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# Transnational Attention, Domestic Agenda-Setting and International Agreement: Modeling Necessary and Sufficient Conditions for Media-Driven Humanitarian Interventions<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

*Transnational Attention, Domestic Agenda-Setting, and International Agreement: Modeling Necessary and Sufficient Conditions for Media-Driven Humanitarian Interventions*

Interventions based solely or partially on humanitarian grounds are rare; but, over the course of the last two decades, they have become increasingly common phenomena of international politics. Nevertheless international relations theories have thus far not been able to adequately account for their occurrence. The authors present a theoretical framework to explain humanitarian interventions as a result of a multilevel process driven by media attention and political entrepreneurship. They argue that drawing the developed world's public attention to a humanitarian crisis does not suffice to prompt international political reaction to it—it is only a necessary but not a sufficient condition. They therefore develop a consistent, detailed, and falsifiable theoretical model that systematically traces the necessary steps from the spaces of a humanitarian tragedy through the domestic arenas of potentially intervening states to the international arena where agreements on interventions must be reached. The authors take Putnam's two-level game as a template for their model, but they exchange Putnam's interest-based approach with an information-driven approach. The authors examine the structural prerequisites for domestic "windows of recognition," deduce logical consequences of these "windows of recognition" for the possibility to reach an international agreement to intervene, and describe the functions and roles of peace entrepreneurs who try to overcome structural constraints.

## Zusammenfassung

*Transnationale Aufmerksamkeit, nationales Agenda-Setting und Internationales Abkommen: Eine Modellierung der notwendigen und hinreichenden Bedingungen für medien-getriebene, humanitäre Interventionen*

Ausschließlich bzw. primär humanitär motivierte Interventionen stellen zwar seltene, aber in den letzten zwei Jahrzehnten zunehmend häufiger auftretende Ereignisse dar, die mit den etablierten Theorien der Internationalen Beziehungen nur schwer zu erklären sind. Die Autoren entwickeln in diesem discussion paper ein konsistentes, detailliertes und falsifizierbares theoretisches Modell, das sowohl auf die Möglichkeiten als auch auf die anspruchsvollen Voraussetzungen für humanitäre Interventionen verweist. Ausgangsthese ist, dass die Aufmerksamkeit der globalisierten Medien eine notwendige, aber keine hinreichende Bedingung für eine humanitäre Intervention darstellt. Im Sinne einer Kausalkette werden weitere Zwischenbedingungen herausgearbeitet, die von einer humanitären Tragödie über mediale Aufmerksamkeit und politischem agenda-setting in potentiell intervenierenden Staaten bis hin zu einer internationalen Interventionsentscheidung führen. In Anlehnung an und gleichzeitig in Abgrenzung zu dem interessenbasierten Konzept eines Zwei-Ebenen-Spiels von Putnam wird ein informationszentriertes Modell entwickelt, in welchem das Zusammenspiel von kognitiven Prozessen und normativen Strukturen in transnationalen, nationalen und internationalen Arenen beleuchtet wird. Trotz des informationszentrierten Ansatzes ist das Modell nicht strukturdeterministisch, sondern verweist auf die spezifischen Möglichkeiten von politischen Unternehmern, durch die Verknüpfung von verschiedenen Arenen in diesem Mehrebenenprozess Einfluss zu nehmen.

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## 1. Introduction and Overview

Political responses to a humanitarian crisis depend on bringing governments to recognize their responsibility to address it. In addition, a sufficient number of those governments must reach international agreement on intervention to solve the crisis. To help detect the inherent structural bottlenecks in both political processes, we develop a theoretical information-centered model that systematically identifies the interdependencies between these two political levels of humanitarian interventions—the domestic and the international. Within the sequence of events giving rise to a humanitarian intervention, we concentrate on the connections between the domestic discourses in the countries with the potential to intervene and on the international diplomatic efforts to reach an agreement. After reviewing the literature and elaborating on our core theoretical arguments, we scrutinize the interdependencies between the domestic and international levels and the resulting structural constraints. We then briefly describe the functions and roles of policy entrepreneurs who try to overcome these potential structural constraints. We call them *peace entrepreneurs* because they invest resources and commit themselves to making peace in situations of humanitarian tragedies where that action involves a long causal chain of many political arenas and levels.

Humanitarian *interventions* as understood in this discussion paper go far beyond the delivery of purely emergency aid. They usually involve a military element combined with a nonmilitary aspect of socioeconomic and political reconstruction. As during the last ten years in Kosovo, East Timor, Liberia, and the Darfur region of Sudan, these humanitarian interventions help pave the road to complex peace operations intended to reconstruct whole states and create sustainable peace in post-conflict environments. We define a humanitarian intervention as an involvement by a group of states in the domestic affairs of a sovereign state for the sole, or at least clearly dominant, purpose of alleviating human suffering. The willingness of states to invest in these kinds of foreign operations contradicts by and large assumptions central to certain theories of international relations, namely, realism and liberalism, which hold that states are unlikely to devote many resources to activities (or to risk the lives of their soldiers and citizens in situations) that do not impinge on either their security or their national interests. These theories are therefore unable to cope easily with such reactions. The authors conceive of humanitarian interventions as situations in which there is no direct and obvious link between (a) the humanitarian tragedy to be eliminated by the intervention and (b) the security or material interests of the intervening states. From the established perspectives within international relations, humanitarian inter-

ventions are a phenomenon difficult to explain but quite relevant, given the dramatic increase in international activities largely classifiable as humanitarian interventions.

In the academic discourse on such interventions, the attention that the media in the developed world devote to humanitarian tragedies is sometimes mentioned as a main factor explaining the involvement of individual states in humanitarian interventions. But this literature does not take into account that humanitarian interventions are almost never carried out by single states but rather by several states that must first come to an international agreement. In most cases the United Nations (UN), with its established norms and rules, represents the institutionalized arena in which the discourses and negotiations take place at the international level. Complete explanatory accounts of humanitarian interventions cannot ignore either the relevance or the interplay of the domestic and the international levels.

The goal of this discussion paper is to offer an initial sketch of a theoretical framework that explains humanitarian interventions as a multilevel process. We take the two-level game proposed by Putnam (1988) as our main conceptual point of reference, for it provides clear hypotheses about the interplay between political processes at the domestic and the international levels. However, to make this interest-based, liberal, intergovernmental approach applicable to the specific characteristics of humanitarian interventions, we must transform it into an information-based account. Unlike a liberal intergovernmental approach, ours does not start by having us look at the domestically generated preferences for the content of international agreements that determine the leeway governments have in international negotiations. Instead, we begin by noting the attention that an international issue receives in the domestic media discourses. It decides both the political priority of the issue for the government and the government's activity at the international level. The functional equivalents of the "win-sets" (Putnam 1988), which characterize the domestic leeway of government negotiators in interest-based accounts, are called "windows of recognition" in our model. Windows of recognition are the times when humanitarian crises receive so much attention in domestic public discourses that it is appropriate for the government to give them high priority on the government's agenda and to actively promote an international agreement for humanitarian intervention. Like the hypotheses that were formulated in the tradition of Putnam (1988) about the relationship between the characteristics and determinants of win-sets and the likelihood and content of international agreements in interest-driven fields of politics, our specific causal assumptions derive from the characteristics of windows of recognition, which refers to the likelihood and content of international agreements in information- and cognition-driven fields such as humanitarian intervention.

By transforming the liberal two-level game concept into a social constructivist two-level framework, we give time a much more systematic place. A focus on the temporal dimension makes it possible to connect our information- and communication-based model to similar information-centered concepts within the field of policy analysis, especially to Jones and Baumgartner's work on the politics of attention and agenda setting (Baumgartner and Jones 1993, Jones 1994, Jones and Baumgartner 2005) and to Kingdon's concepts of window of opportunity and policy entrepreneurs (see Kingdon 1984). Kingdon refers to the coupling (by entrepreneurs) of different streams that is necessary within a policy field in order to make reforms possible. By contrast, we define a window of opportunity as the time when all governments that are necessary for a decision on a humanitarian intervention can reach an international agreement because an intervention is recognized in their domestic arenas as adequate. In other words, these windows of opportunity open up during those times when all relevant governments have open windows of recognition.

Windows of opportunity do not automatically lead to international agreements, though. In an information-centered approach one must take into account the time that is necessary to formulate the details of an international agreement and to agree on operational specifics and the formula of burden sharing for the implementation of a humanitarian intervention.

This discussion paper focuses on a systematic development of the model's elements. The model will be used in an empirical study by the first author in order to analyze the international responses to conflicts and atrocities in Kosovo, southern Sudan, and the Darfur region in western Sudan.

## 2. Humanitarian Intervention as a Media-Driven Phenomenon

The following two sections give a short overview of the scholarly discourse about humanitarian interventions. We focus on the literature, which tries to explain why and how they are decided on and carried out at all.<sup>1</sup> We show that a sophisticated discourse about the role of the media already exists but stress that it does not account for the fact that the decisions for humanitarian interventions take place in a multilevel and multi-arena system.

As of the 1990s, humanitarian interventions have figured more and more important in both scholarly and broader media debates, as it is evident in the discussion about the international inaction in Rwanda (1994), which led to the genocide against

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<sup>1</sup> We therefore do not consider the normative debates about the legitimacy of military intervention in general (see parts of Holzgrefe and Keohane 2003).



the Tutsis, and in cases where humanitarian intervention did take place, as in Kosovo (1999). The UN's failure to prevent massacres in Bosnia (1995) and to protect the "safe-areas" there is another example. Similarly heated discussions arose in the United States when it faced the decision to withdraw its troops from Somalia (1993) after the intervention broke down because of poor execution, an overreliance on military forces, and misjudgment of the conflict situation. In general, the period since the Cold War has seen a steady enlargement of financial and human resources committed to full-fledged peace operations. The number of UN peace operations, for instance, doubled from ten missions in 1989 to twenty in 1999.<sup>2</sup>

We define intervention as the military and nonmilitary involvement of states, including state coalitions, alliances, and regional and international organizations, in another state's affairs with a transboundary character (see: ICISS 2001, Murphy 1996).<sup>3</sup> We consider an intervention to be humanitarian if the intervening states justify their intervention with the existence of a humanitarian emergency situation<sup>4</sup> and if there is no clear-cut link between the crisis at the place of intervention and security or economic interests of the intervening states. For instance, neither geostrategic nor economic importance can explain the interventions in Somalia or Cambodia. In the latter case, only China had geostrategic interests, but it was a more or less passive observer of the process.<sup>5</sup> By contrast, the intervention in Iraq was certainly not a humanitarian intervention, although we assume that a discourse- and media-centered explanation is at least as revealing as security- or interest-driven explanations. The model we develop in this paper is more specifically tailored to situations in which media-boosted empathy with people outside the constituency of the politicians who decide on investing state resources in a given intervention can be seen as the factor triggering multilevel political processes. Whether Kosovo was really a pure instance

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<sup>2</sup> United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations, List of Operations, 1948-2009, <<http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/list.shtml>>, accessed 12 January 2010.

<sup>3</sup> See Zajadlo (2005: 660) for an instructive overview of various definitions.

<sup>4</sup> Note that our definition focuses on the justifications given by the intervening states. It does not refer to the objective situation of a humanitarian crisis.

<sup>5</sup> There is fairly extensive literature on the limitations of interest-based approaches to foreign policy analysis and on the influence that moral principles have on governmental decisions in various foreign policy fields apart from humanitarian interventions. On development policy, for example, see Lumsdaine (1993) and Noel and Therien (1995). On the discourse about the enlargement of the European Union see Schimmelfennig (2000, 2003). Hasenclever (2001: 15/16) summarizes the influence of moral principles on military interventions. Klotz (1995: 450) explores the change of American policy on the apartheid regime in South Africa. She comes to the general conclusion that "norms independent of material considerations are an important factor in determining state 'policies'" (Klotz 1995: 450), that activists outside of the government structure can play a role, and that members of government are susceptible to moral pressures without acting irrationally. Welch (1993) shows that some modern wars cannot be explained without taking public beliefs into account.

of humanitarian intervention is disputed.<sup>6</sup> In such cases our model can be tested against alternative explanations.

There exist two main approaches for explaining humanitarian interventions. The first one focuses on the changing rules and norms in international law; the second, on the media's role as a catalyst of humanitarian interventions in Western states. According to Finnemore (2003: 52), humanitarian interventions are shaped by law to an ever greater degree. Claims that one is confronting barbarism or behaving in a civilized and morally right way have been accompanied by an increasingly influential international legal net designed to protect human rights. These rationales have therefore been incorporated into a Weberian system of rational, legal authority (Finnemore 2003: 21, Zajadlo 2005). In Rwanda and Kosovo, some authors and state officials invoked a duty to intervene by pointing out that perpetrators became criminals under various conventions. They argue that this shift in the normative environment was a necessary condition for making humanitarian interventions possible (see Finnemore 2003).

The belief in the power of legal norms is undermined by trends like the one described by the former UN Secretary-General, Boutros-Ghali: "For the past two centuries it was law that provided the source of authority for democracy. Today, law seems to be replaced by opinion as the source of authority, and the media serve as the arbiter of public opinion" (as quoted in Strobel 1997: 4). The assertion that law is losing its power to shape political action can certainly be disputed. What brings us to focus much more on the role of the media than on legal developments in international law is our conviction that an explanatory model for humanitarian interventions must be grounded in nation-states. Only by looking into the black boxes of the intervening states can one ascertain where new norms in international law come from and how the behavior of state officials is shaped before and during negotiations on international interventions. In this discussion paper we therefore concentrate on the debate about how the media influence humanitarian interventions.

Discussion of humanitarian motives and the powerful interplay between civil society and the media has been widespread ever since the 1984 famine in Ethiopia and the accompanying images of starvation that were published in the Western media, particularly by the BBC (Benthall 1993, Chandler 2006). This discourse was fueled further by the 1991 intervention in the Kurdish areas in northern Iraq (Shaw 1996), the influential media coverage of tsunami aid (Jones 2005), and the land-mine ban owing

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<sup>6</sup> Some authors argue that legitimacy serves geostrategic interests even in humanitarian interventions. In the case of Kosovo, for instance, Chomsky (1999) claims that humanitarian arguments belied a hidden agenda of Western hegemony. The argument referring to the European neighborhood is often invoked as well.

to the considerable impact of shaming, framing, and lobbying by civil society (Price 1998).

The claim that the scholarly literature of the 1990s largely overlooked the nexus of mass media, public opinion, and foreign policy (Saever 1998: 79) certainly no longer pertains. There now exists abundant literature on the impact that the media can have on political decisions. This relationship is referred to as the CNN effect, named after the CNN news channel, whose wide coverage of the U.S. intervention in Iraq (1991) is said to have influenced the political decisions made in that context. Former U.S. diplomat Rozanne Ridgway calls the news media's ability to stir popular demand for action—be it intervention or withdrawal—by showing pictures of atrocities and suffering people a “CNN curve” (Neuman 1996). Since 1991, the term *CNN effect* has been used to describe the ability of news media to trigger responses by both the broad public and political elites. A common pattern runs through most of this literature, with analysis frequently resting on the assumption of a direct link between mass media and the actions of political elites. As Entman (2000: 21) convincingly shows, media-influenced “perceived public opinion” (perceived by government elites) plays a role. Our inquiry therefore concentrates on the direct link between mass-media representation of humanitarian crises and foreign policy actions taken by the political elite.

Views on the relationship between media and government action differ, however. On the one hand, some observers accept the manufacturing-consent theory, which holds that media largely abides by the frames set by the political elites.<sup>7</sup> Analyzing the news coverage of the Vietnam War, for instance, Hallin (1986) concludes that the headlines changed only when a faction of the political elites in Washington opposed the American involvement in Vietnam. Similarly, Mermin (1999) states that the media often simply reflect the conflicts and struggles within a government. Some authors develop this line of argument further by pointing out the power of government to use and abuse media to its own ends, especially in conflict or post-conflict situations (see Becker and Beham 2006). Strobel sees no evidence that news media are truly “independent movers of policy” (Strobel 1997: 5). They have, according to him, substantial effect under the right conditions, which are “almost always set by foreign policymakers themselves or by the growing number of policy actors on the international stage”

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<sup>7</sup> According to Entman (1993), frames are cognitively stored principles for information-processing that, as formulated by Snow et al., “enable individuals to locate, perceive, identify, and label occurrences” (Snow et al. 1986: 464). They are the basis for explaining and understanding events, often by clearly favoring one reading of an event over another. The interaction among cognitive frames and the collective action that emerges from it are called a *framing process*. Framing can have a great influence on both the individual and on collective perception of decisions and their acceptance (Goffman 1974, Tversky and Kahnemann 1981).

(Cohen 1963, Strobel 1997: 5). In sum, this opinion holds that it is the political elite who ultimately set the news agenda. But even Strobel admits that the policy field of humanitarian interventions and peace operations is particularly susceptible to the media's influence. Wheeler (2000: 300). argues that media only tend to facilitate rather than motivate the political decisions to intervene.

On the other hand, many scholars reject the main assumptions of the manufacturing-consent theory. Shaw (1996) sees the media as having a crucial role in shaping the minds and actions of the decision-makers from the outset. Bahador (2007) shares that view in his detailed empirical and theoretical study of the news media's role during the Kosovo intervention. As Benthall puts it: "An active newspaper system can lead to early and effective intervention by the government. One of the roles of the press is to make it 'too expensive' in political terms for the government to be callous and lethargic" (Benthall 1993: 40/41). Government officials' sense of losing control is a common theme (Livingston and Eachus 1995: 415, Wolfsfeld 1997): Kennan (1993), for example, cites the case of Somalia in December 1992 to highlight the negative effects that can occur when media drive politicians to ad-hoc decisions. In that instance a major push by media that spread images of starving children forced U.S. President George Bush to intervene (see Robinson 1999).

There are different types of CNN effects (Robinson 2002: 37-41). One can distinguish, for instance, between a strong and a weak CNN effect. When the CNN effect is strong, media coverage is seen as a significant factor in influencing policymakers' decisions. It thus contributes to placing and holding an issue on the policymaking agenda. When the CNN effect is weak, policymakers might feel only inclined rather than forced to act. Some authors further distinguish between accelerant, impedimental, and potential effects. Accelerant effects obtain when media speed up a policy process but have not caused it. Impedimental effects are essentially the opposite of the CNN effect. They force the government to reconsider its adoption of an active policy. In principle, potential effects occur when policymakers anticipate media coverage. Robinson (2002: 126) finds that both the type and effectiveness of media effects depend on the type of policy in question. A strong CNN effect is evident in cases of aid relief, troop deployment in noncoercive operations, and air-power intervention. It is less strong in high-risk interventions with ground troops.

We return to these insights and controversies when we conceptualize the connection between the prominence that the humanitarian crisis has in the media of the potentially intervening states and the priority that the government gives this issue on its political agenda. Beforehand, however, we address this aspect and further links in the causal chain that receive much less attention in the literature.

### 3. The Chain of Necessary Steps to Humanitarian Interventions

The previous section's literature on the CNN effect focuses on the link between the humanitarian tragedies and the decision of Western governments to intervene. As already seen, there is a lively academic discourse on the role and the influence of the media in shaping this transboundary link.<sup>8</sup> Another aspect receiving a fair amount of treatment in the literature on humanitarian interventions is the implementation phase, with relevant studies focusing on the quality of the peace agreement and the results of the subsequent implementation (or observation) by international actors (see Doyle and Sambanis 2006, Hampson 2004, Hartzell and Hoddie 2003). Wesley (1997) is probably still one of the best accounts of theorizing about this link. Scholarly attention is still focused almost entirely on descriptive case studies. Some of them are valuable for their comparative approach (see Caplan 2005, Chesterman 2004, IPI 2003), but most of the research deals with failures of implementation and coordination in individual missions (see Cousens and Cater 2001, Smith and Dee 2003, Traub 2000, Yannis 2004).

What is missing in the literature is a fully specified framework encompassing all steps necessary to lead from humanitarian crises to more or less successful humanitarian interventions and subsequent peacebuilding operations.<sup>9</sup> We sketch such a comprehensive framework by focusing on analytical links that have been neglected so far.

#### 3.1 The Complete Chain of Necessary Steps

A comprehensive framework includes a variety of arenas. First, there is the space of the humanitarian crisis with its conflicting parties. The second arena is the domestic sphere of the countries that can provide the intervening forces—the “TCCs,” or troop-contributing countries in UN jargon. It is only for analytic purposes that this arena is thought of as a single distinct arena. In reality, it consists of many domestic arenas. Next, there is the international (and supranational) arena, in which the representatives of the nation-states and representatives of international organizations discuss the

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<sup>8</sup> For conceptual discussions on these and other transnational phenomena see Zürn (1998) and Ecker-Ehrhardt (2007) among others.

<sup>9</sup> In a comprehensive overview of the literature on the policy cycle of humanitarian intervention and peace operations (see Junk 2006, Junk and Blatter 2007), we have focused on five core themes: “foreign policy debates and decision-making processes in intervening states,” “legitimacy of intervention and the principle of sovereignty,” “preventive diplomacy and peace agreements,” “decision-making processes at international organizations,” and “international performance during the implementation phase.” We have identified three interlinked shortcomings. First, the different policy levels are treated as disconnected. Second, the field of study lacks detailed, theoretically guided literature on these interdependencies. Third, theories of media and information-based dynamics pertaining to the implementation phase are widely neglected at the international level.

humanitarian crisis and decide whether and how to intervene. The overlap between the domestic and the international arenas contains our model's core analytic element, the window of opportunity. Lastly, the transnational arena represents an intermediary space in which nongovernmental actors can try to link the various arenas and to influence the processes within them. The boundaries between the transnational arena and the others are porous and fuzzy, for the transnational arena is by nature linked and intertwined with the national and international ones. Specific actors can have a hybrid character; they can be strongly anchored in a specific nation-state but can aim to transcend national boundaries and to transmit information across various arenas. Furthermore, the boundaries of the transnational arena are flexible. The ones drawn in figure 1 represent our starting hypotheses.

Figure 1 contains the entire chain of necessary steps and linkages from the recognition of a humanitarian tragedy by the media of the developed world to the impacts of the humanitarian intervention. However, only the main links and directions of causality are highlighted. Feedback loops (such as one between a government's agenda and media attention), and the "interventions" of peace entrepreneurs are not yet included (although they are mentioned in the text). The figure also illustrates that the main causal links do not involve the transnational arena. Nevertheless, the location of the boundary between the transnational arena and the other arenas may be regarded as a hypothesis. If the transnational arena plays a larger role than we assume, then we would have to push the boundary "outwards." That change would amplify the transnational character of the media attention given to the humanitarian crisis and would increase the directness of the link between media attention and the window of opportunity (as implicitly assumed in the literature on the CNN effect). Our information- and communication based framework rests on the assumption that the causal chain from a humanitarian crisis to a humanitarian intervention courses through the domestic arenas of nation-states. However, transnational peace entrepreneurs can help overcome the inevitable structural bottlenecks in such a long causal chain, and media can be affected by and can report on transnational phenomena, channeling them into the domestic arena.

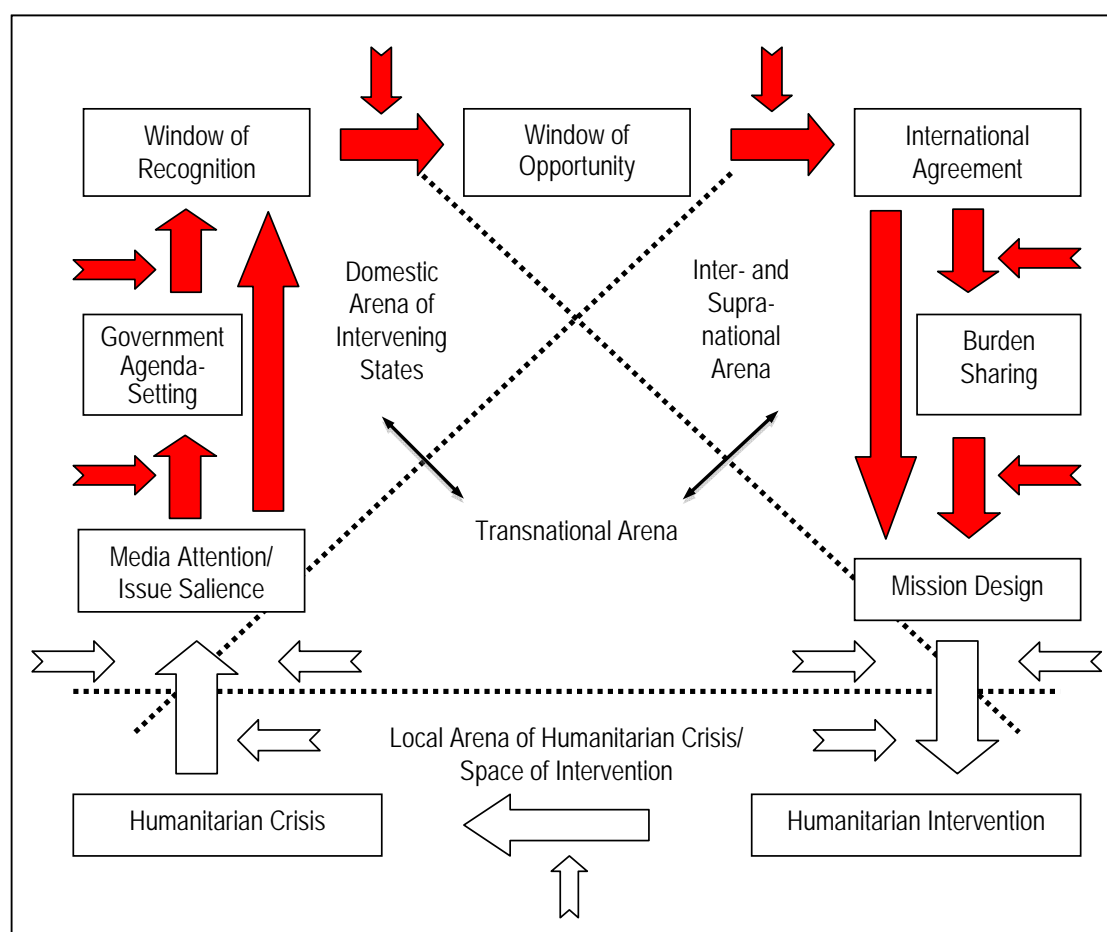


Figure 1. The causal chain of humanitarian intervention.

Our framework contains all the steps usually necessary when the international community reacts to a humanitarian crisis by means of a humanitarian intervention. The first necessary step is that the media in the potentially intervening states become aware of the humanitarian crisis. Many factors influence whether the media attention focuses on events in far-off places and makes a humanitarian tragedy a salient issue in domestic discourses. Our starting assumption is that the logics of the media system foster such intense domestic attention that the resulting discourse pressures the government to put a distant crisis on its agenda. The stimulus for a governmental response to a humanitarian tragedy usually comes from the beyond the borders of this given country. There are, however, several domestic factors that determine whether this stimulus translates to a high governmental priority on addressing a humanitarian crisis and leads the government to recognize its moral duty to intervene. The next step is to acknowledge that states willing to intervene usually cannot do so alone. The governments that are necessary for an intervention in a crisis must therefore be compared for

their willingness to take that action. If enough governments are willing to intervene in the crisis, we speak of a window of opportunity. We carefully delineate the factors influencing its contours and deduce what those contours mean for the possibility and substance of an international agreement to intervene. A window of opportunity is a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition for an international agreement. Supra- and international factors, too, determine the likelihood and content of such agreements.

This international agreement, in turn, shapes the following steps linking the international level with the place of intervention in terms of what is to be done and when. First, the provisions of the international agreement bear greatly on the mandate, resource allocation and, hence, the institutional design of an international effort like a full-fledged peacebuilding mission. The success or failure of humanitarian interventions largely hinges on their characteristics and the degree to which a constant influx of the necessary resources is accepted in both the place of intervention (on problems with spoilers in the post-conflict area: Stedman 1997) and the intervening states.

### 3.2 Chains of Necessary and Sufficient Causes for Explaining Specific Outcomes: Some Methodological Considerations

Our theoretical model rests on the logic of causal chains (Goertz and Levy 2007) and causal conjunctures (Pierson 2004), which are forms of “configurational thinking” (Ragin 2008: 109-123) that combines temporal succession and the asymmetrically deterministic ontology and epistemology of necessary conditions (Goertz and Starr 2003). Because we are interested in explaining the rather rare instances of humanitarian interventions, we are searching for the causes of specific effects rather than the effects of specific causes (Brady and Collier 2004).<sup>10</sup> This approach is especially warranted because we seek to combine theory building and theory testing with case-study research. Causal chains and causal conjunctures are the most adequate understandings of causation for case-study research based on the tracing of causal processes (George and Bennett 2005). Nevertheless, we do not generally follow the inductive approach of tracing causal processes but rather the more deductive logic of congruence analysis (Blatter and Blume 2008), for we first develop a theoretically consistent multilevel model for explaining the outcome. Many diverse implications can be logically derived

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<sup>10</sup>For our research purposes, we find these expressions much more helpful than those in the German methodological literature. The corresponding distinction by Scharpf, for example, is “backward reasoning” and “forward reasoning” (Scharpf 1997: 24-27). The use of Scharpf’s terminology would be confusing in the context of this discussion paper and, in particular, of its basic figure 1. Moreover, Ganghof’s (2005) notions of “x-centered” and “y-centered” research designs are strictly covariational and provide no adequate guidelines for case studies based on tracing causal processes (Blatter et al. 2007: 124).



from this model and compared with the empirical evidence in specific cases. The more consistency there is between the theoretically derived assumptions and the empirical evidence, the more credible this theoretical framework is for explaining humanitarian interventions and their absence.

Our analytical model (see figure 1) refers only to structural factors (e.g., levels of media attention). However, we introduce agency later into this concept and consider how peace entrepreneurs can influence each condition in the causal chain and thereby help overcome structural obstacles. They do so by creating attention, opening windows, and facilitating international agreements. They might even be able to bridge specific segments of the causal chain, divesting them of their status as a necessary condition. For example, a foreign minister might for personal reasons set a humanitarian crisis on the agenda of his or her government although the media has not paid much attention to it. If this official can convince ministerial colleagues to actively pursue an international agreement to intervene, then a window of recognition in that country will have opened without media glare. In this case media attention would have thereby lost its status as a necessary condition in the causal chain, but epistemologically the change would still resemble a deterministic understanding of causality.<sup>11</sup> Within the causal chain of necessary factors, media attention as a structural factor would be supplanted by an agency-based factor.

#### 4. Specifying the Links between Agenda-Setting and International Agreement

In this section we seek to develop and inspect a conceptual model for analyzing humanitarian intervention. This model focuses on the linkage between the domestic arena of the potentially intervening states and the international arena in which an agreement to intervene has to be reached. The connection between these two entities is crucial to carrying out humanitarian interventions, yet it has been neglected in the literature on this field of international policy.

##### 4.1 Intermestic Politics—From an Interest-Based to an Information-Centered Approach

To develop our analytic model, we use Putnam's 1988 article on two-level games as a guiding template. In that work Putnam presented an explanatory model that systemati-

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<sup>11</sup> The ontological/theoretical foundation of this paper is social constructivism. The epistemological/methodological basis, however, is positivism. As Blatter et al. argue with reference to the study of Tannenwald (1999): "a 'constitutive' understanding of ideas and norms can indeed be modeled as sequences of causal mechanisms and then empirically studied by means of causal process-tracing" (Blatter et al. 2007: 161, our translation).

cally takes account of the interdependency between domestic politics and international negotiations. Because his and similar models have been useful in deducing logical, empirically testable predictions, they have stimulated a broad, sophisticated field of empirical and theoretical research (e.g., Keisuke 1993, Mo 1995, Schoppa 1993).

Our aim is to provide a similarly systematic account of the interplay between the domestic and the international arenas of humanitarian interventions. To do so, we must transform Putnam's interest-centered approach into an information-centered one because, as shown in the foregoing sections, it is the media's recognition of a humanitarian crisis that likely influences a government's activity in this policy field.<sup>12</sup> We call our conceptual model "information-centered" because we draw strongly on the agenda-setting concept of Jones and Baumgartner (Baumgartner and Jones 1993, Jones 1994, Jones and Baumgartner 2005) when conceptualizing our model of the domestic level and its consequences for the international level—intermestic policymaking. Unlike approaches based on discourse theory the information-centered account concentrates more on the salience, or weight, of an issue in public discourses and on the government's agenda than on the "valence," values, or preferences relating to the issue. Whereas discourse analysis focuses on the content of discourses (see Oppermann and Viehriig 2009), the important thing to us is how much attention an issue receives in public discourse. In addition, such an information-centered approach takes the roles of institutions and individual action much more into account than purely structuralist concepts do. Lastly, the logical rigor behind theoretical reasoning of this kind makes it easier to develop a theory-led research agenda and to develop clear hypotheses.

In this section we show that our model links the domestic and the international levels in a way similar to that in Putnam's concept. We briefly introduce the concept of window of recognition as the functional equivalent to the win-set in Putnam's approach and show that within an information-centered approach the window of recognition at the domestic level determines the international interactions in a similar way as the win-sets do in an interest-based account. Furthermore, we point to the main differences between Putnam's model and ours. In the following subsections we spell out the various elements of our model and generate an initial set of hypotheses about the links in the causal chain that lead from the recognition of a humanitarian crisis to an international agreement to intervene.

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<sup>12</sup> By contrast, Putnam's approach is the one best suited to the field of economic policy. The key empirical example Putnam uses to illustrate his model is the 1978 Bonn summit, at which the major industrialized countries agreed on a comprehensive package deal on economic policy. The literature building on his approach has indeed mainly to do with economic issues (see Hosli 2001, Paarlberg 1997).

Within an interest-based approach the policy preferences of domestic groups serve as the logical starting points for the analysis. State governments play a dominant role because they are gatekeepers positioned between the domestic and the international arenas. As Putnam puts it:

At the national level, domestic groups pursue their interests by pressuring the government to adopt favorable policies, and politicians seek power by constructing coalitions among those groups. At the international level, national governments seek to maximize their own ability to satisfy domestic pressures, while minimizing the adverse consequences of foreign development (Putnam 1988: 434).

The core of such a model is the concept of a win-set, which is defined as “the set of all possible international agreements that would ‘win’—that is, gain the necessary majority among the constituents—when simply voted up or down” (Putnam 1988: 437). Putnam goes on to clarify why the contours of the domestic win-sets are critical for understanding international agreements:

First, larger win-sets make international agreements more likely, *ceteris paribus*. [...] The second reason why win-set size is important is that the relative size of the respective domestic win-sets will affect the distribution of the joint gains from the international bargain (Putnam 1988: 438-440).

His article thus focuses mostly on the determinants of the domestic win-set, giving special attention to the domestic preferences and coalitions, to the domestic institutions, but also to the strategies of government negotiators at the international level.

Because the window of recognition has similar consequences for the possibility and substance of international agreements, its role in our information-centered approach is just as important as that of the win-sets in an interest-based approach. We define windows of recognition as all the moments, or the time span, when an international agreement to intervene would be recognized as adequate and legitimate in the public discourse within the domestic media system and would therefore allow the government to sign and commit itself to such an agreement. In the following subsection we explain what determines the contours of windows of recognition and how it affects international agreements. But first, we must clarify the main differences between win-sets and windows of recognition.

The first main difference is the fact a win-set is a preference- or valence-centered concept, whereas a window of recognition is a priority- or salience-centered one. Win-sets are determined by the preferences of domestic actors. One usually conceptualizes these preferences primarily by taking into account the valence that actors attach to an issue, with valence being defined by Putnam as the preferred positions within a one-

dimensional space of potential outcomes (Putnam 1988: 446). By contrast, the windows of recognition are determined first by the salience of an issue—i.e., the attention that the issue receives within the media discourse and, hence, the priority it is given on the government's political agenda (see Wlezien 2005). Later on, the other aspect can always be factored into extended versions of these concepts, but the main focus of the two explanatory concepts is distinct.

A second important difference between our model and Putnam's two-level game is the fact that, in our model, the ultimate stimulus for activity is located outside the domestic and international levels, which form the focus of our theorizing. The place of potential intervention entails a third level, and the link between it and the domestic level of potentially intervening countries has to be taken into account. However, for many governments, the stimulus might not come directly from the places of the humanitarian crises but rather from the fact that other governments have put the issue on the international agenda.

As a third difference, it is important to realize that the concept of the window of recognition is connected to a theory of recognition as opposed to the theory of ratification in Putnam's rationalist approach (1988: 435). Within an information-centered approach, it is not the formal requirement to ratify international agreements that limits the leeway of national governments in the international arena but rather the case that the commitments articulated by the national governments must be recognized as adequate and legitimate within the domestic public discourses.

A fourth key difference is that we accept complexity and institutional differentiation in both the domestic and the international arenas. In other words, we do not take it for granted that an international agreement will be reached immediately after all national governments have a window of recognition allowing them to commit themselves to a humanitarian intervention. In our model this situation merely opens a window of opportunity, and we can identify some important intervening factors that help determine whether the window of opportunity is really used to reach an international agreement.

A final notable difference between our model for analyzing humanitarian intervention and Putnam's two-level-game for international negotiations concerns the location and specification of agency. With Putnam, only the national governments are able to overcome structural blockage, for they exploit their gatekeeper position between negotiation arenas at the domestic and international levels. Our model has more linkage points at which policy entrepreneurs can try to overcome structural impasses. Moreover, the activity of the policy entrepreneurs does not center on exploiting information asymmetries between levels and arenas but rather on facilitating, strengthen-

ing, linking, and synchronizing information flows. The ability to function as a policy entrepreneur stems less from formal roles (as it does in the interest-based approach) than from the capacity and willingness to generate, link, and frame information flows.

#### 4.2 The Theoretical Foundation of Windows of Recognition

Like Putnam, who systematically inquires into the variables influencing the win-sets, we highlight the factors shaping the window of recognition. As Putnam states, “[a]ny testable two-level theory of international negotiations must be rooted in a theory of domestic politics” (Putnam 1988: 422). It is logical, then, that he starts with a theory on the power and preferences of the main actors at the domestic level.

It makes little sense to do the same, however, when designing a theoretical model tailored to the field of humanitarian interventions. After all, from an interest-based perspective it is puzzling why a government should invest in risky activities when neither the security nor the material interests of its constituency are at stake. We propose to begin instead with a theory in which the aspect of “attention” takes center stage. This kind of theory has been developed by Jones and Baumgartner (Baumgartner and Jones 1993, Jones 1994, Jones and Baumgartner 2005) who dwell on the question of governmental agenda-setting. Agenda-setting is the “process by which information is prioritized for action, and attention allocated to some problems rather than others” (Jones and Baumgartner 2005: viii/ix).<sup>13</sup>

Jones points out how this approach differs from the interest- or preference-based approach used by game theorists like Putnam:

In the agenda-setting approach, information is viewed as inherently ambiguous, so that there is a very important role for leadership and policy entrepreneurship in the framing of issues to garner support for a policy position. That is, the manipulation of information plays a key role in forcing governmental attention to problems. Because attention can shift rapidly (especially in comparison to preferences), policy action can also shift very rapidly. In preference models, information is viewed as neutral and costly, and hence sub-

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<sup>13</sup> There is abundant literature on agenda-setting. Defined in the most basic terms, agenda-setting is the identification of a policy problem in a policy cycle. Many scholars (e.g., Cobb and Elder 1972) distinguish between systemic agenda (discussion agenda) and institutional agenda (action agenda). We do not use that terminology in this study but do emphasize that an issue does not always automatically result in action once it is recognized by relevant actors. The agenda-setting process involves certain sets of conditions, and an issue can lead to nondecisions despite having been recognized or discussed (Bachrach and Baratz 1963). Other researchers (e.g., Shepsle and Weingast 1987) deal with agenda-setting as a source of power by looking at first-move advantages. We refer to these insights when exploring burden-sharing arrangements at the end of the detailed discussion of our causal chain. Still other scholars (Cobb et al. 1976, Gerston 2004) inquire about the locus of policy initiation (e.g., outside initiative, inside initiative, and mobilization) and about the agents (e.g., public officials, bureaucracy, mass media, or interest groups) who took the initiative with varying degrees of success and failure.

ject to the laws of declining marginal returns. To the extent that attention is important in these models, it is treated as a transaction cost. In agenda models, information primarily causes heightened attention to an issue, and attention to an issue carries with it a valence [...] That is, information is never neutral in the policy process, and that is why it is so fundamental (Jones 1994: 23).

Policymakers and political systems do process the flood of information—detecting signals in their respective environment, prioritizing them according to their relevance and urgency, and producing public policy based on them—but they do so disproportionately. Because of their “bottlenecks of attention” (Jones and Baumgartner 2005: 50) and the bounded rational nature of their cognition, they overestimate and neglect issues. Based on “the cognitive limits of decision-makers and formal and informal arrangements of groups of decision-makers [...], the serial model of d]isproportionate information-processing leads to a pattern of extreme stability and occasional punctuations, rather than either smooth adjustment processes or endless gridlock” (Jones and Baumgartner 2005: 5).

Three aspects of Jones and Baumgartner’s concept are central to our understanding of the domestic “recognition” of a humanitarian crisis. First, humanitarian crises compete with other issues for attention and priority in domestic public discourse and the government’s agenda. Second, changes in attention and priority do not take place gradually but rather in punctuated equilibriums. Third, the priority of an issue on the government’s agenda is important because even governments with a differentiated structure and large bureaucracy must focus their activity on the most pressing issues. We do not go as far as Jones and Baumgartner, who claim that “attention can be directed at only one problem at a time” (Jones and Baumgartner 2005: 44).<sup>14</sup> But we do follow them in assuming the existence of a threshold that determines whether a government must actively address a given issue, can afford to ignore it, or can process it on the sidelines with no major decision taken.

We diverge in two main ways from the concepts of Jones and Baumgartner. First, we take the role of the media into far greater account than they do, attributing the bottleneck of attention less to government than to the media. Linking our model to the insights into the “CNN effect,” we distinguish between the attention that the humanitarian crisis receives in the media (media salience) and the priority it gets on the government’s agenda. Nevertheless, our starting hypothesis is that great media salience is translated directly into high priority on the government’s agenda. It is borne out by the findings reported by Jones and Baumgartner (Jones and Baumgartner 2005: 249-273).

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<sup>14</sup> Jones and Baumgartner (2005: 39) base their assumption on the limited attention span of an organization’s leadership.

They substantiate the high correspondence between an issue's salience in the media and the level of attention it is given in parliament and legislation.<sup>15</sup> Our starting assumption is visualized in figure 1. More specifically, we assume that media salience of humanitarian crises leads to high governmental priority on addressing those situations, but we acknowledge that the relationship between media salience and priority on the government's agenda is not as unidirectional as it seems in figure 1. Indeed, governmental control of the media agenda is probably a central factor determining whether a window of recognition emerges.<sup>16</sup>

Second, recognition, the first stage within a full-fledged model of individual and organizational decision-making, figures even more prominently in our model than in the work by Jones and Baumgartner (Jones and Baumgartner 2005: 33/34). We start with the assumption that recognition of humanitarian tragedies is immediately linked to a necessary solution to the problem: the need to intervene and stop the suffering. Emotional pictures of suffering people are pivotal in pushing the media salience of an issue; and in theories of behavioral action, emotions are connected to binary codes of immediate reaction and activation (Schnabel 2005). Nevertheless, the government's choice to become active in solving the humanitarian crisis is influenced by normative preferences as well (meaning, in the field of humanitarian interventions, the relative weight of state sovereignty and human rights as competing values). We take this valence-related dimension of information-processing and decision-making into account when we conceptualize the threshold that leads to governmental activity. Stated differently, the salience of an issue in the media depends only on the cognitive aspect (i.e., whether the issue is recognized as important), but the concept of a threshold also takes account of the normative dimension (i.e., whether a specific response, a humanitarian intervention, is normatively appropriate, morally imperative, or both).

### 4.3 The Contours and Determinants of the Window of Recognition

We can distinguish two factors on which the window of recognition for humanitarian interventions depends:

- the political salience of the issue (S), which is measured in terms of the attention that the humanitarian crisis receives in the mass media and which usually translates into the corresponding priority on the government's agenda.

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<sup>15</sup> We stress, though, that correspondence is not causality! There is continuous debate on whether the media drives the government or whether government framing strongly influences the media.

<sup>16</sup> We return to this when we spell out the chief factors determining the contours of the window of recognition.

- the threshold (T), which determines the moment when it is possible and appropriate for a government to pursue an international agreement to intervene.<sup>17</sup>

A window of recognition is open during all those moments when  $S - T > 0$  (see figure 2). It is therefore primarily defined by the factors of the vertical dimension of the figure. Nevertheless, the term *window* points to the importance of “time,” which forms the second, horizontal, dimension of the window of recognition. The moment when a window of recognition opens is what we call *the point of recognition* (A), and the moment when the political salience of the humanitarian issue drops below the threshold is the *point of reorientation* (B). The size of the window of recognition is therefore defined by its width ( $S - T$ ) and its length, i.e., “duration” ( $B - A$ ). We later additionally hypothesize the existence of a point of denial (C) to explain why the window of recognition might stay open beyond B. The point of denial is the moment when a government not only turns its attention to other issues but also shifts its normative stance and denies the adequacy of a humanitarian intervention.

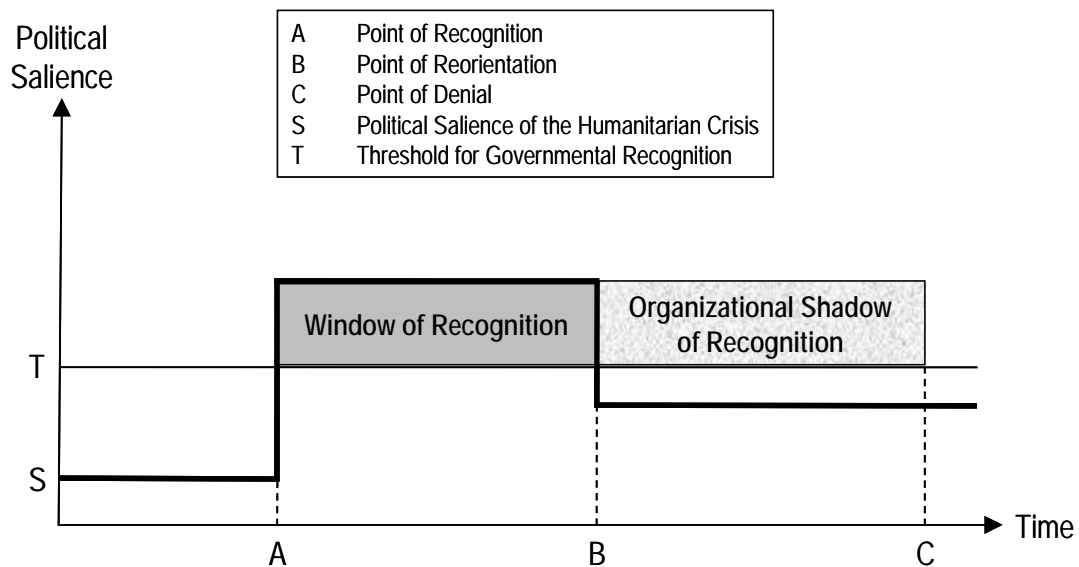


Figure 2. *The window of recognition.*

Although the two dimensions are not conceptually symmetric and not equally important (for the temporal dimension depends on the other dimension), both have their own specific consequences at the international level. From the size of the window of rec-

<sup>17</sup> Jones and Baumgartner define a threshold as “a value for a problem-space attribute that implies policy actions when it is exceeded” (Jones and Baumgartner 2005: 45).



ognition, we can deduce logical consequences for the interactions at the international level, but first we elaborate on the factors that influence S and T.

There are three primary factors determining the salience of the humanitarian crisis in the media (S), as summarized in figure 3:

- (1) *the magnitude of the humanitarian crisis and, even more important, the availability of dramatic pictures that make the suffering of people in distant places visible to the people in the countries that can potentially intervene.* These images produce a kind of moral imperative for the government to promote a humanitarian intervention. That is, we hypothesize that the strength of the “signal” reaching the domestic media system is an initial determinant of S, but this strength is mainly shaped by the kind of signals and only secondarily by the events from which the signals originate.
- (2) *the “filter” that determines which signals are placed on the agenda of the domestic media system and which form they take there.* The more liberalized and internationally oriented the media system is, the more likely it is that the humanitarian crisis will receive a great deal of attention. Conversely, the more the domestic media system is government controlled, locally oriented, or both, the less attention is likely to be allocated to humanitarian crises, other things remaining equal. This hypothesis derives from the argument that a government normally uses its control to deflect attention from issues that might force it to become involved in risky activities, especially when its constituencies have little to gain. Of course, it is possible, albeit structurally unlikely, that governmental actors will use their control over the media to increase the salience of the humanitarian crisis. We address this matter in a later discussion about the role of political entrepreneurs.
- (3) *the “crowdedness” of the agenda.* Our model is informed by the fact that the attention given to humanitarian tragedies is contingent on what else is happening at the same time. Scarcity of attention makes an issue’s salience a function of both its own newsworthiness and the journalistic attractiveness of other, concurrent events. But the momentary competitiveness of an issue or an event is not the only important factor determining the amount of attention it receives. The salience of a humanitarian tragedy builds also if it fits into a broader framework that dominates public discourse for a lengthy period. Current examples are humanitarian crises with an interreligious aspect, which lend themselves more easily than other issues to the highly salient discourse on the relationship between the Christian West and Islam.

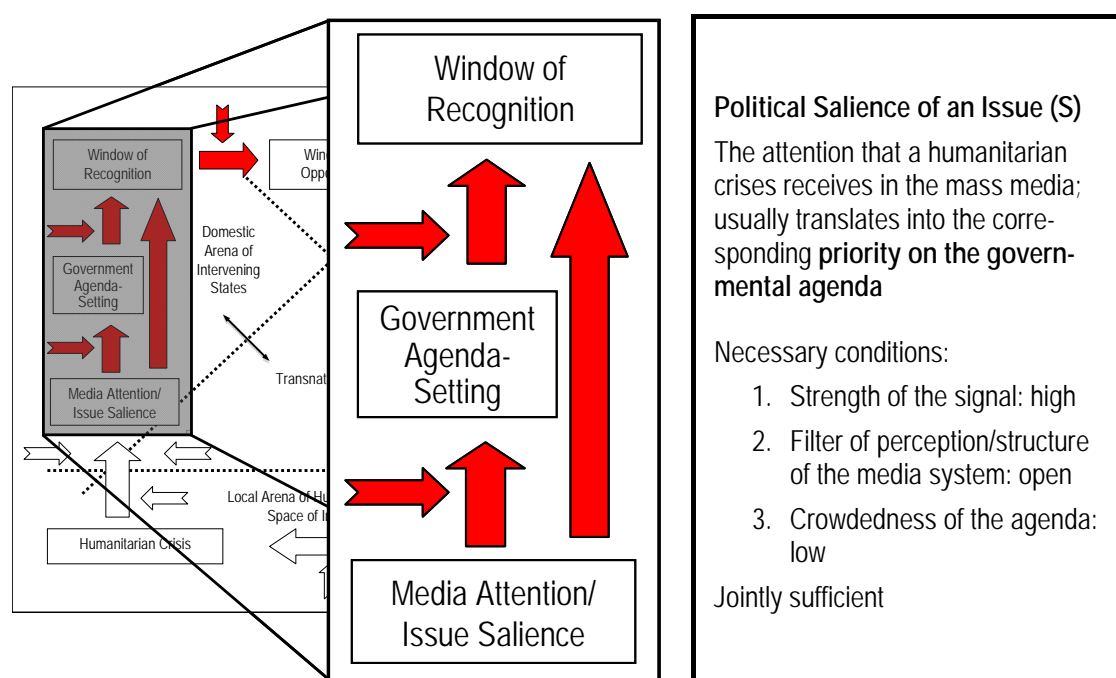


Figure 3. Governmental agenda-setting: The political salience of an issue.

The threshold (T) determines when the government must recognize a humanitarian crisis as an issue that demands governmental activity and when it must support an international intervention. T is influenced strongly by the following three factors, as summarized in figure 4:

- (1) *the relative strength of the value that provides the normative underpinning for humanitarian interventions and of the value that restricts the willingness to intervene in foreign countries.* In domestic discourses in which the value of human rights is clearly seen as more important than state sovereignty, we expect a low threshold. In domestic discourses in which the value of state sovereignty takes precedence, we expect a high threshold. When both values are strongly present in the domestic public discourse, the values and ideologies of the government determine whether it recognizes the duty to intervene.
- (2) *cultural attitudes within a country.* Countries can tend toward an isolationist or an interventionist attitude. Furthermore, they can have a strong record of humanitarian activities abroad (as is the case in the Scandinavian countries and Canada) or may have little or no record in that respect. In other words, we not only take the current public discourses into account but also assume that these discourses in the domestic media system are embedded in national cultures and shaped by long-standing attitudes and traditions.

- (3) *the institutional factors, especially the institutional differentiation of the government.* A differentiated organization is better able to process more issues in parallel than a monocentric organization. Even when the humanitarian crisis is not accorded the highest priority on the government's agenda, it might still be addressed by a specialized part of a differentiated government.

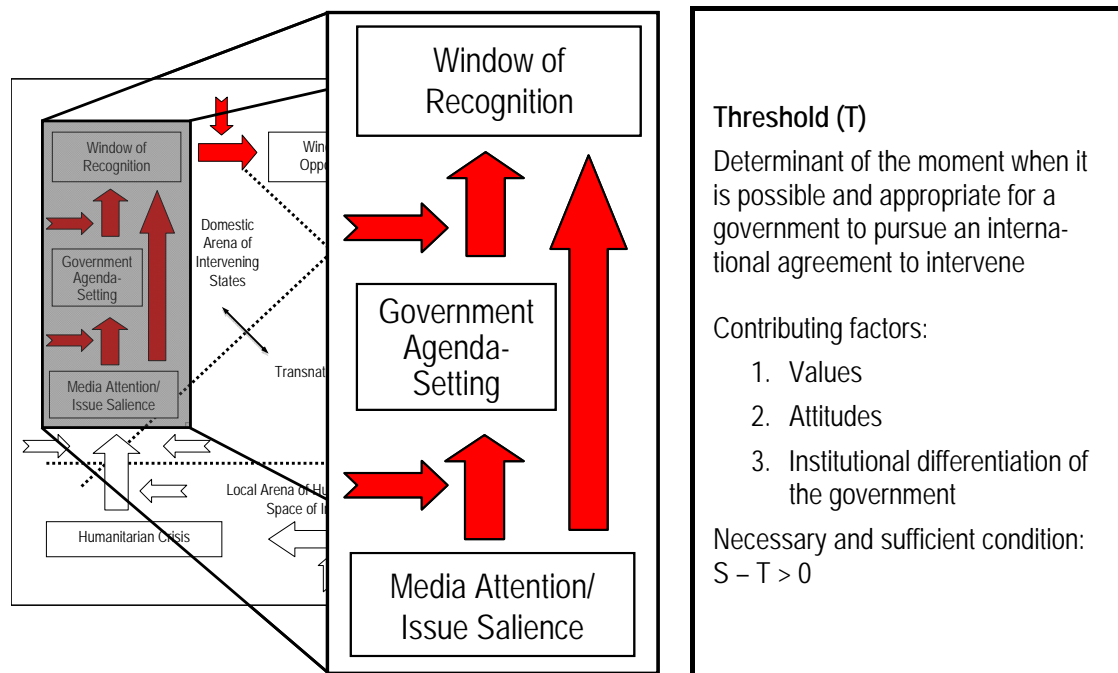


Figure 4. *The window of recognition: Threshold for government action.*

These factors tend to change slowly over time and might explain differences between countries. Nevertheless, there are also factors that can produce more short-term threshold changes. A change in government, for instance, might bring about a fundamental change in the attitudes of the rulers (e.g., a president or a parliamentary majority) to the issue of humanitarian intervention. It is up to empirical research to ascertain the degree to which the ideological orientation of the ruling leader or parties is able to block or filter the public opinion expressed in the media. The starting assumption in our model is that an idealistic or moralistic ruling party or leader results in a lower threshold of activity than do leaders whose foreign policy rests on realist or interest-based foundations.

Another factor that might lead to short-term changes in the threshold of an active government response to a humanitarian crisis is a specific kind of learning process. Recent experience, especially that perceived as failure, can accelerate attitude change.

The change can go in either direction, with abortive intervention soon raising the threshold and nonintervention soon lowering it if the public has framed the omission as evidence of its own government's moral weakness. For example, the fateful experience of the United States in Somalia has arguably undermined the U.S.'s readiness to intervene in Rwanda.

We now turn to the temporal dimension of the window of recognition. A purely information-based model would equate the period during which a window of recognition is open with the total duration of the moments when the salience of the humanitarian crisis is above the threshold of activation ( $B - A = S - T$ ). An important advantage of the model by Jones and Baumgartner (2005) is that it integrates institutional knowledge into the approach centering on information-processing. We take into account the fact that modern government consists of an institutionally differentiated apparatus allowing bureaucracy to follow up on an issue that has lost the attention of the politicians. We therefore expect a "time lag," a phenomenon that expands the window of recognition beyond B to C (see figure 2).

We call this time lag an *organizational shadow of recognition*, and it has substantial impact on the likelihood that an international agreement will come about. The organizational shadow of recognition is contingent on what is actually happening at the point of reorientation (B). The political leadership of a government may reallocate its attention to another issue because another important event or crisis is emerging. In that case the bureaucracy will continue to work toward an international agreement, provided the new issue does not completely absorb the relevant parts of the bureaucracy. Because the very purpose of a bureaucracy is to implement political decisions after they have been made, it is a natural counterweight to the short-term logic underlying the politics of attention. There might also be other effects prolonging a window of recognition into an organizational shadow of recognition. First, a government could stand to lose its reputation or some of its trustworthiness in subsequent negotiations if it has committed itself to the process of humanitarian intervention either publicly or at the negotiation table. Second, one could assume that a forum of negotiation creates its own agents either in a subordinate bureaucracy or in an institution like a presidency, both of which tend to continue pursuing an item once it is on the agenda.

However, such an organizational shadow of recognition is not always likely. A given point of reorientation may not be the result of an issue's reduced salience (S) and corresponding lower relative priority on the government's agenda. Instead, it may be that the threshold for government action (T) was raised by a change that brought to power a coalition having a different normative orientation. The government might no longer recognize a humanitarian intervention as an appropriate response to the

humanitarian crisis and might therefore cease efforts to reach an international agreement. In this case, one should not assume that a longer window of recognition will result from any time-lag created by the bureaucracy.

Before assessing the size of the window of recognition for its effects at the international level, we summarize our discussion about domestic windows of recognition by deducing three possible positions that they will probably lead national governments to take at the international level. In doing so, we take the structural context of national governments into account (but not yet their ability to function as peace entrepreneurs):

- (1) When  $S - T$  is clearly positive, we assume that the government is functioning as a promoter of humanitarian interventions in the international arena.
- (2) When  $S - T$  is low or zero, we assume that the government is taking a neutral position.
- (3) When  $S - T$  takes on a negative value, we assume that the government is against a humanitarian intervention and, functioning as an obstructor, is trying to block an international agreement.

#### 4.4 The Consequences That Windows of Recognition Have for the Windows of Opportunity

In this section and the following one, we examine the structural consequences that the size of the window of recognition has for the processes at the international level. Let us first consider the window of opportunity (see figure 5).

Like large win-sets in interest-based approaches, large windows of recognition (including the potential organizational shadow) increase the likelihood of reaching international agreements on humanitarian interventions, other things remaining equal. Such a formulation of the hypothesis emphasizes the conceptual symmetry between our argumentation and the interest-based two-level game approach. Nevertheless, given our methodological stance (see section 3.2), it makes sense to reformulate the hypothesis in the language of necessary and sufficient conditions. The temporal overlap of windows of recognition (i.e., a window of opportunity) in all states, which must agree on a humanitarian intervention, is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for reaching such an international agreement.

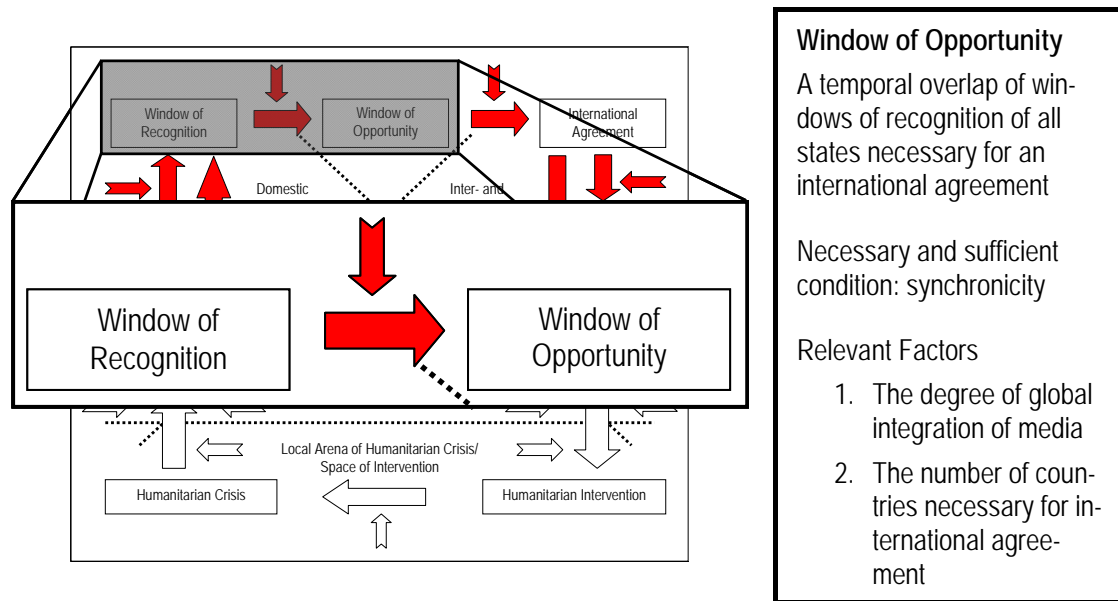


Figure 5. The window of opportunity in the causal chain.

Figure 6 highlights the fact that the existence of a window of opportunity depends solely on the length and on the synchronicity of the windows of recognition, not on their width (which is relevant in other respects, as we will show). If we assume a decision-making rule to which all relevant governments have to agree at the international level (not taking political entrepreneurship into account), it does not matter how wide open the window of recognition is for all other governments. If just one of these relevant governments has no open window of recognition, then no window of opportunity exists. It is therefore appropriate to conceptualize causality in the deterministic language of necessary and sufficient conditions.

In contrast to the original, interest-based model, our conceptualization takes time systematically into account. Whereas the length of windows of recognition in individual states has a major impact on the length of the window of opportunity (this is important for the next step in our causal chain), the synchrony determines whether a window of opportunity opens up at all. This characteristic of our model allows systematic testing of assumptions and hypotheses about the global integration of the mass media and the transnational nature of communicational processes in international politics. If the reporting media is indeed globally integrated, we would expect a high synchrony in windows of recognition (and therefore more often the existence of windows of opportunity).

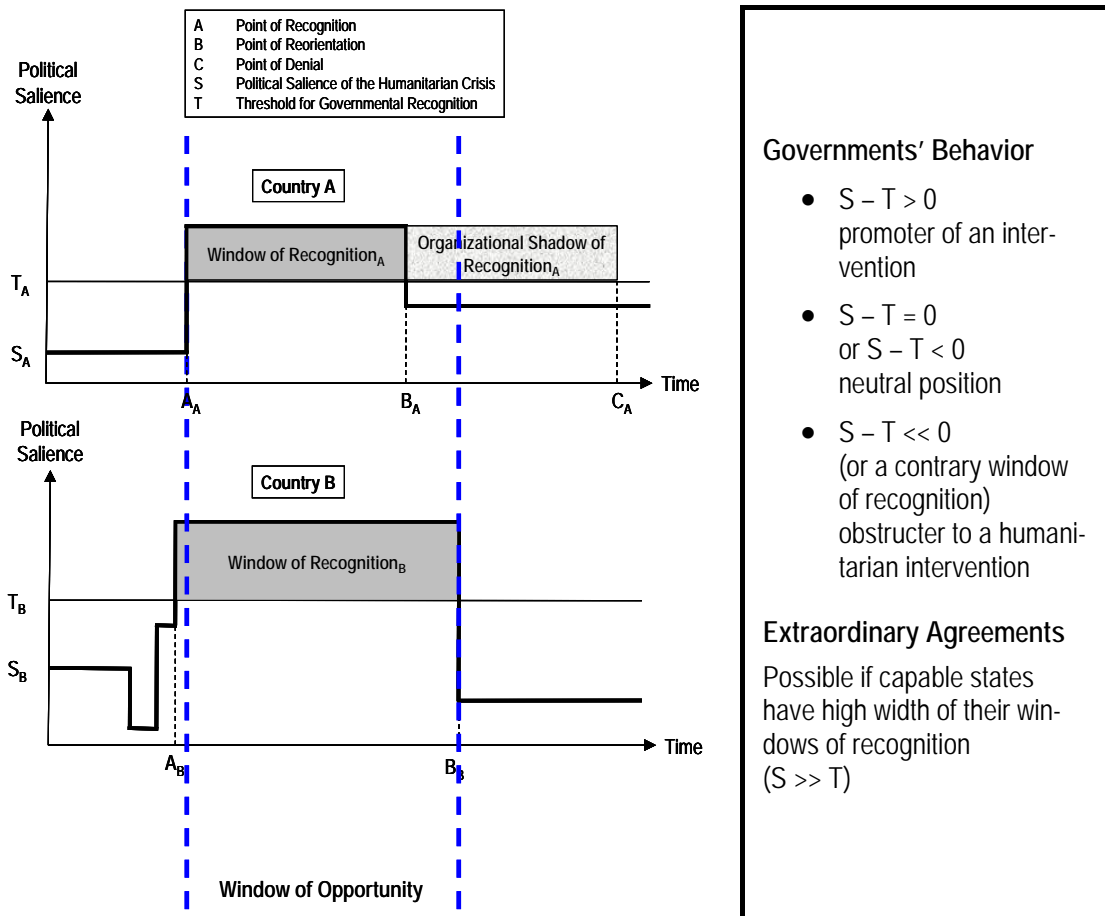


Figure 6. The window of opportunity.

Once a window of opportunity opens, an international agreement might be reached—but not necessarily, as elaborated in the next section. The windows of recognition have consequences not only for the negotiations on an international agreement but also for burden sharing among states. This feedback loop between strategies of national governments and their domestic windows of recognition in the later stages of deciding upon a humanitarian intervention is analogous to the one in Putnam’s (1988) model.

#### 4.5 The Consequences That the Windows of Recognition Have for International Agreements and for the Burden-Sharing Arrangements Between States

As in interest-based approaches, the number of states necessary to reach an international agreement for a humanitarian intervention must be taken into account. The more countries that are required (because of the decision-making rules in the international arena or because of the resources required by the intervention), the more difficult it is to reach an agreement, other things remaining equal (see figure 7).

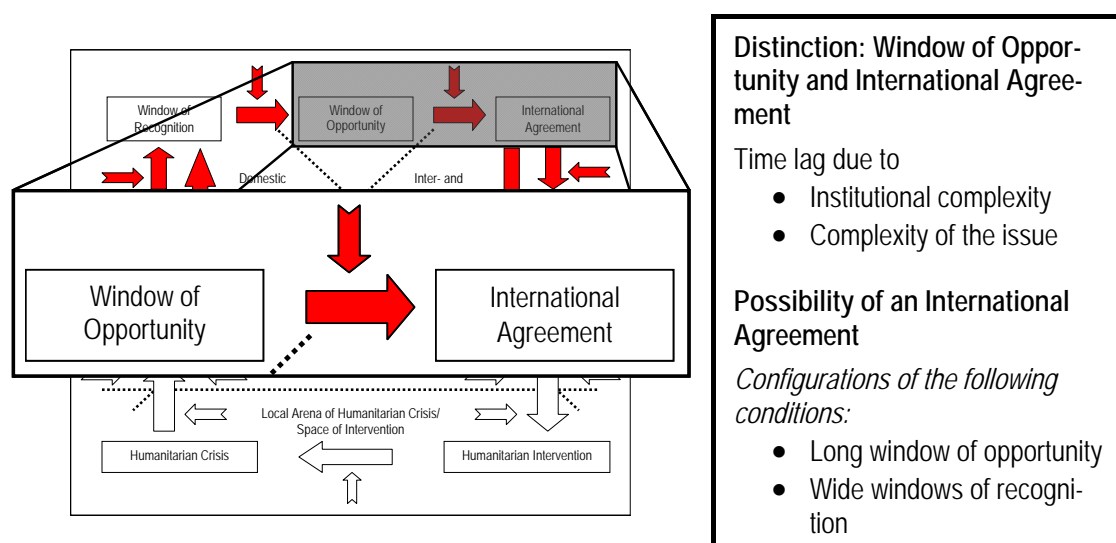


Figure 7. Towards an international agreement.

The existence of a window of opportunity is a necessary, but not sufficient, precondition for an international agreement to be reached. There are at least two reasons why a window of opportunity does not immediately lead to an international agreement.

- (1) *Structural rules and institutional complexity.* There might be a time lag if the decisive institutional body (in our case, the United Nations Security Council) cannot immediately address an issue, whether because of diverse rights of initiative, routines of presenting evidence, or, most important, due to informal arrangements of the drafting groups and coalitions. Long decision-making chains, too, might delay an international agreement.
- (2) *Complexity of the issue.* The more complex the issue at stake is, the more difficult it will be to reach an agreement. The greater the number of technical details there are to clarify and the more compromises one must find (often across cultural boundaries), the longer it will take to consult within negotiation groups and to locate the necessary technical expertise.

Within our model we identify two factors that determine whether these hurdles can be overcome and whether a window of opportunity will really lead to an international agreement. The first factor is the length of the window of opportunity. The window of opportunity must be long enough for the participating actors to process the necessary information, exchange arguments about the proper legal bases and other matters, come to an agreement, and work out the details of the intervention mission. If a window of opportunity closes after only a short time, it will be difficult to find adequate support for the international agreement even if the agents at the international level have



already started working on it. As with the window of recognition, the consequences depend on why the window of opportunity closed. If one or more governments have not merely lost interest in the issue but have even come to oppose the international agreement after reassessing the issue, the prospects for an international agreement are meager.

The second factor determining the ability to forge an international agreement is the width of the windows of recognition. The higher the sum of the windows of recognition (the sum of the distances  $S - T$ ) of the involved states, the higher the overall willingness to invest not only in the intervention but also in the decision-making process that leads to the international agreement creating legitimacy for the intervention. Furthermore, at least one government must have a wide-open window of recognition in order to actively promote an international agreement for a humanitarian intervention. Otherwise, nobody will invest in the decision-making process at the international level. Note that a wide-open window of recognition can lead to an agreement even if the window of opportunity is brief.

As demonstrated by the decision of the Western countries to intervene in Kosovo without the consent of the Security Council, it is nevertheless possible to change the arena for an international negotiation process and to search for an international agreement within, for instance, regional organizations or “coalitions of the willing.” Our model is able to identify one prerequisite for such an extraordinary agreement: a wide-open window of recognition ( $S \gg T$ ) in most of the potentially intervening countries. If this condition obtains, then the pressure on those governments to find an agreement might be so high that they will decide to circumvent the veto power of reluctant countries within the UN Security Council even if it means foregoing the legitimacy that this forum provides.

The widths of the windows of recognition are relevant for more than just opening a window of opportunity; they greatly determine the strength of the intervention and, thus, of the peace operation. The wider the windows of recognition, the greater the resources the governments may be willing to provide and the clearer the wording of the underlying mandate might be. Governments that have a narrow window of recognition might support an intervention (or at least they might not try to block it), but they are probably not prepared to contribute as much to the mission as those governments with a wide window of recognition.

In our model, state governments are just as ambivalent about large windows of recognition as they are about large win-sets in two-level negotiation games. The result of large windows of recognition is similar to that of large win-sets. Not only do those countries with an early and wide window of recognition have to shoulder the major

transaction costs of the international negotiations, they might also have to bear most of what it costs to implement any resulting agreement. The greater the willingness to invest the greater the burden a country is expected to bear.

Early—as opposed to wide—windows of recognition need not only mean heavier burdens for the governments, however; they may also lead to advantages at the international level. Governments with an early window of recognition place the issue on the agenda of international organizations. They might also be able to frame it and influence both the discourse and the decision-making procedure at the international level. By exploiting this first-move advantage, governments that act early might be able to pass some of the burdens on to less enthusiastic countries. Figure 8 summarizes the assumptions of the last paragraphs.

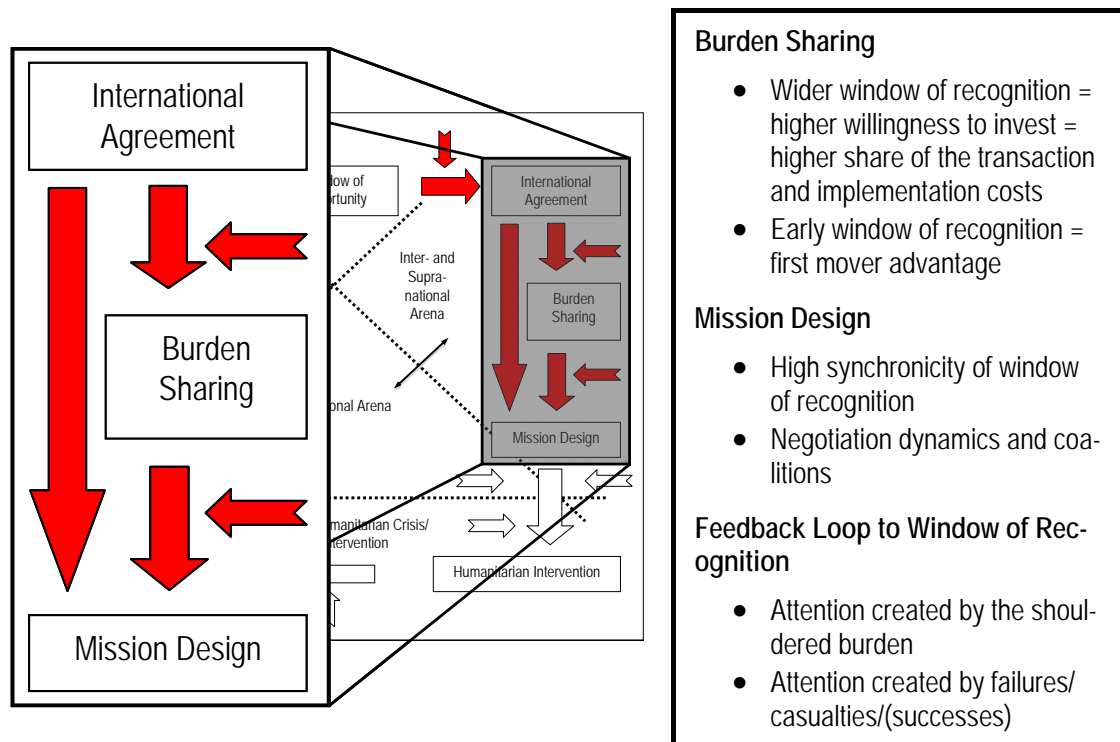


Figure 8. Burden sharing, mission design and feedback loop.

Achievement of an international agreement and burden sharing arrangement points to the design of the subsequent policy, the institutional set-up, and the allocation of human and financial resources. We deduce that extensive overlap (high synchronicity)

of the necessary windows of recognition enhances a hierarchical institutional design<sup>18</sup> because it requires less negotiation of compromises, fewer complex formulas of side payments, and fewer compensations between the relatively homogenous positions of the bargaining partners and the inclusiveness of the sponsoring coalition. High synchronicity increases the room for thoroughly discussing details of the mandate and the planning process, or at least for rapidly making decisions that might facilitate an organization's reaction to an urgent crisis. If synchronicity is low, we assume that an agreement's formulation is correspondingly vague, for it entails compromise formulas and package deals that enable each country to find at least some of its stances incorporated and assures that it or its agents will have a stake in the design.<sup>19</sup> The implication is that low synchronicity results in a rather nonfunctional and heterarchical design. Correspondingly, we expect high synchronicity to lead to comparatively streamlined or functional responses with presumably clear hierarchical arrangements.

Like Putnam (1988), we conceptualize the interplay between the domestic and the international arenas as true interdependence, not a one-way street. Hence, feedback loops leading from the decision to intervene, the negotiated mission design, and the implementation of that design to the domestic windows of recognition are likely. This expectation follows the logic we have outlined for the opening of these windows and is a function of the salience (S) and the threshold (T). If one government invests heavily or deploys troops, or if the implementation phase has discouraging or encouraging signs of how the international community is performing to end the humanitarian crisis, the domestic audience might be alerted positively or negatively. In other words, if a strong signal exists in the media on the burden sharing arrangement or on the performance of a peace operation, and if the crowdedness of the agenda allows for media and government attention, then we expect a window of recognition to open for or against the given decision on a humanitarian intervention and expect the government to re-engage at the international level.

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<sup>18</sup> There are many typologies of institutional designs. We adopt the most common distinction—that between the ideal-types of hierarchy and heterarchy (see Junk 2006). Hierarchical characteristics denote a vertical pattern of organization based primarily on explicit, centralized, and highly structured relations of social rank and social control (Roberts and Bradley 2001: 4/5). The strategic managerial level is prominent (see Thompson 1967: 11), whether because of a key function performed by one organization (e.g., an office like the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the UN) or because of a lead nation that commands the intervention forces or exerts authority on the civilian side. Heterarchical settings denote a horizontal structure of social connection that is decentralized, network-like, fluid, and transitory. It is based on mutual links between discrete more-or-less autonomous entities at the operational level (Thompson 1967: 12). To assess whether an institutional design is closer to the heterarchical or the hierarchical extreme, it might be useful to think in the analytical dimensions of centralization, formalization, and complexity.

<sup>19</sup> This assumption holds that conflicts unsolvable during the design phase are often shifted to the implementation level (Junk 2006: 20).

The threshold (T), by contrast, may not be influenced as easily as the salience (S) of an issue. However, a traumatic experience can lead to changes in the normative bases and the attitude a given country has toward isolationism or noninterventionism—we outlined this when discussing T. Body bags like the ones the United States had to send home from Somalia, for instance, might abidingly affect the behavior of countries. Or election cycles and changes in a government's composition might bring about rare upheavals (as when José María Aznar was replaced by José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero as Spain's prime minister in March 2004), a fundamentally new approach, a commitment to new values and new attitudes, or a change in the degree of a government's structural differentiation.

Overall, our model allows for the formulation of a testable hypothesis on the influence that the size of windows of recognition has on the substance of an international agreement, on burden sharing arrangements, and on institutional design. We have thereby completed our causal chain of an information-centered two-level process. In the following section, our framework complements this structural analysis by systematically incorporating individual agency as a crucial element for theorizing and understanding humanitarian interventions.

## 5. Expanding and Synchronizing Windows of Recognition: The Role of Peace Entrepreneurs

In the foregoing sections, we have identified necessary conditions for the conclusion of an international agreement on a humanitarian intervention as a response to a humanitarian crisis. First, the crisis in a foreign country needs to gain attention in the domestic media of potentially intervening states. Second, the crisis must be recognized by the government as an issue that demands governmental activity. Third, for the creation of a window of opportunity, the windows of recognition resulting from the two preceding prerequisites necessary for reaching an international agreement on intervention must be open in all countries. Fourth, at least one country must strongly commit itself to the humanitarian intervention (and no relevant country may be strongly opposed). This engagement will encourage investment in the international decision-making procedures so that the window of opportunity can really be used to forge an international agreement. We have also identified a variety of intervening factors that affect the size and synchronicity of the windows of recognition.

Conceptualizing these steps as necessary conditions in a causal chain and examining each link's contextual factors make a humanitarian intervention seem hardly possible if no integrated global media system exists which synchronizes the public discourses within the nation states. Whereas this is the case in the Western world, this

assumption certainly does not hold if we take countries like Russia and China into account—countries which usually have to accept an international agreement to intervene. This leaves us with the puzzle why some international interventions have taken place against all odds. In others cases, at least a few of the causal chain's prerequisites were met even without the existence of the conditions outlined in this discussion paper or of those needed for an interest-based (preference- and valence-centered) explanatory approach. This discrepancy leads us to introduce individual agency as an intervening factor that can help explain why certain actions have been taken despite the initial absence of favorable structural conditions. By complementing structural features with agency, we are fully in line with Kingdon's (1984) understanding of windows of opportunity. Not only are actors necessary in order to pursue the options within open windows, they can try to influence the size and synchronicity of windows and thereby attempt to overcome structural obstacles to humanitarian interventions. That is, their activity encompasses both recognizing and creating opportunities.

In our causal model, actors who are committed to a humanitarian intervention and who try to overcome structural barriers are the peace entrepreneurs defined at the outset of this discussion paper. Entrepreneurs are actors who go beyond their formally assigned roles. A diplomat who is not just trying to maximize or defend the interest of his or her government is such a person. So is a journalist who pursues an investigation more persistently than is demanded by the logic of the short-cycle media system and its editors. Another example is a celebrity who uses his or her fame to direct attention to political issues. A conceptualization of peace entrepreneurs that is consistent with our attention-focused model is conveyed less by Kingdon's utilitarian idea of policy entrepreneur<sup>20</sup> than it is by conceptualizing them as being driven by intrinsic motivation and the search for social recognition.<sup>21</sup> A final, key characteristic of a peace entrepreneur in our model is the fact that he or she connects different arenas through communication. Functionally, a peace entrepreneur connects arenas that are separated by institutional or communicational structures.

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<sup>20</sup> Kingdon defines policy entrepreneurs as "advocates who are willing to invest their resources—time, energy, reputation, money—to promote a position in return for anticipated future gain in the form of material, purposive, or solidary benefits" (Kingdon 1984: 179). According to Kingdon, these entrepreneurs possess three characteristics: (a) some claim to a hearing, (b) political connections or negotiation skills, and (c) persistent pursuit of their aims (Kingdon 1984: 191/192).

<sup>21</sup> "Policy entrepreneurs, like leaders anywhere, are not motivated solely by the rewards that will stem from the policy itself; they also seek the recognition that stems from accomplishment and enjoy the intrinsic rewards of fighting the good fight" (Jones 1994: 25). In general, scholars of international relations have widely recognized the concept of entrepreneurship as referring to "transnational moral entrepreneurs" (Nadelmann 1990: 482) or "norm entrepreneurs" (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998: 896-899).

This conceptualization of peace entrepreneurs allows us to identify and systematically integrate two strategies that they can apply in the described policy process (see figure 9): first, they can widen windows of recognition within individual countries by strengthening signals. Second, they can synchronize windows of recognition among countries in order to create a window of opportunity.

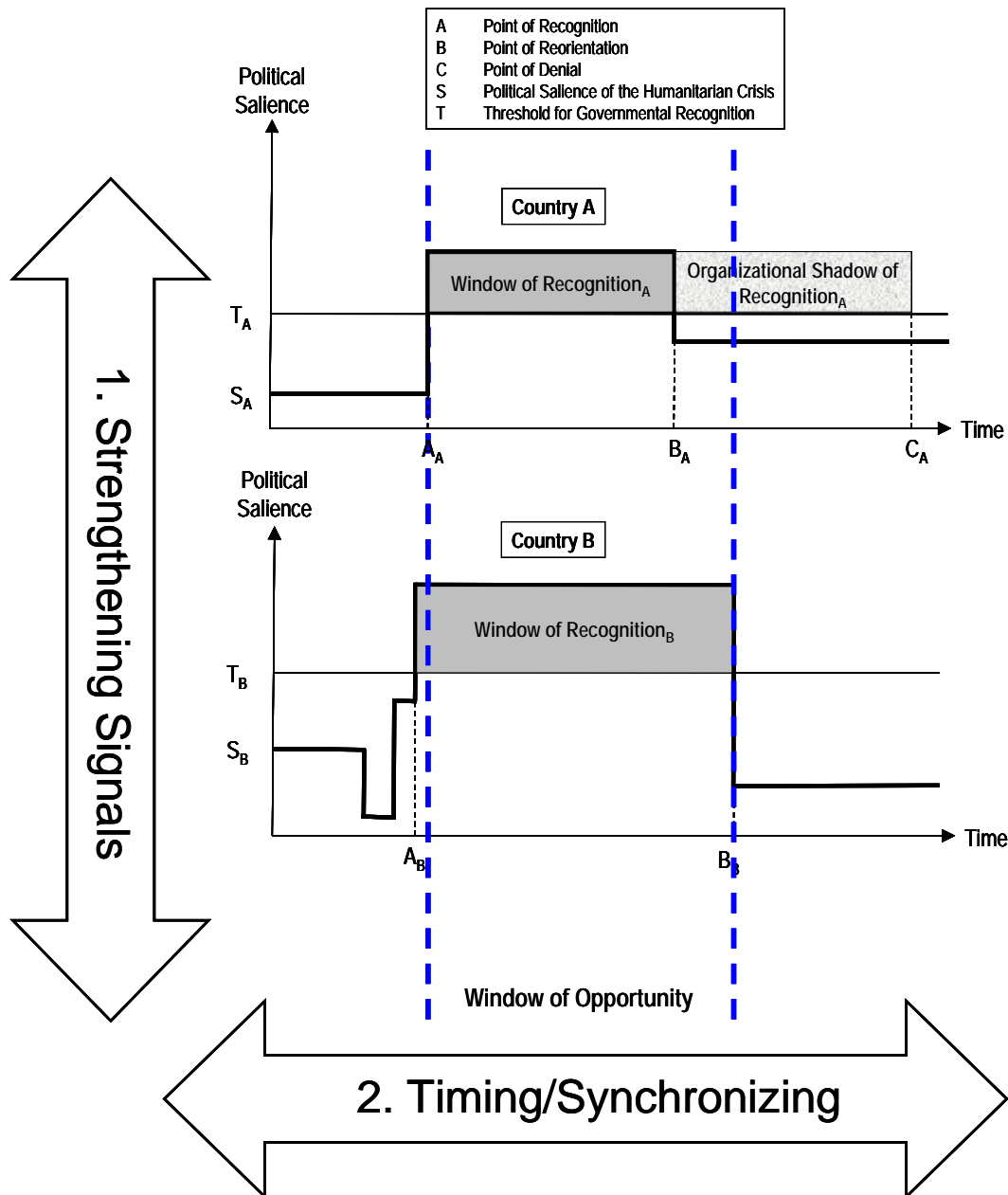


Figure 9. Main strategies of peace entrepreneurs.

As for the first strategy, we have systematically elaborated on the factors that influence the width of windows of recognition within potentially intervening countries. These factors allow us to specify the functions of peace entrepreneurs and to identify elements beyond the confines of any strategic attempt to facilitate humanitarian interventions.

Peace entrepreneurs can try to strengthen the “signal” that transports images and narratives of a given humanitarian tragedy into the domestic sphere of potentially intervening countries. Peace entrepreneurs can also reduce the degree to which media outlets “filter” issues that are remote from the audience. For example, the features of such filtering were present in the process that led to the U.S. government’s surprisingly strong reaction to the humanitarian tragedy in western Sudan (Darfur). At first, Western countries were predictably reluctant to become involved in the humanitarian crisis, and their media coverage was scarce, for most of them had no strategic interests at stake and reporting from Darfur was (and remains) very hazardous. Nevertheless, grassroots movements within the United States launched a massive media campaign, creating and reinforcing signals that raised awareness of the crisis in Sudan. The organization “Save Darfur” succeeded well at attracting media’s attention. Journalists such as Nicholas Kristof of *The New York Times*; activists and scholars from International Crisis Group, Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch; and diplomats like Juan Mendez, the former Special Advisor to the United Nations Secretary-General Annan, were persistent in reporting and documenting the failure of the Western states to take action in Darfur (Grono 2005: 625). As a result of the U.S. media’s growing attention to these crises, the administration of George W. Bush addressed the issue and started to promote international action. Both President Bush and his secretary of state at the time, Colin Powell, used the word *genocide*, which generally implies the urgent obligation to intervene internationally. Shortly thereafter, Powell and the-then national security advisor, Condoleezza Rice, traveled to Darfur. The United States increased its aid contributions to the area and abstained from the UN Security Council vote on the International Criminal Court’s (ICC) referral of Sudanese suspected of involvement in the atrocities—an extraordinary step for an administration that had hitherto staunchly opposed the ICC (Grono 2005: 627). Hence, evidence is strong that peace entrepreneurs were able to set an issue on the public agenda and impel action by the U.S. government although no U.S. domestic interests were at stake and no convincing link could be made between the Darfur tragedy and U.S. national security.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Some factors that affect the width of both the window of recognition and the window of opportunity (e.g., the crowdedness of the agenda) are comparatively unreceptive to initiatives by individual or collective peace entrepreneurs. They depend more on the overall agenda of a government and on the

As for the strategy of synchronizing windows, we emphasize that windows of opportunity for an international agreement depend on the synchronicity of windows of recognition in *all* countries that are necessary for intervention. This aspect sets our framework apart from rational institutionalist ones which underline governmental strategies to search for international forums that reduce the number of veto players (e.g., by transferring the international agreement from the UN to NATO) or for package deals between governments. Our framework highlights the role of communicational structures and strategies as mechanisms for opening up windows of opportunities. It stresses the transnational connection between domestic arenas rather than the international and intergovernmental arena, as is the case with Putnam's (1988) multilevel-game approach. Within a communication oriented and transnational approach we distinguish between a structural and an agency-based way of explaining the synchronization of windows of recognition. With the structural approach one assumes that a global media system exists to the extent that national and transnational media outlets conform to criteria in their prioritization and framing of issues. (The media outlets need not have a global ownership or audience.) The greater the presence of a homogeneous global media system, the less independent the discourses and agenda-setting processes within the domestic arenas. In other words, the transnational arena encroaches on the domestic arena (see the small arrows at the permeable boundaries in figure 1). However, our framework questions whether transnational structures are as relevant as some scholars suggest. By introducing peace entrepreneurs, we accentuate the agency-based approach, in which one assumes no such homogenization of the media. Instead, it traces strategic, media-focused attempts to use a window of recognition in one country to create windows of recognition in other ones.

The Darfur case illustrates this role of peace entrepreneurs. Whereas the humanitarian crisis in Darfur has opened up windows of recognition for the governments in all Western countries, it has not done so in China. The absence of these windows in China owes partly to the press's lack of independence there and partly to the priority that that nation places on the principle of national sovereignty and economic considerations. China has blocked all attempts of the Western states to press the Sudanese government into accepting vigorous international intervention in Darfur. Again, there is strong evidence that peace entrepreneurs have been crucial in at least partially over-

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track record of earlier or parallel humanitarian interventions than on the activities of peace entrepreneurs. The U.S. policy in Bosnia and Rwanda, for instance, was strongly influenced by the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Somalia. Similarly, the commitment shown in the Kosovo crisis (1999) was shaped by a cry of "never again" after the traumatic events in Srebrenica (1995) and Rwanda (1994).



coming this impasse. The salience of the Darfur crisis for the Chinese government dramatically increased, for example, when Mia Farrow, Hollywood actress and a UNICEF goodwill ambassador, described the situation in Darfur as “The Genocide Olympics,” a reference to the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing.<sup>23</sup> She also cautioned film director Steven Spielberg, who had been appointed as artistic director for the Games, that he could “go down in history as the Leni Riefenstahl of the Beijing Games” if he failed to urge the Chinese government to put pressure on Sudan. Mr. Spielberg did not reply directly to the comparison with the Hitler-glorifying German filmmaker. However, he did write to Chinese President Hu Jintao “in the spirit of the Olympic Games themselves,” asking China “to change its policy toward Sudan and pressure the Sudanese government to accept the entrance of United Nations peacekeepers to protect the victims of genocide in Darfur” (S. Spielberg, personal communication to Chinese President Hu Jintao, April 2, 2007).<sup>24</sup>

The various activities of the celebrities were not lost on U.S. politicians. In May 2007 the chairman of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Tom Lantos, and 107 other members of the House of Representatives, signed a letter to Hu in which they expressed their grave concern about the atrocities in Darfur. The signatories explicitly linked the situation in Darfur with China’s influence on the government in Khartoum and warned the Chinese president that “it would be a disaster for China if the [Olympic] games were to be marred by protests, from concerned individuals and groups, whom [*sic*] will undoubtedly link your government to the continued atrocities in Darfur, if there is no significant improvement in the conditions.”<sup>25</sup> Moreover Lantos said “if China fails to do its part, it risks being forever known as the host of the ‘Genocide Olympics.’”<sup>26</sup>

These examples make it obvious that peace entrepreneurs use open windows of recognition in one country to push for recognition in another country. Both Spielberg and Lantos were surely defending or strengthening their social standing in the U.S. when they approached the Chinese government. Our model leads us to assume that Spielberg was more influential than the other interlocutors because he was known in China, too, and was expected to play an important role in the Olympics. In a rational intergovernmental approach, by contrast, Lantos would be seen as the more important voice because the Chinese government certainly recognizes that a chairman of the

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<sup>23</sup> Mia Farrow in an article published on March 28th, 2007 in the *Wall Street Journal*, p. A17. Also available online from <[http://www.miafarrow.org/ed\\_032807.html](http://www.miafarrow.org/ed_032807.html)>, retrieved March 2010.

<sup>24</sup> Retrieved 25 May 2009 from <[http://media.npr.org/programs/atc/features/2007/jul/spielberg\\_letter.pdf](http://media.npr.org/programs/atc/features/2007/jul/spielberg_letter.pdf)>.

<sup>25</sup> Retrieved 26 May 2009 from <[http://foreignaffairs.house.gov/press\\_display.asp?id=345](http://foreignaffairs.house.gov/press_display.asp?id=345)>.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

House Committee on Foreign Affairs is an influence on the win-set in intergovernmental negotiations.

We do not know exactly why China finally altered its position in the UN Security Council, paving the way for the first international intervention in Darfur (the deployment of a hybrid mission under the auspices of the UN and the African Union). The mission's weakness and China's continued obstruction of Western attempts to end the tragedy in Darfur may well be due to the fact that short time-span peace entrepreneurs were able to use the 2008 Olympic games to prod the Chinese government into putting Darfur on the government's agenda. This group has been unable to shift the attention of the Chinese media or change their perception, for they are still strictly controlled by the government. They preferred instead to influence the international media's pressure on the government directly. As implied in our model, this pressure was brief and resulted in only a very narrow and short window of recognition in China.

In interest-based accounts of multilevel games, national governments play the dominant role because they link domestic and the international negotiations. In our information-centered approach, the important actors are those able to connect events and issues in different arenas at different levels and able to attract attention to these linkages. Journalists, celebrities, politicians, and diplomats can perform this task—but only if they combine their status with innovative communication strategies.

## 6. Concluding Remarks

This discussion paper has developed a theoretical concept that systematically identifies the interdependencies between domestic, international, and transnational political arenas in the process that leads to a humanitarian intervention. Our model, with its focus on the role of information and its structure as a chain of necessary causes, helps detect the structural bottlenecks that exist in this process. It shows that a globally integrated media system would be a helpful—but not necessarily sufficient—condition for overcoming many of these bottlenecks. Furthermore, the model helps to identify and to specify two basic strategies—strengthening signals and synchronizing attention—by which individual actors, whom we call peace entrepreneurs, can overcome the many hurdles encountered on the way to a humanitarian intervention.

We intend to use the model as an analytic framework to guide empirical research and plan to encourage others to do so as well. The two major functions of the model are (a) to draw attention to the causal chain's crucial links that lead to a humanitarian intervention and (b) to identify theory-based mechanisms that facilitate or hinder humanitarian intervention.

Time and timing are important in our model. The tracing of causal processes is therefore an especially appropriate analytic technique that can be applied in case studies in order to test the model's usefulness for understanding and explaining specific cases. A theoretically based and internally coherent approach generates predictions not only about the final outcome of a political process but about all its elements. Within specific cases one can test whether the processes evolved as predicted (Blatter and Blume 2008, George and Bennett 2005). In order to align ontology and methodology (Hall 2003) we suggest using congruence analysis and causal process tracing as methodological approaches for studying the politics of humanitarian interventions. In order to contribute to theory building, these techniques need consistent theoretical frameworks—one of which we developed in this paper.

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