

3 Instrumentalisation of aid in humanitarian crises

Obstacle or precondition for cooperation?

Dennis Dijkzeul and Dorothea Hillhorst

Introduction

In Chapter 1 of this volume, Tom Weiss challenges current humanitarian approaches and discusses them in relation to their instrumentalisation: politicisation, militarisation, and marketisation, and then proposes alternative courses of action. He advocates, in particular, establishing better evidence for humanitarian action and working with a consequentialist ethic. Although we concur with the need for evidence-based humanitarian action (Dijkzeul et al. 2013), we argue that these recommendations can only partially address the problem of the ongoing instrumentalisation of humanitarian action, because they in turn can also be instrumentalised.

Hence a central theme of this chapter is that instrumentalisation is bound to happen when crises bring humanitarian organisations into active contact with a wide variety of other actors (see Donini 2012; DeMars and Dijkzeul 2015). These may vary, for instance, from regional organisations to warlords, the military, diaspora networks, intelligence agencies, new donors, and national government institutions. For many of them humanitarian action is a renewable resource, and all of these groupings may see their goals, principles, and mandates differently, and may not be naturally inclined to cooperate with humanitarian organisations. At the very least, they will attempt to realise their own interests. Hence they will carefully observe a humanitarian organisation to determine whether they or their adversaries will benefit from its work. They will then see the humanitarian organisation as either a prize to capture or a threat to neutralise (DeMars 2005). Working in a multi-actor environment is often frustrating and always challenging. To complicate these challenges further, humanitarian organisations themselves are frequently not above instrumentalising their own work for organisational growth, survival, status, or job security for their employees.

In all social endeavours, the reactions by others to our activities regularly lead to our goals being thwarted and frequently lead to unintended outcomes. In this respect, the dynamics of human interaction are always—but never in exactly the same way—impossible to fully control. They unravel the best designed plans, frustrate (presumed) ideological purity, and undo principled approaches.

This chapter first provides a critique of the recommendations that Weiss makes. In particular, it discusses the interaction of humanitarians with other actors within and outside the aid system. Next, it takes up two alternative angles to the discussion. First, we look at the diversity—coupled with occasional overlap—of different types of crisis. Understanding the various types of crisis is a precondition for understanding options for different forms of humanitarian action. The actual type of crisis sets the parameters for both humanitarian action and its instrumentalisation. Second, we need to establish which alternative, non-humanitarian approaches exist to address crises. The chapter also assesses to what extent these alternatives offer feasible solutions.

Culture or political economy?

Weiss's title focuses on the culture of humanitarians in war zones, but his analysis is much broader and includes the political economy of humanitarian crises and humanitarian action. A central aspect of the political economy approach is the analysis of how various actors pursue their own—often hidden—economic and political agendas. They can use humanitarian action as an instrument to further their own aims. A good political economist is able to describe the ensuing dynamics by which a diverse set of actors cause unintended, often suboptimal consequences, how and why worthwhile goals are not met, and why such actors cannot live by their principles alone.

Noting that humanitarian action becomes a fungible resource that is “part of the calculations of winning a war, and belligerents are not averse to manipulating assistance and civilian lives as part of their arsenals” (Chapter 1 in this volume),¹ Weiss masterfully describes three forms of instrumentalisation—politicisation, militarisation, and marketisation—which increasingly complicate humanitarian action and call into question traditional humanitarian principles. He does not succumb to easy cynicism; he attempts to understand crises better and to improve how these three forms of instrumentalisation are addressed. He prefers a humanitarian culture that is more modest in its claims that it can help significantly, and details two admittedly imperfect solutions.

First, looking at the example of the military, he defines what an *evidence-based culture* should look like. Second, he wants a much stronger *consequentialist ethic* to be followed. Elsewhere, he also writes about accreditation of humanitarian organisations and the need for consolidation of the humanitarian system (Weiss 2013). While Weiss's prescriptions help deal with some of the shortcomings of humanitarian action, they cannot do so fully, because they cannot overcome the root causes of politicisation, militarisation, and marketisation. Hence his solutions only partially address the problem, as they also run into the problems of instrumentalisation he describes.

On evidence-based action as an antidote to instrumentalisation

Let's start with a rhetorical question: did the evidence-based culture of the military matter for the decisions to intervene in Iraq in 2003?² Obviously not, as evidence

alone did not inform the decision to intervene. A political process overtook the decision-making authority of the military. Political leaders and other decision-makers often use evidence that fits a direction usually decided on other grounds. Even if they choose to, it is only on occasion that evidence is specific enough to be actionable. Some of the evidence to justify the military intervention in Iraq—the presence of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs)—was actually made up. It is not entirely clear how much then US Secretary of State, Colin Powell, knew or wanted to know about the quality of the evidence. Which other actors in the Bush Administration had specific interests or convictions to justify the intervention? How much did Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, and President Bush, or the CIA, actually know that Colin Powell did not know? Which other goals did they feel they could realise through the intervention? Ending the unfinished work of the former Bush presidency, raising the Administration's popularity, promoting Halliburton, winning elections, projecting an image of strong US power, or restoring justice after 9/11? The point is that it is not easy to come up with a clear answer. On the one hand, political scientists and management scholars rarely or never have direct access to such decision-making. On the other hand, those involved are rarely open about all their intentions; they may have a hidden agenda next to their open one.

We are not in any way negative about the potential advantages of the use of evidence,³ but we are sceptical about the extent to which it will shape political or humanitarian decision-making. Instrumentalisation of action, be it politicisation, militarisation, or commercialisation, is an everyday political phenomenon. Even the solutions to this instrumentalisation are likely to be used by actors to further their own purposes. It is here that humanitarian (and human) interactions become hard to track for scholars and practitioners alike.

To give another example, a former head of an agency charged with supporting disaster response expressed that he did not want to know everything his trusted staff or tested and responsible NGOs did on all occasions, because then they could implement their own solutions, within understood parameters and without unproductive interference. He also did not tell his superiors everything he knew when it would only produce a round of less-than-useful discussion. At the same time, he tried to attend as many general meetings as possible: “to be present”, so as to share in understanding the overall direction of his organisation. He worked hard on gaining information, understanding the dynamics of political action, which varied in every situation, including the levers of power and how these influenced humanitarian action. In the process, he was sometimes able to create an organisational space complementary with humanitarian space, but not entirely based on the traditional humanitarian principles—so that humanitarian action could proceed, responding to local circumstances instead of primarily political directives.

In sum, evidence is important. It should be used more in humanitarian circles. But at best it is just one aspect of political decision-making and humanitarian leadership. The main epistemological limitation is not establishing evidence, but applying evidence.

On ethics as an antidote to instrumentalisation

Weiss advocates a consequentialist ethic. In other words, he favours an ethic that focuses more on the outcomes of action than on the purity of its intentions. He doubts the humanitarian imperative—a deontological or duty-based ethic centred on intentions in which humanitarian organisations always have to assist people in need. Instead, he wants it replaced by the “humanitarian impulse”, meaning that humanitarian actors can sometimes decide not to provide aid. He is even more scathing about the principles of impartiality, neutrality, and independence.

Yet it is important to note that the two different ethical approaches have always been used in the humanitarian field, but differently by different organisations. International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and Médecins sans Frontières (MSF) as single-mandate organisations operate in the Dunantist vein; they follow a deontological ethic. They thus consider themselves duty-bound to alleviate suffering and save lives. This ethic constitutes an attempt to prevent politicisation, militarisation, and marketisation by carving out a limited humanitarian role, with ideally no influence on the other parties involved in the conflict—it aims only to assist victims. ICRC and MSF are a minority of two that consciously respect and promote the humanitarian principles. Most other humanitarian organisations—and this is a large majority—are multi-mandated organisations, combining humanitarian with development, human rights, or conflict-resolution work. These kinds of work automatically imply political and societal change to a preferred end-state (e.g. peace). Hence multi-mandate organisations operate with a consequentialist approach. Among these organisations, the degree of respect for the principles differs pragmatically (Hilhorst and Pereboom 2015). They may respect them to an extent, but more as a tactical move than a universal duty.⁴

Moreover, in practice both ethics interact regularly, for example within each organisation or with its local contacts. In the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in the late 1990s, there were a few organisations, such as Agro Action Allemande (Welthungerhilfe) and the Life and Peace Institute, that built large networks of contacts on all sides of the conflict, in particular with traders who worked across battle lines, traditional chiefs and family members, and local officials. They then communicated and used the humanitarian principles in their daily activities to build trust on all sides. In other words, they used a deontological ethic to facilitate the impact of their work, implementing it in a consequentialist manner. This is not easy, but some organisations manage it. MSF, to give another example, is an organisation that consciously bases itself on Dunantist principles. Yet, once it decides to become active somewhere, it follows a rigorous decision-making approach, in which it focuses on its (potential) health and medical impacts. In this way, it also combines both ethics (Heyse 2006). In a recent volume, MSF further explains how, in many situations, access is negotiated whereby adherence to principles may be sacrificed to more effective relief of suffering (Magone et al. 2012). In sum, the two ethics are not mutually exclusive (see below).⁵

In all crises, the degree of success of both ethics depends on the interaction with a wide cast of other actors—local and international—that follows its own interests.

These actors calculate whether they see a specific humanitarian organisation or activity as an opportunity to grasp or a threat to suppress (DeMars 2005). And the humanitarian organisation's staff is rarely fully aware of these actors' specific interests and tactics.

The basic image behind the consequentialist ethic is a *Homo economicus*, who knows his interests (a.k.a. utilities or preferences), and is able to calculate strategically (all) possible consequences and select his desired option. The deontological ethic works with the *Homo sociologicus*, who follows societal norms, because that is the right, good, or appropriate thing to do. Yet norms and interests are not separate entities. They mutually influence each other, as societal norms and individual interest constitute each other. Yet we rarely know how exactly they form and shape each other. Hence norms and interests are basic concepts of the social sciences that are nevertheless ill suited to fully understand the dynamics of social interaction, including its instrumentalisation. The difficulty in understanding the diversity of actors and the resulting social dynamics has long been known, before the modernist liberal interventions of the post-Cold War era (compare Chandler's Chapter 2 in this volume).⁶

For humanitarian action, focusing more strongly on the dynamics of working in a multi-actor environment is crucial. Its degree of success cannot be determined beforehand, because one cannot control the behaviour of all the other actors. Other actors will hijack or simply attempt to influence humanitarian action for their own benefit. Yet humanitarians are rarely completely powerless in their reactions to these actors and their efforts at instrumentalisation. Weiss's text helps the humanitarians to come up with at least partial approaches.

However, understanding the three forms of instrumentalisation can be taken one step further. One can ask to which extent such instrumentalisation is necessary for humanitarian organisations to receive at the least a modicum of *cooperation*. If those other actors would not see some of their interests realised by—working with—the humanitarians, they would only obstruct or neglect. Usually, their interests may be very different from those of humanitarian actors. For instance, warlords may negotiate with humanitarian organisations to gain legitimacy towards the population under their control or to appropriate food aid to feed their rebels. As a result of such influence, humanitarian action can have a completely different impact on aid than would be expected if one follows the normative claims of the humanitarian organisations and their principles. Fiona Terry (2002) studied these unintended consequences of humanitarian action when she formulated the humanitarian paradox: humanitarian action can worsen or lengthen the suffering it is supposed to address. She focuses on the effects, the study of instrumentalisation on their causes. Paradoxically, instrumentalisation can be simultaneously a *precondition for cooperation* in, and the main *obstacle* for, humanitarian action (Barnett 2012, 1171–1172).

The two ethics suggest different ways to deal with instrumentalisation. The deontological ethic focuses on the importance of good or pure intentions, so that the humanitarians are not seen as a threat in the hope of safeguarding access to and security of recipients (and staff). The consequentialist ethic centres on outcomes. Both are needed in humanitarian crises, but none works perfectly.

Consequently, both multi-mandate and Dunantist organisations are necessary. Yet the difficult question of when and how to combine them cannot be answered *a priori*. It is always a tough judgment call.

In sum, there is room for the humanitarian principles and the deontological ethic, but it is limited room that requires continuous care (Slim 1997), as other actors will attempt to realise their own interests. We do not know beforehand whether and when the humanitarians or other actors will succeed.⁷

Partial global alternatives

How, then, to deal with instrumentalisation and foster cooperation? Ms Ogata, a former UN High Commissioner for Refugees, famously quipped: “There are no humanitarian solutions to humanitarian problems” (Rieff 2002, 22). We need to understand not only how and to what extent the humanitarian system can function better, but also the various actors in different crises⁸ and the broader global context in which these crises take place (Sezgin and Dijkzeul 2016). Briefly, we need to broaden our focus from the humanitarian aid system to crises and global politics. Hence we will look first at the different types of crisis and what they imply for both ethics and evidence-based action. Second, we will discuss several policy options that (partly) need to be realised outside the humanitarian crisis areas, in particular in the Global North.

Understanding crisis-scenarios

Weiss focuses explicitly on armed conflict, and most multi-mandated organisations would agree that the utility of their work “depends on what crisis we are talking about.”⁹ After all, humanitarian budgets are being used to achieve several ends. These vary from responding to acute crises to supporting victims of those continuing for years or even decades. Addressing crises requires support in many forms, such as care and maintenance of refugees, building institutions in fragile states, and disaster prevention, risk reduction, and preparedness. General discussions of humanitarianism(s) and the ethics behind the humanitarian principles are often hindered by the fact that proponents have different humanitarian scenarios in mind. This section introduces a number of these scenarios.

Open armed conflicts

Historical commentary on modern humanitarian action usually begins with a reference to the battlefield of Solferino in 1859, where Henry Dunant witnessed heavy and bloody fighting inspiring him to organise medical care, and leading to the formation of the ICRC and the development of International Humanitarian Law. Ironically, humanitarian action is least effective in accessing and assisting affected people in these iconic situations of open, violent conflict. Conflict areas are often inaccessible. When it is too dangerous for aid workers, aid will be withdrawn. Needs in these situations are always vastly larger than aid can cover.

The problem of instrumentalisation in these kinds of situations is nothing new. There are, however, some recent developments. Since 9/11 and the proclaimed 'war on terror', we are faced with international conflicts in which the so-called international community acts as a 'neutral outsider' or as a 'warring party' depending on the point of view of the observer. In some conflicts, politicisation and militarisation have indeed led to distrust of humanitarian organisations and the United Nations, as they are frequently associated with Western domination of the international response. The independence of humanitarian aid, and hence its credibility, have been severely affected in some countries.

Although every type of organisation faces problems of access in areas of open, high-intensity conflict, single-mandate organisations are better suited to addressing this concern than consequentialist, multi-mandate organisations. The ICRC will typically play a large role, and MSF is usually also at the forefront of aid delivery, though an increasing number of agencies with broader mandates are becoming more active in this regard. Scenarios of open, violent conflicts are often local and periodic. That means that parts of the country are for certain periods subjected to heavy fighting, while in other parts of the country aid is being delivered for reconstruction or development. Proportionality may be an issue. In a recent report, MSF attempts to raise awareness of these situations. Titled *Where Is Everyone? Responding to Emergencies in the Most Difficult Places* (MSF 2014), the report states that in the worst conflicts few organisations are able to provide aid well. While this is ascribed partly to contextual issues, the report raises questions about the efficiency and independence of aid delivery. One of the examples is the situation in Goma in the eastern DRC in 2012, where an intensification of violence of rebel group M-23 led to the evacuation of aid organisations just when people needed aid more than ever.

Fragile settings—chronic crises

Although a number of countries have an official peace agreement and/or an internationally accepted government, conflict continues at a low level or flares up intermittently. Governments in these countries are often not willing or able to provide basic services. These fragile settings often end up developing into a long-standing humanitarian crisis, challenging long-term development objectives. These are settings where, with variations, the government does not function well, civil society is weak, poverty indicators are in the red, fertility is high, the rate of urbanisation is increasing, *and* criminality is abundant. Progress with the Millennium Development Goals bypasses these countries, and the risk of relapsing into open, armed conflict in the absence of fundamental change is always present (Milante 2015).

Fragile settings demand multiple types of aid, varying from emergency aid, to development cooperation, to support for institution building. One will find agencies with different mandates, programmes, and ethics in these situations. Multi-mandated organisations may alternate between direct support of the most vulnerable groups and institution building. They often deal with 'wicked problems':

vicious problems that are practically unsolvable and where specific solutions often evoke new problems (ibid.). In these crises, aid stands little chance of success in meeting needs or bringing about sustainable change. This can feed into the increasing critique on aid. Arguments in favour of maintaining a high level of aid in fragile settings (where ‘do no harm and try doing good’ is often the *leitmotif*) include the high level of vulnerability leading to immediate humanitarian needs, and the risks of renewed conflict, which can have all kinds of spill-over effects regionally and internationally.

The complex nature of these problems does not mean that aid cannot do better than it does. There are some recurring aid ‘traps’ in these situations. For example, aid organisations tend to underestimate the capacity of local actors to offer solutions and function efficiently. Some organisations also tend to focus on implementing specific projects without taking a holistic view and operating in cooperation with other groups, including local entities. This often leads to duplication of work and waste of resources, as well as local resistance. For instance, when humanitarian medical organisations entered the South-Kivu province in the eastern DRC after the Rwandan genocide, they often failed to contact the provincial health inspection. Only over time did cooperation improve (Dijkzeul and Lynch 2006). We also may see an inability to switch modes between the provision of direct relief and other types of support. Lessons learned as a result of monitoring and evaluations are not always followed up. Accountability to the local population and local institutions can be vastly improved.¹⁰

Some of these critiques on aid recur over decades. We see, however, some positive developments concerning aid in fragile settings. Compared with the 1990s, aid is more often directed towards existing institutions and the resilience of the population (Hilhorst et al. 2011), so the likelihood of sustainable change is slowly garnering more strength. Coordination systems are being improved, and a growing number of governments have more space to take and maintain initiative and define their own development agenda.¹¹ Yet, all in all, in this type of crisis tensions between deontological and consequentialist actors are bound to arise.

Refugees and displaced persons

Care for refugees and displaced persons is part of humanitarian budgets and is considered as humanitarian aid.¹² Humanitarian aid in conflict areas—as described above—is highly difficult and, in practice, aid is often provided to people who flee from the open conflict. Problems of internally displaced persons (IDPs) are often more difficult when there are multiple displacements, where people fleeing from violence arrive in insecure areas and have to flee again.

Humanitarian aid has been criticised for many years because it did not take into account the resilience of refugees and IDPs and hence did not build on their initiatives (Harrel-Bond 1986). Even where aid agencies want to break through this situation, they are often constrained by national laws that forbid refugees from undertaking (economic) activities. Currently, however, we see many developments for dealing with refugees more effectively, partly triggered by technical progress.

Instead of distributing goods, for example, agencies often provide cash or vouchers so that refugees can decide what they need. Where refugee movements become massive, aid is confronted with huge logistical, organisational, and financial problems. Because camps are often the only place where aid can be provided, there can still be an oversupply of aid organisations locally.

Issues of IDPs are complex, because IDPs establish camps in some countries but also often stay in the periphery of cities. Some will wait to return home at the end of the conflict, while others decide to stay in the city. As a result, displacement intertwines with rapid urbanisation in fragile settings. It is not always clear what roles humanitarian action can play in addressing these complex problems, and in what ways governments can realise the basic rights of these people, together with the international community. As IDPs in urban environments usually blend with the urban poor, the issue on how to provide adequate aid is equally intertwined with issues of development, making the concern of IDPs by nature apt for multi-mandate organisations, following a consequentialist ethic.

Disasters triggered by natural hazards

Recognising that vulnerability to natural hazards is largely human-made, the world community has vastly improved prevention, preparedness, and response to small- and medium-scale disasters. The Hyogo Framework for Action of 2004 (ISDR 2005) has played an important role in reinforcing national governments to make disaster prevention and preparedness a policy priority and to improve responses. In more and more countries, small- and medium-scale and recurrent disasters are being addressed by government and non-governmental institutions, sometimes with the cooperation of international development organisations residing in the country, sometimes as the result of local action, as happens for example in the many recurring floods in the Philippines and Bangladesh.

Increasingly occurring large-scale disasters are a different story. These disasters cannot be dealt with at the national level alone. They require massive efforts from outside. The international humanitarian system has made enormous progress in the past 20 years on first care and emergency aid in these kinds of disasters. These changes have supported life-saving aid in slow-onset disasters that slowly reach crisis proportions, such as the drought in the Horn of Africa in 2011. Despite the momentous logistical challenges of large-scale aid interventions in circumstances where roads are blocked, aid workers are themselves affected, and communication lines are broken down, the aid community has managed to significantly bring down mortality figures in these situations.

After the first crisis period, usually lasting several weeks, the situation becomes more complicated. The acute needs are not over, but the response falls into a certain routine. Reconstruction also starts. Reconstruction after large-scale disasters is an extraordinarily complex operation which is always politicised. Most efforts occur outside the framework of humanitarian aid, like the (corruption-sensitive) rebuilding of infrastructure, or political measures to strengthen the position of vulnerable groups such as the poor or ethnic minorities. Humanitarian

organisations focus mainly on the local level where communities try to resume daily life together and rebuild their habitats. Reconstruction is often characterised by politicisation and bureaucracy. In this process, aid organisations often make mistakes because their aid supply does not complement activities people undertake themselves, and a lack of accountability to affected populations may prevail.

Natural disasters are dealt with mainly by multi-mandate organisations. MSF does not reckon natural disaster its core competency, while the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and several national societies are the more prominent players in the Red Cross family. This is, of course, different in the large number of cases where disasters take place in conflict areas. Natural hazards do not stop at the border or wait for peace. The Hyogo Framework for Action ascribes the primary role in disaster response to the national government. However, disasters often occur in situations where the government does not function well or where more or less intensive conflicts take place. In these situations, natural hazards may lead to catastrophes because the response capacity is lacking and people in conflict circumstances become more and more vulnerable and poor. While natural disaster response is mainly a multi-mandate, consequentialist affair, there continue to be issues concerning the balance between immediate relief and recovery efforts.

Biological, chemical, and nuclear disasters

While biological, chemical, or nuclear disasters can and will occur in the future and will no doubt raise humanitarian needs, this is not a subject for discussion within humanitarian organisations, and there is almost no preparation for these types of disaster.

Although weapons of mass destruction have not been found in Iraq and have not been used between the superpowers, that does not mean that such weapons will never be used. Within US military policy-making circles, the use of small nuclear weapons has been advocated, and terrorist organisations are known to develop or try to get their hands on WMDs. Unstable states such as North Korea, Pakistan, and India with regard to Kashmir, the Arab–Israeli conflict, and Iran still create risks of nuclear or other WMD attacks. The traditional principles of humanitarian aid are not applicable on the ground after the use of these weapons, because the humanitarian organisations lack the knowledge and capacity to address the horrific consequences of such attacks. They will probably need to cooperate with the military because the military possess some of the technological and healthcare capacities that humanitarian organisations do not have. At the moment, such cooperation, which will need to include a division of labour, training, and planning, is woefully underdeveloped (see Prescott et al. 2002; Dijkzeul 2004).

In addition, summer 2014 brought the spread of the Ebola virus, a disaster caused by a biological vector. While the Ebola virus caused a horrible epidemic, it became clear that the humanitarian world—starting with the agencies of the United Nations—had no adequate answer.¹³ On 2 September 2014, the

international Chair of MSF called upon the UN to deploy military troops to deal with this crisis (MSF 2014). The Ebola crisis and the use of WMDs, be they atomic, biological, or chemical, thus raise several questions that are missing in the humanitarian agenda up to now. How can the international community respond to biological, chemical, and nuclear disasters? Is this the exclusive domain of military actors and governments? What mandate do humanitarian organisations need to be able to play a role in this scenario? What ethical approach should they follow? Are they equipped and prepared for it?

Concluding the scenarios

This overview of different scenarios brings out that single-mandate humanitarian agencies are particularly prominent in open, violent conflict, whereas in all other types of crisis multi-mandate organisations appear to be more dominant and may generally be better suited to provide services. And both types of organisation, including their ethical approaches, always run the risk of being instrumentalised by other actors.

It is clear that the different types of crisis are not clearly separated in reality. In countries where certain areas or periods are more or less violent, aid is always moving between different objectives and ways of working. It is at the borderlines and overlap between different types of crises that most friction about mandates, finance, cooperation, and ethical approaches occurs.

Alternative global policy options

A logical alternative to intervention by humanitarian organisations is non-intervention.¹⁴ After all, an intervention can make a situation worse, in particular when its instrumentalisation contributes to an escalation in violence, or when insufficient state-building activities are undertaken afterwards. Nevertheless, the “let-them-fight-it-out” or “let-them-figure-it-out” options also have serious negative effects at the national and international levels. In addition to human suffering, the consequences vary from increased drug trade and spread of diseases to terrorism and economic decline.¹⁵

Fortunately, there are non-humanitarian, non-interventionist policy alternatives that indirectly facilitate humanitarian action, stability, and rebuilding. These alternatives fall into several overlapping categories of international discourse and public policy, discussed below, namely trade, weapons control, economic and financial measures, fighting corruption, public health, and migration policies, as well as peacemaking and state building. Together they mark a shift in attention from the humanitarian crises to the international root causes and interactions of actors from the Global North with those from the Global South.

- A crucial policy alternative would be to *scale down or eliminate subsidies, import restrictions, and other trade barriers* in the United States, Japan, and the European Union in agriculture, commodities, and basic industries such as

textiles. Progress in these areas with the World Trade Organization and international trade rounds has been extremely slow. Yet many people in the Global South, including countries in crisis, work in these sectors and their products would be more competitive were it not for these subsidies and barriers. An end to agricultural subsidies on cotton, grain, and dairy products, for example, would provide an income boost for many farmers in the Global South and help to improve or stabilise many weak states by creating conditions under which violence becomes a less viable alternative to make a living.

- A second policy initiative would be to *reduce the availability of weapons*. To a large extent, this means taking action in the rich, industrialised countries that are the main arms exporters. This has already happened with weapons embargoes and, starting at the grassroots, with the International Campaign to Ban Landmines. Other initiatives, for example on small arms, are in the offing. However, structurally, more can be done, but this is difficult as several governments and their military–industrial complex(es) benefit from weapons production and trade.
- A third helpful policy measure would be to *reduce the funds that rebels and corrupt governments obtain through violence*. The World Bank suggested curbing rebel access to commodity markets, as happened with the Kimberley process for certifying conflict diamonds. As a result, the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) and the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone lost some of their power, which helped end the civil wars in these countries. The Khmer Rouge took a serious blow when the government of Thailand stepped up scrutiny of the border trade in illegal timber. Such action can be replicated with timber, coltan and other forms of resource extraction in countries in crisis. The independent UN reports on the war economies in Sudan, DRC, Sierra Leone and other countries have been small steps toward ensuring international accountability from warlords and other criminals, as well as their supporters in governments and international enterprises.
- A related alternative policy area to reduce support for violence is to *limit diaspora finance from rich countries to rebel groups*. For example, “Tamil Diaspora organisations raised around \$450 million per year during the 1990s, much of it used by the Tamil Tigers to buy arms” (Collier et al. 2003, 144). The Irish Republican Army (IRA), for instance, became more open toward peace overtures when its international resources began to dry up. The importance of limiting finance was also brought home by following the leads to financial support for the Islamic State and al-Qaeda. On the positive side, peace negotiations and international donors can also involve diaspora organisations in business recovery strategies by organising visits home, business forums, and selection of investment and rebuilding opportunities (ibid., 162).
- Another complementary approach would be to *reduce the profits rebels obtain from producing and trading drugs*. According to one estimate, opium accounts for one-third of Afghanistan’s GNP (Economist 2003, 41) and politically sophisticated drug lords resist government intervention and attempt to influence elections in their favour. These drug lords increasingly cooperate

with the Taliban (de Volkskrant 2015). Similar problems occur in Colombia and parts of Myanmar. “Current OECD policy toward ... drugs varies, but its main thrust is to encourage the government of developing countries to discourage production. The problem with this production-focused approach is that it makes territory outside the control of a recognised government enormously valuable, and so inadvertently helps to sustain rebellion” (Collier et al. 2003, 144). An alternative would be to penalise illegal consumption of drugs, while simultaneously instituting a government-controlled supply of drugs to registered addicts in order to bring down prices (ibid., 146).

- A sixth policy alternative is *reforming the provision of aid*, in particular its amount and timing. First, donor countries have, with only a few notable exceptions, never achieved the official target of allocating 0.7 per cent of GDP for funding development cooperation. Second, in sudden-onset large emergencies aid tends to be provided at the height of the crisis and then taper off. However, aid can be very productive a few years after the conflict has ended because absorptive capacity and private investment have also increased. The development community, including multi-mandate organisations, does not invest sufficiently in this stage, which reduces the effectiveness of international aid.
- *International debt relief* could be used to foster peace negotiations, in particular when instituted with economic growth and reconciliation policies. Guatemala, for instance, would have been able to establish more rapid democratic progress if it could have reduced debt repayments after the 1996 peace accords. More generally, it would be interesting to link debt relief with building a stronger, more inclusive state. For example, debt relief for Iraq did not deliver sufficient results, as international support failed to address government weaknesses and ethnic and religious divides.
- *Corruption should be fought* harder. In the United States, parts of the war on terror, in particular the highly criticised Patriot Act, expanded “the range of evidence that can be used [in court], which now includes material gathered clandestinely that was previously deemed inadmissible” for prosecuting corrupt foreign dignitaries (Economist 2004, 46–47). This act has also made it easier to deny or revoke visas of corrupt officials and to forfeit property—a type of discretionary and highly individualised sanction with no negative effects for society at large. The handlers of ill-gotten money, in particular financial institutions in the North, should also be scrutinised and, if necessary, punished (ibid.).¹⁶
- Another policy area considers the fraught issue of *migration and refugee flows* from crisis countries to rich Western ones. Whereas intensive debates continue on the exact effects of brain drain and remittances, offering refuge saves lives and could, over time, help to stabilise countries in crisis by providing resources and expertise from returning migrants and refugees. However, the opportunities for migrants and refugees—and the difference between these two groups is rarely clear-cut—to reach the rich world have dramatically decreased and due to the growing intensity and number of wars and other crises they keep coming in large numbers.
- International policy-makers should also consider the broader *population pressures*. Population pressures in the context of weak states and

underdevelopment may contribute to conflict through poverty, unemployment, unsustainable demand on basic services, environmental decline, migration, and sheer desperation. Better health policies, particularly in terms of reproductive health and AIDS, can contribute to longer, healthier, and more productive lives, which helps to stabilise societies.

- The eleventh policy concerns the *root causes* of natural disasters. Climate change and environmental disasters already hit the poorest of the poor hardest, although they are the least responsible for causing them. With some exceptions, such as the prevention of ozone depletion, stemming environmental decline has been disappointing so far, and the number and intensity of natural disasters is increasing. Environmental decline may also be a factor contributing to armed conflict.
- International *diplomacy for making peace* should be reinforced. From Libya to the Fiji Islands, conflicts have nasty contagious effects. It may sound like stating the obvious, but if the Israeli–Palestinian conflict could finally be seriously addressed, this would have tremendous implications for the Islamic world and elsewhere. Preventing and resolving violent conflicts does not just have positive effects within the country itself, but it also helps stabilise neighbouring countries, strengthens economic growth, and removes possible sanctuaries for terrorists.

Any one of these policies on its own will not prevent humanitarian crises, but taken together their cumulative effects can be highly beneficial. These policies have indirect and marginal benefits that, over the long term, can help address crises for large parts of the population. In this respect, they are the logical opposite to the negative effects of economic sanctions, military interventions, and other punitive policies. In short, where sanctions and the use of force disrupt, these policies would reinforce building from within the societies themselves. They either reduce the need for humanitarian interventions or complement attempts to alleviate suffering. Both teleological and consequentialist approaches would become a little easier to carry out.

These policies put the onus of responsibility on the strong Northern states, but also require cooperation between Global North and South. Yet it remains to be seen whether moral concerns and strategic and economic appeals about the negative consequences of conflicts and disasters will offset the special interest groups, societal inertia, and divisions among donor countries to establish these policies.¹⁷ These policies easily run the risk of becoming utopian ideals. They are hard to implement, and will take effect only slowly. Together, they can best be seen as an emancipatory project that requires considerable social struggle over time.

Nevertheless, the upshot of not implementing these types of policies is that crisis regions will only rarely stabilise and development will not take off. Instead, many crises are bound to become chronic, and even intensify, as their root causes are not addressed. The growth in humanitarian needs is currently outstripping the growth in resources for aid. Internal improvements of the humanitarian organisations, of whatever ethic, and reform of the humanitarian system, will not

be sufficient to stem human suffering. Without supportive international public policies, humanitarian effectiveness will continue to disappoint.

Conclusions

This chapter began with a critical review of Weiss's Chapter 1. As Weiss convincingly argues, purity of intention does not ensure successful interaction or outcomes. He proposes to find recourse in more evidence-based aid and in shifting to a consequentialist ethic. The first part of this chapter brings out why these solutions are only partial at best. Policies that determine aid flows and practices are rarely based on evidence alone, and different kinds of ethics in a multi-actor environment are likely to become instrumentalised too.

The chapter then proposed two additional angles to the debate on instrumentalisation and cooperation. Firstly, we call attention to how different types of crisis present different parameters of instrumentalisation. Open conflict, refugee crises, fragile contexts, natural hazards, and biological/chemical/nuclear disaster situations pose different types of risks of instrumentalisation. In many instances, a certain level of instrumentalisation may benefit the service delivery of people in need, because it provides incentives for actors to engage positively with aid when they see some of their own objectives realised. There are also many instances where instrumentalisation may be objectionable, yet does little harm in practice. For scholars, we have only an imperfect offering to understand the dynamics of everyday politics of working in a multi-actor environment, and we suggest making the issue of instrumentalisation, be it as politicisation, militarisation, marketisation, or whatever other form, a central research theme. The paradox of instrumentalisation in crisis areas is that it both can facilitate (limited) cooperation with other actors and obstruct humanitarian work. Hence "[t]he remarkable thing about humanitarian organisations is not that other actors are constantly attempting to instrumentalise them by attaching hidden agendas or even taking over their open agendas. Instead, the remarkable thing is how humanitarian organisations manage to elude becoming completely instrumentalised, or even instrumentalise others" (Dijkzeul 2015, 264). This leads to questions as to when, and to what extent, humanitarian organisations allow themselves to be instrumentalised in order to be able to deliver aid. How exactly does such instrumentalisation take place? When is it eluded? When and how do they instrumentalise other actors? These questions beg more empirical research on the ground. The categorisation of different types of crisis provides a first entry point in distinguishing different realities of instrumentalisation. Only if we understand better the differences and overlap among types of crisis can we meaningfully discuss the actual impact of the different roles, ethics, and mandates of the humanitarian organisation involved.

The second angle we propose is to pay attention more systematically to the potential of non-humanitarian policies that help to prevent or mitigate humanitarian crises. Put simply: with more supportive international policies, humanitarian action is either less necessary or it cannot be instrumentalised or abused easily. We distinguished 12 types of (international) policy that can

contribute to the prevention and resolution of humanitarian crises. Together they may bring about substantial change in the occurrence of humanitarian crises, but they require considerable international cooperation. While some would dismiss this notion as naive or outside the remit of humanitarians, we suggest that the promotion of these types of policy can be seen as forms of humanitarian diplomacy and hence be considered as highly ethical.

Notes

- 1 As humanitarian aid is a fungible resource, donor governments can also use it to promote military intervention, to enhance their image, or as a fig leaf for the media and the general public to pretend they are at least doing something to aid victims; warlords and dictators use it to shore up their political legitimacy and authority; and it has become part of a self-perpetuating multi-billion-dollar aid industry with its media marketing and fund-raising (see Chandler, Chapter 2 in this volume). “The history of humanitarianism appears to be full of the unintended consequences which occur when universal desires to ‘help the helpless’ meet the concrete realities of power inequalities and desperation” (ibid.).
- 2 As we focus here on the role of evidence in the relationship between military and political decision-making, we will leave aside that some observers argue that the military has a results-based culture directed at outcomes premised on control, which is not the same as evidence-based.
- 3 See the 2013 Special Issue of *Disasters* on Evidence-based Humanitarian Action, edited by Dennis Dijkzeul, Dorothea Hilhorst, and Peter Walker.
- 4 These organisations can be Wilsonian organisations, which tend to work closely with (their national) donor governments, or even solidarists that reject the principles in favor of a political cause. Finally, some organisations are simply subcontractors from their donor governments.
- 5 Although there are associated staffing, public relations, and resource implications.
- 6 We will provide a few examples. First, take Machiavelli’s prince, not exactly a principled actor. But even if *Il Principe*’s use of norms and values is purely instrumental; the associated hypocrisy is only possible as the compliment that vice pays to virtue. Second, classical realists, such as Carr and Morgenthau, were highly sceptical of military interventions and foreign adventures. Their sensitivity to the tragic aspects of political instrumentalisation and unintended consequences of good (and bad) intentions made them call for prudence in international politics. Both examples show political scholars who, basing themselves on their own life’s experiences, become extremely sceptical of universalist, linear, reductionist, and generalising scholarly work. David Chandler is right to protest against such universalist, linear, and reductionist approaches. Yet Machiavelli, the classical realists, and Weiss are just a few examples of scholars who have attempted to deal with the complexity of the dynamics of interaction all along.
- 7 And as indicated in note 1, humanitarian organisations sometimes instrumentalise their own work as part of a multi-billion-dollar industry that perpetuates itself.
- 8 In terms of a research agenda: debates about aid in crises would benefit from a more realistic acknowledgement of interests, instrumentalisation, and the inevitable unintended outcomes of aid in a multi-actor environment. Only if we understand the networks of various local and international actors, with their open and hidden agendas, and how they try to instrumentalise aid, can we at least attempt to deal more consciously with humanitarian (inter-)action and its unintended consequences. Addressing these epistemological and methodological issues also helps determine what the most promising opportunities for improving humanitarian action are. Even without quick fixes, humanitarian practice and theory can be linked much more closely.
- 9 This section is based partly on Hilhorst and Pereboom (2015).

- 10 When organisations interpret their mandate and their areas of activity rigidly, they run a higher risk of limiting flexibility and accountability, and not following up on monitoring and evaluation outcomes.
- 11 See for example G7+ (2011).
- 12 Funding for IDPs is more complicated than for refugees. Many donors provide no funding for the internally displaced, as this disaster-affected group is often considered an official responsibility of the host government.
- 13 MSF became a lead player in the response to the Ebola outbreak.
- 14 This section is based partly on Dijkzeul (2004).
- 15 Another policy area short of intervention concerns different types of sanctions, which can be considered a punitive policy. In the past, sanctions have done serious social harm, leading, for example, to a decline in public health and an increase in criminality, and in some cases even to an intensification of humanitarian crises. However, “smart” sanctions that target individuals and corruption (see below) may influence political and commercial elites that are insufficiently accountable and (inadvertently and consciously) cause crises.
- 16 The recent scandal of HSBC support for tax evasion to Switzerland is just another example.
- 17 When, in 2005, then UN Secretary General Kofi Annan attempted to link UN reform with proposals in which the Global South and Global North would strike a deal to foster comprehensive human security, including addressing terrorism, nuclear proliferation, and instability, by facilitating more development and (fair) trade, his efforts were thwarted and the ensuing reforms, which included the UN Humanitarian Reform, were minimal. Perceptions of threats between the Global North and South differed too much to foster such international cooperation.

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