case, and the choice, Slim suggests that the involvement of more than one agency allowed a moral division of labour in which it was better that not all did the same thing, for then publicity, protest, and relief work could all occur, and so promote desirable consequences overall. Each agency was right -- *provided*, and given, that each had learnt or ensured that another would do differently.

The Ethiopia example gives a key extension to the analysis: multiple agencies. A follow-one's-mission stance may be plausible only if sufficient agencies are present and provide the required range of complementary missions *and* capacities and willingness. For example if relief agencies operate on a rule of 'When in doubt, supply', they could be complemented by journalists who adopt the rule 'When in doubt, publish' about possible misuse of relief supplies.

Slim advises that 'a range of positions from classical neutrality to solidarity is to be expected and desired in any given emergency' (1997c:351). Organizations must at least be clear on 'whichever principle--neutrality [between movements], impartiality [between needy persons] or solidarity [with favoured movements]--their organisation has chosen to pursue' (loc. cit.; my additions), so as to be consistent and convincing, to their own staff and those they deal with.

This suggestion for a range of positions, not a single agreed stance, matches general arguments about complex systems and situations with high needs for learning, two features which fit complex emergency relief. First, it can be undesirable for everyone in a system with a considerable division of labour to have the same values. People do not have identical positions, and different values are useful for functioning in different places in the system. Those with caring roles should care; perhaps those with activist roles should have we-can-do-it and let's-try-something attitudes; and so on. Secondly, even if people all had identical roles, uniformity of views is undesirable in situations of high ignorance or high change, for it restricts the range of experimentation and learning. A rich 'gene bank' of values promotes the testing of different approaches. If one feels optimistic one can find a 'cunning of history' in, for example, the plurality of ways, ideologically opposed but arguably complementary, of dealing with, influencing, opposing, and ultimately replacing apartheid in South Africa.

A basic question remains about this reading of the Ethiopia case. Did the relief resources supplied by SCF--even if complemented by MSF public protests--in fact relieve *the government*, by taking over its responsibility to care for its population, and indirectly release its resources for use instead for the forced resettlement?¹¹ Were not more productive, less tainted, options present for the funds? Only if public protestation were enough to stop the abuse would this question not arise. If some agencies are willing to supply under any circumstances, then protests by their colleagues can become irrelevant. In this Ethiopia case however, the forced resettlement programme was halted a few months later, after MSF's protests were taken up the European Community and the US (Ramsbotham & Woodhouse, 1996:119).

In the Rwandese refugee camps case, there was no one present or forthcoming, willing and able to prevent misuse of relief resources. A division of labour, between those who, as it were, put matches in the hands of pyromaniacs--as unintended effect of allowing all in need of warmth to build a fire--and others who would monitor and restrain misuse, was fantasy. There was no effective restraining force. The colleague was imaginary. When it became clear that 'failures of the UN Security Council and member states in meeting their responsibilities [placed] humanitarian aid agencies in an untenable situation' (ODI, 1998:3), the agencies lamented this - and continued in the camps.

A comparison of cases and approaches

Before considering some other required types of approach, we can compare Slim’s four cases and his and some other possible responses, in terms of the ‘compass’ and ‘bounded mission’ approaches and various dangers in emergency relief. We have touched on the following dangers: 1. diversion of relief resources; 2. (other) unintended negative effects; 3. turning a blind eye to misdeeds occurring in parallel. No doubt there are others. For present purposes we can combine issues 1 and 2, and need not argue about relative frequencies.^{12 13}

SOME PROBLEMS AND APPROACHES	<i>Approach: Decide according to the balance of effects</i>	<i>Approach: Delimit own sphere of responsibility</i>
<i>Problem of diversion of relief resources to wars, and thus problem of unintended negative effects</i>	<p>Slim on scenario 2 (Burundi):- weight the uncertainties of disengagement so high that <u>de facto</u> one will carry on supplying regardless</p> <p><i>For Slim’s scenarios 1 and 2:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - disengage or stay out, on grounds of unsatisfactory net effects; or: - apply Red Cross principles of neutrality and prevention: continue if can achieve them, disengage if not <p>Slim on scenario 4 (‘Ethics of Contributing to a War Economy’):- use ‘fieldcraft’ to ensure positive net effects; withdraw if cannot</p>	<p>Slim on scenario 1 (Rwandese refugee camps): carry on supplying</p>
<i>Problem of other undesirable behaviour by recipient authorities</i>	<p>Slim on scenario 3 (Ethiopia):- Organize both help to the needy and protest against the authorities</p> <p><i>For Slim’s scenario 3 - withdraw if protest is ineffectual</i></p>	<p><i>For scenario 3: - an extreme Red Cross type response; carry on supplying regardless of net effects</i></p> <p><i>For scenario 3: - a purist human rights stance: whistle-blow regardless of net effects</i></p>

Slim’s scenarios 1, 2 and 4 concerned unintended effects from diversion of relief resources. Scenario 3 centred on other undesirable behaviour by recipient authorities. (Each scenario also contains some of the other type of problem, or easily could.) For scenarios 2, 3 and 4 Slim discussed balancing the good of staying in versus the bad of staying in, though his framing of this comparison in scenario 2 was extreme and became equivalent to a ‘mission-bounded responsibility’ strategy of staying in regardless of ongoing misdeeds. In scenario 1--the biggest case and the most sensitive for relief agency legitimacy and self-belief--he defended the practice of most NGOs: staying in regardless of massive misuse of the resources provided. I have argued against ‘stay-in-regardless’ stances; and we saw that Slim elsewhere accepts the Red Cross requirement that relief resources are not used to fight wars. Slim’s stances in scenarios 3 and 4 were persuasive, *provided* that in scenario 3 whistleblowing has a longer run regime-influencing effect, and that in scenario 4 a bottom-line is enforced.

Arguments for further types of approach

'*Casuistry*' means the study and resolution of specific cases of conscience, duty, or conduct through interpretation of ethical principles or religious doctrine (Webster's Dictionary), notably in cases where more than one principle applies. More specifically, it refers to an intellectual tradition over many centuries in Europe which, parallel to the accumulation and systematization of case-law for some areas of life, holds that we require and can progress with skills and sets of exemplars to guide ethical choices in other areas too. This tradition declined in Europe after a peak in the 17th century, displaced by the search for simpler systems of moral law on the model of the triumphant natural sciences, and discredited by frequent lapses into relativism and special pleading (Jansen & Toulmin, 1988). While '*casuistry*' became a term of ridicule, we do require skills to examine complex, idiosyncratic, difficult *cases*: to identify relevant principles and circumstances, and discuss which principles might fit, in which roles (Bedau, 1997).¹⁴ *Casuistry*--or, to take a term not discredited, '*contextual ethics*'--supplements other ethical approaches and principles, by considering how to relate them to cases and how to select or combine from them when several look relevant but in conflict.

One casuist argument for business as usual in the Rwandese refugee camps, subtler than lax versions of the doctrine of double effect, has been that relief agencies sometimes were unable to identify the past and perhaps continuing killers in the camps, and instead had to provide relief to all those in need, regardless of their deserts or future intentions. Assessment of this argument takes us to facts and to principles mentioned earlier. Some killers could be identified (Storey, 1998) - but who was to judge?; and repercussions of seizing them would have been considerable (MacRae, 1998). Even if individuals could not be identified with full certainty, the presence of many killers was known for sure, and their intentions to kill further. Should agencies then have prioritized these camps, compared to other worthy possible activities? And should not agencies adopt different priorities in future? A few NGOs did withdraw from the Rwandese refugee camps, for these and related reasons.¹⁵

Slim mentions other casuist-type criteria for judiciously assessing whether an action was responsible or culpable, which can be applied to emergency relief. Was it carefully considered in advance? (Often not, but time is limited.) Was its ignorance vincible? (Often yes, including learning from past experience.) Were mitigating, compensatory measures prepared for the negative effects? (Often not.) These concerns with identifying and countering negative consequences take us beyond the mine-and-thine doctrine of '*mission-bounded*' responsibility.

'*Ethics of virtue*', an eternal competitor to ethics of consequences and ethics of duty but perhaps better seen as a complement, stress instead the role of good character. Slim (1997b) notes the importance of inspiring role-models; for relief workers these often have been unbowed victims and dedicated local carers. Some virtue ethics hold that no general rules are satisfactory (or, in extreme variants, of any use); instead the virtuous person will somehow perceive and smoothly act on situationally unique moral requirements. In another stream, virtues supplement general rules, as dispositions to obey the rules or to behave in

ways that further the goals adopted in the rules; or as guiding well-motivated interpretation and application of general principles to cases (Slote, 1995). Similarly, ‘ethics of care’ stress attitudes of sympathy and skills of co-operation. A combination from these views makes sense: general rules are prompts and guidelines, that must be selected and used intelligently and with a good spirit, and substituted for when necessary.

Slim’s papers exemplify each of this range of approaches--consequentialism (in both act- and rule- versions), deontology, virtue ethics, and casuistry/contextual ethics--for his work is enriched by cases which trigger a range of insights and responses.

For this fuller set of approaches, which might fit which types of case? The next table makes suggestions about relevance. They are too simple, but help to raise questions.

POSSIBLE APPLICABILITY OF DIFFERENT ETHICAL METHODOLOGIES	<i>In handling individual cases</i>	<i>In handling sets of cases and defining frameworks</i>
Act consequentialism	Especially for simpler cases	[Hardly]
Rule consequentialism	Especially in complex cases, (partly) follow a rule/rules	To help determine rule(s) for the tactical level
Deontology	Often too binding and simplistic ¹⁶	Influential in framing of cases and setting (non-absolute) rules
Casuistry / analysis of contextual relevance	Usually needed	Also needed
Ethics of care and character	Usually needed	Also needed

Slim uses a different division. He compares ‘strategic’ choices, concerning whether to be involved at all in a situation, and tactical ‘choices’ concerning how to operate when involved (1997a:12). We saw he took a partly deontological ‘mission-bounded’ approach for some ‘strategic’ choices (as in scenario 1, advising relief agencies to supply regardless of net effects), and an (act-) consequentialist ‘compass’ for some tactical choices (as in scenario 4’s ‘fieldcraft’).¹⁷ Perhaps for lower-level tactics one faces given parameters and smaller decisions and can more plausibly trace consequences--if the relevant data are available. Rule consequentialism takes an opposite stance: one must follow rules rather than calculate in tactical decisions, given the very limited time and information, but should estimate consequences during the strategic setting of stances and guidelines--thus rules for footsoldiers and calculation for mandarins. Both views are imperfect, partly because a two-level analysis--tactics versus strategy--is thin. Using more levels, perhaps on the lines of Fischer (1995), might help.

We have concentrated on how broad a range of effects should be considered in assessing relief interventions. The less the interest in effects, the less also the interest in causes. Some intervention approaches concentrate only on symptoms.

5. DEEPER DIAGNOSES AND STRATEGIC RESPONSES

Responses to complex emergencies can be strategy-less, strategically inept, or strategically well guided. One type of response is to address symptoms because one has hardly thought about root causes: for example, flooding a country with foreign food as if its problems were mainly due to temporary natural causes can contribute instead to further degradation of its production base and social base, and strengthen rather than discipline or replace the State or other predatory forces that leave or make increasing numbers vulnerable. Mind-sets from Western medicine and sudden natural catastrophes have predominated. But, for instance: 'You cannot stop a genocide with doctors' (MSF-France). A second type addresses symptoms because one cannot see how to directly resolve root causes. We still have to ask: does a given effort at palliation really help? - in the actual conditions, and also for all those affected, now and later? A third type of response is to withdraw, and focus limited resources on more tractable matters. A fourth is to identify and address underlying causes and the factors required to influence or counteract them. Here broad analysis is wise, even if comprehensive response often is not.

In world society just as in public health, prevention of crises would be the rational priority above responding to the symptoms. It would include action on fronts such as preventive diplomacy, prosecution of accused war criminals, and control of the arms trade (Weiss & Collins, 1996). The multiplicity of relevant fronts can lead humanitarian agencies to reply 'why focus on the harm we might sometimes do, when it is less than the damage due to other causes?' (see e.g. ODI, 1998); but harm is not justified by saying others are worse.

Intelligent and more effective response requires attention to causes. Why do 'complex emergencies' arise? As in famines analysis and the study of 'natural' disasters, we need at least the following categories: deeper causes generate dynamics that bring vulnerability of some groups; then proximate causes, such as the arrival of a 'natural' hazard like a drought, trigger the crisis, whose own dynamics are in turn influenced by further factors. For de Waal the deep cause in famines is a State with no accountability to certain groups in its territory, and no felt obligation or compulsion to reduce and counter their vulnerability. In the overlapping sphere of complex emergencies, while 'complex' may imply the absence of simple universal causal chains, it is also the international agency jargon to acknowledge violent conflict as a key feature and proximate cause. Harm to civilians is here an intention, a 'mission', not a side-effect (Ramsbotham & Woodhouse, 1996). We concentrated on the Rwandan refugees case because it raised some issues clearly. No natural disaster component, no major drought or cyclone, was present. No doubt existed about the genocide in Rwanda or where the main perpetrators went (though this was downplayed - some NGO publicity even claimed that the external camps were for the victims of genocide; de Waal, 1997: 198-9). However the underlying causes in Rwanda and other humanitarian emergencies are murkier. Recent work suggests some recurrent patterns.

Deep causes of conflict typically include oppression, lack of legitimate and accountable authority, and ongoing dispossession and denigration of some groups.¹⁸ For example:

Ethiopia 1984-5. 'The principal cause of the [1984-5] famine [in Northern Ethiopia] was the counter-insurgency campaign of the Ethiopian army and air force... There is no doubt that [the 1984-88] relief programme to Ethiopia supported President Mengistu militarily and politically... In Tigray very few rural people and very many soldiers were fed by the relief. The humanitarian effort prolonged the war and with it, human suffering' (de Waal, 1997:115).¹⁹

Somalia 1991-2. 'African Rights...make a convincing case for the alienation of land as the principal cause of the famine of 1991-2' (Middleton & O'Keefe, 1998:41).

Kenya 1992. Security-related problems were the greatest cause of difficulties reported by people in need during the Kenyan 'drought' of 1992, far in excess of drought itself (ibid.:64).

Sudan, 1980s & 90s. 'Operation Lifeline Sudan is condemned to supporting the insupportable', namely ongoing State-led asset seizures and genocide (ibid.: p.80; see also Jean, ed., 1993). For example, the excess foreign exchange it has provided to the Sudan government--thanks to an overvalued Sudan currency--to cover the programme's local expenditures, covered much of the military budget.

The preoccupation with symptoms, and the neglect of indirect effects, often rest on a set of unconsidered optimistic assumptions about development, relief, and aid in general. Experience now obliges us to be strongly aware of alternative possibilities.

Conventional view

Aid contributes to socio-economic development

Development leads to increased welfare, reduced vulnerability, fewer disasters

Emergency relief restores welfare and reduces the chance of further disasters; it is a temporary phase before resumption of 'normal' development and aid.

Alternative view

(Poorly designed and managed) *aid* can produce dependency, negative demonstration effects and low savings, poor policy and project choices

(Mal-) *Development* can lead to rising expectations, unlegitimated inequalities, resource conflicts, decline of mediating institutions, ethnic mobilization

(Ill-considered) *relief* can foster dependency and permanent refugee populations, substitute for and suppress the local State and other local institutions, and fuel the violence of warlords. It can contribute to permanent crisis.

Let us note three examples of more considered strategic responses. Each reflects a deep problem-analysis and comparison of response options. Alex de Waal stresses construction of '[anti-famine] political contracts' with which people can hold governments accountable for respecting their right to subsistence. The style of recent Western relief intervention is usually not helpful here, he argues. Instead of building accountable relations between people and a State, "actually existing humanitarianism"... [weakens] the forms of political accountability that underlie the prevention of famine... [it has a] total lack of any engagement with the local political processes that can actually resolve the problems of famine...[and has] immunity from accountability to the ostensible subjects of [its] concern' (1997: 4, 158, 179). None of its internal debates 'question whether famine relief, or any other form of emergency response, should be

controlled by international “experts” (1997:70). Its race to deliver food necessitates deals with warlords; and not only feeds wars but disempowers other locals and ‘drains their capacity to find a solution’ (1997:xvi).²⁰

Proceeding from the neglect of this local capacity, to how to support it, Ian Christoplos observes that besides ‘the expatriates’ stay-or-pull-out dilemma... one needs to consider another choice: does one invest [the] limited resources in following one’s duty and saving the lives of those one sees, or does one invest in the institutions which should be providing at least somewhat more sustainable services to save the lives of the population as a whole’ (Christoplos, 1998:14). Building institutions requires attention to felt ownership by local participants and to what gives them morale, identity and commitment. He takes as an example the Angolan Red Cross, as one present and future component of an Angolan civil society. Largely ignored and scoffed at--as self interested, lazy, incompetent--by foreign NGOs busy with their ‘professional’ delivery exercises, it carries out important relief functions in extraordinarily hard conditions. It is there, on the spot, long before the INGOs arrive and shoulder it aside. What motivates its members? - meeting the needs for medical access of people they care for, and feelings of acting morally and better than the warring parties. Relief and aid agencies must recognize, respect, and not hinder this; and foster it by earmarking a percentage of project budgets for local institutions (Weiss & Collins, 1996).

Michael Edwards focuses less on international aid agencies’ obligations in societal construction in the South, for, he advises,

[concerning] promotion of social and political processes that contribute to peace-building and/or foster conflict resolution....most NGOs lack the capacity to conduct the strategic analyses necessary to success in these areas, especially in the complex and contingent environments in which they operate.... [Instead,] networking and influencing strategies are required [for NGOs] to have any significant impact on reducing the suffering that occurs in complex political emergencies.... A number of options are emerging....(Edwards et al., 1999:129).

The options include: helping to build UN credibility and capacity in peace-making; influencing the foreign policies of national governments (notably those, one can add, ‘with the ability to stop genocide who instead send food and blankets’, Weiss & Collins, 1996:172); experimenting with ways for civil societies to move beyond the donation-or-disengagement level of response and to push governments to react to emerging conflicts at an early stage; and monitoring the private sector so that businesses who gain from war economies face sanctions such as consumer boycotts and critical media coverage. ‘However, if they wish to gain more influence over other actors in pursuing these roles, then NGOs will need to invest in their own credibility and legitimacy by becoming more knowledgeable and transparent about the achievements of their existing humanitarian and peace-building work’ (Edwards et al., 1999: 129). To say ‘ours but to supply, not question why - nor what it achieves’ is no longer tolerable; nor will a doctrine of mission-bounded responsibility persuade other implicated actors to change.

6. CONCLUSION

Conflict-driven humanitarian emergencies place extreme demands. The extremity of the situations faced unfortunately often generates extreme attempts to simplify, by declaring insoluble dilemmas, or by judging responses in some sharply restricted way: by only their intentions, or their scale and type of activities, or their degree of achievement of intended effects. Humanitarianism as a heroic vocation, a modern chivalry not to be subjected to the pettifogging calculation of less or more, is ironically also the motto of the marketplace contractor, the supply-driven supply-focused agency that provides things and good news footage, but perhaps no improvement, and that prefers to be evaluated accordingly, in terms of things and images.

While better than judging only by intentions, assessment just in terms of activities or output delivery or even direct impacts on a target group ignores unintended and higher-level consequences: side- and longer-run effects. In this paper I concentrated on the stance of 'mission-bounded responsibility': that aid and relief agencies must supply regardless of the full range of effects, and are accountable only for achievement of their own delivery- or direct impact objectives, not for what use others make of the resources provided. While identifying and acknowledging grey areas, I argued (especially in Section 3) that we must consider broader consequences, not be controlled by agencies' organisational convenience. Besides seeing 'relief' as improvement in people's lives rather than as a delivery activity or set of commodities, we must consider improvement for needy people now and later, not just for those targeted, today.

The 'humanitarian imperative', to help wherever one sees extreme suffering, is a noble ideal. An ethic that accepts a responsibility to help must also then assess whether, when, and how one really helps, otherwise it becomes only an ethic of response not of responsibility. Some recent sets of principles for humanitarian action agree. But the 1995 International Red Cross principles begin: 'The humanitarian imperative comes first' - assistance should be provided wherever extreme suffering is visible. While negative consequences are to be minimized they are assumed never to be prohibitive, remarks Terry (1998). Granted, sympathy should be expressed in action, and fostered, otherwise it will dry up (a rule consequentialist argument). Sympathy and response must be combined though with hard thinking commensurate with the scale of the crises. Massive crises require intense thought, not its suspension. A danger exists that thought will be crowded out by sympathy and donor self-importance, which demand immediate demonstrative action and then resist fundamental evaluation of that action. 'Humanitarianismdoes not need to succeed in order to justify itself. Humanitarianism works, by definition' (de Waal, 1997:4).

Assessment can never consider all effects, all people, all times, never be fully comprehensive. Bounds are unavoidable. The framing should reflect, amongst other things, an understanding of what are key causal factors (such as, very likely, local capacity and accountability of a State to its citizens), so that the assessment looks at impacts on those. Similarly, design of interventions should reflect the principles of 'connectedness' and 'coherence': as discussed in Sections 4 and 5, it should consider key causal factors so as to

address them where possible, not only symptoms, or at least understand the constraints they set; and consider what other agents are present, to judge how far those can and will take up key issues. We have not answered here which agents are best suited for which roles.

Framing of an assessment to consider only the intentions set for an intervention (the doctrine of 'mission-bounded responsibility') could be justified only under special conditions, such as: (a) the intervention has a perfect design (in which case why would it need assessment?), it has no substantial wider effects; (b) the other people affected are deemed unimportant, or other forces deal costlessly (like benign bacteria) with the negative externalities; or (c) the purpose of assessment is only audit-style accountability rather than future-oriented learning, say because no alternative intervention approaches were possible (Gasper, 1999c). None of these situations has much relevance to complex emergency relief, where we face many alternatives and high levels of ignorance, surprise, and need for learning. The case for broad framing increases though the higher is the organisational level.

The doctrine of 'not our responsibility', and dealing with symptoms not causes, are not cheap as well as not effective. International agencies spent \$1.4 billion in nine months on relief inside and outside Rwanda in 1994, to mop up a disaster; but virtually nothing on prevention, both before and after (Sida, 1996; Lindahl, 1997). Close to \$4 billion was spent on Operation Restore Hope, the disastrous US-led United Nations military expedition to provide relief in Somalia, and its follow-up UNOSOM II, for a country with a GDP less than \$1 billion and which may have gained nothing from them (de Waal, 1997). The US alone spent more than twice as much as its annual development assistance for all Sub-Saharan Africa (Weiss & Collins, 1996). We have to reflect on the causes behind Northern responses as well as on the forces driving complex emergencies. Possibly Northern military organizations have wished to justify Cold-War level budgets; and even for INGOs relief and intervention may seem to offer a bigger stage, bigger budgets and more jobs than the complexities of prevention. Adopting a preventive role would require facing the legacies of colonialism, aided mal-development, and misdesigned structural adjustment. Could it play the same roles? - dramatic exercise of capacities, and even of force; seizing through capitalist news media the attention of preoccupied Northern consumers; providing feel-worthy and feel-superior outcomes for donors.

Yet most aid personnel and INGO staff are conscientious and concerned. Part of the problem lies in weak conceptualization of causes and implications, options and justifications, and in the apparently self evident virtue of the 'we deliver' approach to humanitarian relief. Hence the need for the critical probing found in recent literature and in this paper.

REFERENCES

- Africa Rights, 1998. *Rwanda: The Insurgency in the NW*, London: Africa Rights.
- Anderson, M.B., et al., 1998, *Do No Harm*, Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.
- Bedau, H.A., 1997, *Making Mortal Choices - three exercises in moral casuistry*. New York: Oxford Univ. Press.
- Broughton, B., 1996, 'Charity or Rights?', *Development Bulletin* (Australian Development Studies Network), vol. 39.
- Bryer, D., & Cairns, E., 1997, 'For better? For worse? Humanitarian aid in conflict', *Development in Practice*, 7(4), 363-74.
- Christoplos, I., 1997, Local Service Institutions and the Humanitarian Imperative in Relief and Rehabilitation: a case study of the Angola Red Cross. Paper to conference on Public Management for the 21st Century, Univ. of Manchester.
- Christoplos, I., 1998, 'Humanitarianism and Local Service Institutions in Angola', *Disasters*, 22(1), 1-20.
- Davis, N.A., 1991, 'Contemporary Deontology', in P. Singer (ed.), *A Companion to Ethics*, Oxford: Blackwell, pp.205-18.
- de Waal, A., 1997, *Famine Crimes: Politics and the Disaster Relief Industry in Africa*, London: James Currey, & Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press.
- Edwards, M., et al., 1999, 'NGOs in a Global Future: Marrying Local Delivery to Worldwide Leverage', *Public Administration and Development*, 19, 117-136.
- Fennell, J., 1998, 'Hope Suspended: Morality, Politics and War in Central Africa', *Disasters*, 22(2), 96-108.
- Fischer, F., 1995, *Evaluating Public Policy*, Chicago: Nelson Hall.
- Gaspar, D., 1986, 'Distribution and Development Ethics', in *Development Studies - Critique and Renewal*, edited by R. Apthorpe & A. Krahl, Leiden: Brill, pp.136-203.
- Gaspar, D., 1999a, 'The Logical Framework Beyond the Project Enclave - monitoring and evaluation of humanitarian assistance in complex emergencies', *Revista Española de Desarrollo y Cooperación* (in Spanish), no.4, Sept. 1999.
- Gaspar, D., 1999b, 'Ethics and the conduct of international development aid - charity and obligation', *Forum for Development Studies* (Oslo; forthcoming).
- Gaspar, D., 1999c, 'Evaluating the "logical framework approach" - towards learning-oriented development evaluation', *Public Administration and Development* (forthcoming).
- Jean, F. (ed.), 1993, *Life, Death and Aid: The Médecins Sans Frontières Report on World Crisis Intervention*, London: Routledge.
- Jonsen, A., & Toulmin, S., 1988, *The Abuse of Casuistry*, Berkeley: Univ. of California Press.
- Lindahl, C., 1997, *Sida Evaluations Newsletter*, 3/97, Stockholm: Sida.
- Mackie, J., 1977, *Ethics*, Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- MacRae, J., 1998, 'Purity or Political Engagement?: Issues in food and health security interventions in complex political emergencies', *J. of Humanitarian Assistance*, <http://www-jha.sps.cam.ac.uk/a/a574.htm>, posted on 7 March 1998
- Maier, K., 1998, The Spoils of Humanitarianism, *London Review of Books*, 19 Feb. 1998, pp.13-15.
- Middleton, N., & O'Keefe, P., 1998. *Disaster and Development: The Politics of Humanitarian Aid*. London: Pluto Press.
- Ndumbe, K., 1998. Cooperation in Conflict Prevention in Rwanda. *Development and Cooperation*, 3/98, 24-26.
- ODI, 1998, *The State of the International Humanitarian System*, ODI Briefing Paper, London: Overseas Development Institute.
- Pan, 1979, *A Dictionary of Philosophy*, London: Pan Books & Macmillan.
- Prunier, G., 1997 (2nd edn.), *The Rwanda Crisis - History of a Genocide*, London: Hurst & Co.

- Ramsbotham, O., & Woodhouse, T., 1996, *Humanitarian Intervention in Contemporary Conflict*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Sen, A., 1987, *On Ethics and Economics*, Blackwell: Oxford.
- Slim, H., 1997a, *Doing the Right Thing - Relief Agencies, Moral Dilemmas and Moral Responsibility in Political Emergencies and War*, Studies on Emergencies and Disaster Relief, no.6, Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet.
- Slim, H., 1997b, 'Doing the Right Thing - Relief Agencies, Moral Dilemmas and Moral Responsibility in Political Emergencies and War'. *Disasters*, 21(3), 244-57.
- Slim, H., 1997c, 'Relief agencies and moral standing in war: principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and solidarity', *Development in Practice*, 7(4), 342-52.
- Slim, H., 1998a, 'International Humanitarianism's Engagement With Civil War In The 1990s: A Glance At Evolving Practice And Theory', *J. of Humanitarian Assistance*, <http://www-jha.sps.cam.ac.uk/a/a565.htm> posted on 1 March 1998.
- Slim, H., 1998b, 'Sharing a Universal Ethic: Spreading the Principle of Humanity Beyond Humanitarianism', paper to ECHO/ODI conference on Principled Aid in an Unprincipled World, London, 7 April 1998.
- Sida, 1996, *Sida Evaluations Newsletter*, 1/96, Stockholm: Sida.
- Slote, M., 1995. Virtue Ethics. In T. Honderich (ed.), 1995. *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.
- Smillie, I., 1995, *The Alms Bazaar*, London: Intermediate Technology Publications.
- Storey, A., 1997, 'Non-neutral humanitarianism: NGOs and the Rwanda crisis', *Development in Practice*,
- Terry, F., 1998, 'The Paradoxes of Humanitarian Aid', *Agenda* (Australia).
- Terry, F., 1999, 'The Humanitarian Impulse: Imperatives versus Consequences', forthcoming in H. Adelman (ed.) ----,
- Verwoerd, W., 1999, 'Individual and/or Social Justice after Apartheid? The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission', *European J. of Development Research*, this issue.
- Walker, P., 1996, Chaos and Caring: Humanitarian Aid Amidst Disintegrating States, *J. of Humanitarian Assistance*: <http://www-jha.sps.cam.ac.uk/a/a020.htm> posted on 13 October 1996.
- Weiss, T., & Collins, C., 1996, *Humanitarian Challenges and Intervention*, Boulder, CO: Westview.

¹ Strictly speaking therefore many did not fit the legal definition of a refugee and could rather be termed EDPs, externally displaced persons.

² See e.g. Weiss & Collins (1996), Prunier (1997), de Waal (1997), Middleton & O'Keefe (1998) Storey (1998) and Terry (1999) for accounts of these events.

³ "[From an aid-funded] road-building project for example, heavy machines were carried to Goma [in Zaire] and used to build infrastructures in the refugee camps, and the international community paid large sums to the perpetrators of the Rwandan genocide who transported these machines to Goma and offered themselves as private firms. They bought arms with the money, organised military incursions into Rwanda and held back as hostages in the camps those refugees who had expressed their desire to return' (Ndumbe, 1998:24).

⁴ In a dilemma proper, the 'choice [is] between two [or perhaps more] *equally* unwelcome alternatives' (Banks, 1995:5; emphasis added). However: 'As used *informally* a person is in a dilemma when he is confronted with difficult choices as in the case of moral obligations which conflict. Adapting an example from Plato: If I return John's gun then he will inflict harm. / If I don't return John's gun I will have broken a promise. / [Either] I return it or I

don't return it. / Therefore someone will be harmed or I will have broken a promise.' Honderich ed., 1995:201; emphasis added).

⁵ One can have a bottom-line even when benefits and costs cannot be precisely summed, for example a set of minimum required conditions.

⁶ The categories of (a) orientation to consequences and (b) rule-following are not opposites. Maximizing desirable consequences can be presented as a duty, a rule to be followed; and duty-fulfilment can and should be presented as a desirable consequence to be maximized, given that duties--such as the Kantian imperatives to avoid coercion and deception--may conflict, with each other and within themselves (one might have to coercively counter coercion) (Sen, 1987, Ch.3).

⁷ ODI Briefing 1998(1) states that up to 200,000 refugees and militia disappeared, died or were killed in Eastern Zaire (not as returnees in Rwanda) in late 1996 and 1997. A large majority of this figure could well be phantom refugees, invented to attract relief resources to the militia-controlled camps, whose later 'disappearance' brought charges of counter-genocide (Howard Adelman, personal communication). Non-imaginary victims may have included many unwilling to return since fearful of arraignment for murder. See Fennell (1998) and Terry (1999) for other readings.

⁸ Bedau (1997) cites a more demanding version of the doctrine, in which the action itself must not be evil, and the amount of good produced must not be less than the amount of bad: so the 'compass' criterion is included too.

⁹ Similar to this is the 'dictum of "do no harm" (Anderson et al., 1998)... which places a high priority on ensuring that humanitarian aid is not captured by warring factions' (Edwards et al., 1999:128). While still judging by consequences it would differ from the principle 'ensure benefits exceed costs', if it insisted that no values be harmed while some must be benefited. It would then be as limiting and limited as the Pareto criterion in economics.

¹⁰ MSF were about to leave anyway, according to some; whereas de Waal (1997:124) claims that inexperienced MSF staff did not think they were likely to be expelled. By far the most common scenario is to stay quiet, as for example about the 1983-4 massacres of perhaps 300,000 people in Uganda's Luwero Triangle (ibid.:193). SCF (UK) stayed quiet except to pass reports to the British High Commission, which filed them. Broughton, a staff member, now believes SCF should have spoken out, for he concludes that the relief did little or no net good, and 'attract[ed] people to relief centres where.. many men were murdered and many women were raped' (1996:6). Reports on Somali refugee camps in Kenya in the 1990s say that Kenyan authorities tolerated and encouraged Kenyan soldiers' rape of Somali women, to discourage arrival of Somalis. Western NGOs were aware of this but stayed quiet, to not jeopardize access and delivery.

¹¹ De Waal (1997:105-6) answers yes, both for Ethiopia and a comparable question about relief to Sudan in the 1980s and 90s.

¹² My thanks to Almas Mahmud for the idea of tabulating responses. 'Other undesirable behaviour' is a separate category for it does not depend on relief resources and yet relief agents may be able to influence it, and otherwise risk legitimating it.

¹³ Edwards et al. (1999:128) remark: 'While such incidents are well-documented in the relief literature, ODI (1998:3) argue strongly that - at worst - support to armed groups "has probably been slight"'. ODI actually declare 'In most, *if not all*, conflicts the role of humanitarian aid as a source of support for *warring factions* has probably been slight' (emphases added), which leaves (i) the demonstrable, very major, contrary cases, and (ii) the *indirect relief* given to war-waging governments. For a case in the former category, Somalia after collapse of any government, de Waal estimates 50% 'diversion' of ICRC relief: including for 'ghost' locations and residents, protection racket mark-ups (Weiss & Collins

cite monthly rents of \$10,000-plus for modest accommodations), and the 10-15% admitted by ICRC as unaccounted (de Waal, 1997:169-70, 183).

¹⁴ Howard Adelman (personal communication) suggests the label rather than the widely discredited term 'casuist'.

¹⁵ The International Rescue Committee (IRC) and Médecins Sans Frontières (France), according to Terry (1999). Weiss & Collins (1996) add CARE and MSF Belgium.

¹⁶ Davis (1991) summarises the problems which effects-ignoring principles run into.

¹⁷ In reality not only Slim's cases 1 (Rwanda-Zaire) and 2 (Burundi) involve strategic choices, so do cases 3 (Ethiopia) and 4 (fieldcraft) which he deems tactical. The issues in cases 3 and 4 are respectively: *loyalty* versus *voice*, i.e. turning a blind eye and staying-in versus risking being expelled; diversion of resources and deciding whether one's bottom line has been crossed so that one must withdraw (*exit*).

¹⁸ Middleton & O'Keefe (1998) claim in addition that in most cases where conflict emerged in the 1990s a major factor was promotion by national and international forces of neo-liberal economic policies prepared to sacrifice many people, indeed as a 'side-effect'.

¹⁹ Yet if soldiers had not been fed by the relief they might have seized food from the local populace.

²⁰ Middleton & O'Keefe elucidate how ideas of context-independent relief measures underlie why 'Unilateral action, fired by some antiquated and confused notion of flying to the rescue, is thought...to be more effective in disasters than any form of participation' despite counter evidence (1998: 156).