

Chapter 1

Introduction

INTRODUCTION

Conflict within a nation state is frequently accompanied by a humanitarian crisis. Internally displaced persons, hunger, disease, and other maladies conspire to tear the fabric of a society apart. While the first instinct of many in the international community is to help, that help can lead to trouble. Human interaction is highly complex yet our capacity to make sense of it all is limited. This state of affairs frequently causes the world community to stand by and let the upheaval take its course, and only then attempt to pick up the pieces of a broken society if things work out poorly. Even in the best case, the provision of aid has the potential to prolong the conflict. We cannot readily forecast the outcomes of intervention because our top-down models have difficulties dealing with the complex interactions associated with these types of events. Bottom-up approaches are not necessarily any better at prediction, but they do have the capacity to provide insights into the interaction of the variables involved in complex humanitarian interventions; much like a flight simulator allows a pilot to try various procedural options when presented with a system failure.

BACKGROUND

The international community has become more attuned to the number of complex humanitarian issues developing throughout the world (United Na-

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tions General Assembly Resolution 52/167, 1998). This is particularly true in parts of the developing world where civil war or some other driver of civil strife overwhelms the region's capacity for emergency response. When this occurs, the international community feels obligated to act as stated in a series of Guiding Principles contained within the United Nations General Assembly resolution 46/182 (1992):

The magnitude and duration of many emergencies may be beyond the response capacity of many affected countries. International cooperation to address emergency situations and to strengthen the response capacity of affected countries is thus of great importance. ... Intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations working impartially and with strictly humanitarian motives should continue to make a significant contribution in supplementing national efforts. ... There is a clear relationship between emergency, rehabilitation and development. In order to ensure a smooth transition from relief to rehabilitation and development, emergency assistance should be provided in ways that will be supportive of recovery and long-term development. (Annex, p. 50)

MAIN FOCUS OF THE CHAPTER

For this study, the statement above is the operationalized definition of stability: the effort to address complex humanitarian emergencies in a way that supplements and rebuilds the receiving nation's capacity to take care of its citizens. This international effort can include, but is not limited to providing security and development aid, assisting with the establishment or reestablishment of the rule of law and governance, as well as humanitarian assistance.

Policy makers face a conundrum in failed or failing nation states: how to provide humanitarian relief while weaving the torn fabric of a society back together. Humanitarian action alone is rarely neutral. The advance of humanitarian care and supplies frequently frees belligerents to militarize the refugees and continue the conflict on a wider scale. Other times it takes on a "placebo effect" and nullifies the impetus to provide the military or political engagement necessary to address the cause of the strife (Lischer, 2007). Policy makers that lead with military forces acting as humanitarian workers (such as the Provisional Reconstruction Teams operating in Afghanistan) often find they cannot create the stability they hope for due to inadequate security. Lischer describes the military planners' goal as gaining a "force multiplier effect" from engaging in humanitarian operations. This force multiplier effect is quite simply an increase in efficiency; an ability to do

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