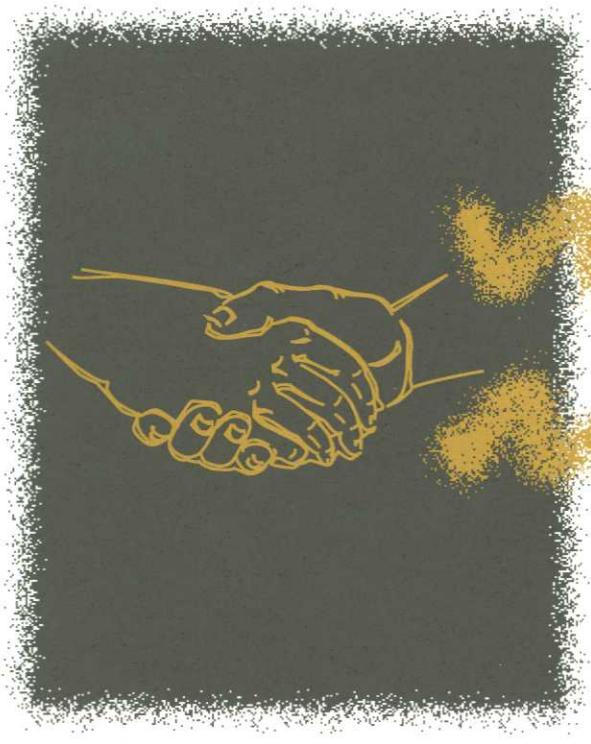

SPECIAL ADDRESS

From Practice to Policy: Triple Transitions and Shattered Paradigms

Reverend Canon Burgess Carr

Yesterday, starting with General Zinni's provocative and stimulating keynote address, we were well served by a series of comprehensive analyses of the experience of military support in complex humanitarian emergencies at the operational level. My task, as I understand it, is to offer some reflections this morning that might facilitate the transition from practice to policy in our discussion.

Now, let me begin by identifying three key policy issues that emerged from yesterday's discussions. First, enhancing the effectiveness of humanitarian systems. Second, managing the interplay between the humanitarian and the political military. And, third, understanding the influence of the media on humanitarian action.

Enhancing the Effectiveness of Humanitarian Aid

Here, I want to pause and ask us to reflect for a while on the strategic shift that has occurred since the end of what was called the Cold War. We speak rather easily about a new world order, but we very seldom stop to come to terms with what that means. In my view, the new world order refers to two things.

First, there has come about a decisive shift in the structure of power in

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the world. The bipolar paradigm has been shattered with the collapse and the shattering of the Berlin Wall. There is now less concern about a cosmic nuclear threat and greater fear of chaos as a source of tension and violence. To quote Dr. Mary Anderson, "Today's wars are fought in people's backyards, between neighbors, some of whom, as in Rwanda or Bosnia or Liberia, might even be related by marriage or by blood." This makes humanitarian emergencies complex indeed.

The second change brought about by what you call the end of the Cold War is a change in the principles of world order—the principle of the nation state or principles that legitimize the nation state. The current phenomenon of collapsed states brings to a close that period that began in 1648 with the Treaty of Westphalia and has been the basic fulcrum of world order for the last 350 years. Now, as a consequence of today's change in the post-Cold War world, there is greater space for humanitarian intervention due to the relativising of the principle of nonintervention in the internal affairs of states.

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I always go back, at this point, to thinking about the situation in Nigeria, which was the first emergency in which I was involved back in the mid-1960s, and how extremely difficult it was in that country for humanitarian organizations, not to mention the UN representatives, to come anywhere near Biafra, or anywhere near areas inside Nigeria where there were people who needed emergency assistance. It took an enormous amount of negotiation with the Nigerian authorities, and, really, it came down only to the kind of person that General Gowon was—he saw himself in the finest traditions of the British Army in terms of sensitivity to humaneness—and the humanitarian law of the Geneva Convention that enabled us to carry relief to those who were needy in Nigeria and in Biafra. In the case of Biafra, it involved having to fly in there at night, and to land on air strips in the dark.

Now, this greater enlarging of space due to the relativising of the nonintervention principle has produced a multiplication of actors in the humanitarian field, both external and internal players.

There are five major external players in any complex emergency: the international organizations, UN and otherwise; governments; NGOs; the International Committee of the Red Cross; and international military, sometimes forces from one country, more often than not a coalition of forces from several countries.

And there are three major internal actors in any humanitarian complex emergency: the government; the insurgents (for example, the Biafrans I was speaking

about earlier); and local institutions. And that could be local NGOs or churches or what have you. The division of labor between these players is key to increasing the effectiveness of humanitarian assistance.

In delegating responsibility and determining models of coordination, answers to seven questions would indicate which actor is the best suited to which task. The first question is, who best responds to life-threatening suffering? Is it the ICRC? Is it the NGOs? Is it the military? Is it a UN agency, such as the High Commissioner for Refugees or the Department for Humanitarian Affairs? That's the first question: who best responds to life-threatening suffering?

The second question: Who best can provide aid when there is outright war raging? Is it the ICRC? Would they be mandated to go in there and deal with people who might be taking prisoners of war, and so on?

The third question: Who negotiates best? The UN? Well, what about the constraints against talking to insurgents? Back in 1971, when I approached the Governor of Sudan to offer my good offices as a churchman and head of the Pan-African Ecumenical Organization to assist in any way I could to resolve the Sudanese problem, it was clear to me in talking with President Nemery and his officials that the kind of conversation we were having we never would have had with any representative from the Organization of African Unity or the United Nations. As a matter of fact, at the end of six to eight months of preparing the negotiations, painstakingly knitting it all together, when we sat down in the Hilton Hotel in Addis Ababa, the government on this side of the table and the rebels on that side of the table, the government objected to even a representative of the Organization of African Unity sitting in as an observer. Because, they said, this is a family affair. So, who negotiates best? NGOs?

Who has the special resources needed to increase the effectiveness of humanitarian aid: manpower, logistics, material and equipment, communications? Everybody will tell you that had it not been for the American military, many, many hundreds of thousands of people would have died in Goma. And, in fact, it was the post-Gulf War military we are talking about--not the pre-Gulf War—because the efficiency and some of the ways in which logistics and the movement of large numbers of forces had been done in the case of the Gulf War had increased the capacity and capability of the U.S. military to respond to something like the Goma episode, much, much, much more efficiently than they would have if they had come five years earlier.

Who has the special resources needed to increase the effectiveness of humanitarian aid? The UN agencies? The High Commissioner for Refugees? You know, the Secretary General usually calls on her first, whether it is for the Kurds or the Afghans or for Bosnia. The UNHCR usually comes out playing the lead agency role.

Another question: Who can best reach those at the grassroots level? Because, you see, people who are contributing to the relief of those who are suffering in these complex emergencies want to know that the money, the good will, and everything that they are investing are going to reach people who need it, and

are not going to end up in some bureaucracy where people are paid fat salaries or people are stealing it outright.

Another question. Who is best able to manage the transition from relief to development? I have been in many meetings in Geneva in the last several weeks as we approach the possibility of a peace in the former Yugoslavia. Ambassador McKinley from the State Department, and Ambassador Johnson, and the ambassadors from the European countries, sit around the table looking at the requirements necessary for post-war reconstruction. And we get into all of the questions related to repatriation of refugees.

And every time you sit down with the generals from Germany to do one of these games, you hear them say it is important to identify who has command, who gives the orders, who determines the policy. We can do anything if we know what it is you want us to do. But somebody has to tell us what you want us to do That is what they tell us every day in Geneva.

So the question is, where should command and control be lodged? Who makes the political decisions? The UN? You see the catastrophes that we lived through in the former Yugoslavia because of the confusion on this as far as the UN is concerned.

These are the questions that I think need to be put to the players to see how we can have the most effective engagement from the many players that are there There are no easy answers to any of these questions No one institution is universally best suited to any given task The UN, governments, the military, NGOs—international and local—each has an indispensable role to play in humanitarian action.

Managing the Interplay Between the Humanitarian and the Political-Military Actors

Two issues surfaced yesterday in our discussions. The first is the importance of understanding the structure and relationships between humanitarian policies and programs. Again, Goma

A number of NGOs in Goma decided they would pull out They could not, in good conscience, carry out relief programs in the context where the perpetrators of the genocide were the primary beneficiaries of international concern for those who were the victims. A clear clash in policy between what the people on the ground feel deeply about and what the policy-makers on the boards—in Monrovia California or wherever the headquarters of the relief agency is—tell them ought to be the practice.

The second thing that came out yesterday related to this interplay between the two—humanitarian and the military—is the role of the military in the humanitarian sphere What exactly is the role of the military in the humanitarian sphere? Let me use three paradigms to illustrate

First, in the Cold War years, humanitarianism, we heard, was subordinated to political-military goals and demands.

Second, humanitarian action was seen sometimes to be a substitute for political action. That was clearly the case in Nigeria, back in the 1960s. And in the beginning of the conflict, that was also the case in the former Yugoslavia.

And, third, humanitarian action in partnership with political-military action—working in parallel together, but not separate from each other. This is the model I suppose ICVA has sought to develop through the channel of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and its programs for emergency assistance to Rwanda: to locate a cell within UNREO (the U.N. Rwanda Emergency Office) to manage and facilitate coordination among NGOs, between NGOs and the government of Rwanda, and between NGOs and the various UN agencies that are working in that country.

So the third is the preferred option among NGOs, mainly because they are very concerned about their neutrality, and about both their integrity and their credibility. If they are going to go out and be in enemy territory, the only thing they have to protect themselves is their integrity. And if you take that away from them—or if that is besmirched because you are believed to be in cahoots with one or the other of the parties—they feel they can be in serious trouble.

Let me remind you that in reality you cannot be neutral in this business. But just the fact that I choose to go into the territories that are controlled by insurgents already says something about the openness that I have to listening to what might be the legitimacy of the case they have to tell me.

So I like to say that I will try to be evenhanded. I try to be fair. I will take whatever number of hours, day or night, that are needed to hear what you have got to say. And I would do the best I can to faithfully report it back to the person who can do something about helping us to resolve this conflict. But I am not going to try to tell you that I don't have any views of my own, because that wouldn't be the truth.

At the policy level, therefore, NGOs are challenged to define what role, if any, we can have in resolving problems that are root causes of the deadly conflict in the world. Can we be impartial and at the same time play a larger role? Can we agree upon the interdependence among political-military and humanitarian actions and still be perceived as impartial? Can we deal with the root causes of ethnic and religious conflict without taking very political positions or without advocating against human rights violations and abuses? What terrifying paradoxes!

When it comes to the role of the military in the humanitarian sphere, we were told yesterday that that's usually limited to fostering a climate of protection, a shield, if you like. This is an area in which the military has a clear comparative advantage. No doubt about it.

It also involves supporting humanitarian organizations. It's very costly and expensive, and not usually universally recognized as good. Again, former Yugoslavia, where NGOs don't mind being escorted by UNPROFOR, as we heard yesterday, but when it comes to the rapid reaction force, that's a different story.

The military also has a critical role in directing the distribution of relief and other supplies. This is a significant role, but it's one that the military isn't trained to do—hence, the many conversations like the ones we are having now, where we are learning about each other's cultures. The humanitarian agencies are learning about the military culture. The military is learning about the culture of the humanitarian agencies.

What is important here is the cooperation between the humanitarian and the political-military organizations—cooperation that should be based on mutual understanding of the different roles each has to play and adequate preparation for playing those roles.

It is also very important to base this relationship on clear mandates and codes of conduct. Mandates and codes of conduct will be observed by both NGOs and the military. For example, as I said a moment ago, in Yugoslavia, humanitarian agencies find it more acceptable to come under the protection of UNPROFOR whose mandate from the Security Council is clearer than that of the rapid reaction force.

The Effects of Media on Humanitarian Action

The media increases public awareness, influences policy-making both of governments and of international institutions, and enhances fundraising by humanitarian organizations. In Geneva it is said that people going to work in the morning are formulating in their minds their answers to the questions CNN in the seven o'clock news has planted in people's heads. That is the influence of the media.

Typically, there is a push and pull effect, as in Somalia, where the media influenced the military going in and pulling out of that country. Then there is what is called the blitz cholera effect, as in Rwanda, where the media missed the big story altogether—the genocide. But it came back in full force and with full coverage once the suffering got bad enough. Last, there is the blanket media. I sometimes describe this as the media tail wagging the humanitarian dog, as in former Yugoslavia. The forgotten emergencies are those like the one in my own country, Liberia, where the media shows scant, if any, interest at all.

So, how does one conceptualize the interplay among humanitarian and political-military and media actors? It seems to me as though humanitarian organizations have two options: to integrate their humanitarian action into the political-military context, or to isolate their activities from the political-military context and pursue their own separate activities.

Our choice at ICVA? For us, the preferred choice is to work with the UN coordination system, and leave it to the UN coordination system and the military forces to work out the relationships between themselves. But sometimes—again, in Liberia—agencies move in between these two options and the rules are never clearly defined. The result can be a heavy increase in the humanitarian disaster, as has happened in Liberia.

To Sum Up

Much has changed fundamentally in the world where NGOs do their work. Today we are caught up in a triple transition: from war to peace; from authoritarian to totalitarian regimes to democratic governments; from state-run planned economies to free-market economies.

Cultures are colliding. Tolerance is declining. Xenophobia is on the rise. And the logical—indeed, the actual—development of new nations that had emerged out of the decolonization process in Africa and Asia and the all too recent idea about a peace dividend—all of these have gone by the border. The idea that aid would promote a world in which development would indeed be the new name for peace, as Pope Paul VI wrote in his famous encyclical *Populorum Progressio*. All of this lies shattered in the shelves of too many complex emergencies, too many collapsed nations, and civil chaos.

Triple transitions and shattered paradigms shape the contours of our world. The need for restructuring is as urgent in donor countries as it is for those fed the daily diet of the World Bank's Structural Adjustment Program. At ICVA, we continue to try to be a global forum for empowerment through dialogues—dialogues that change the conceptual understandings and generate policy ideas that can be translated into models of operational cooperation and coordination at field level.

How infinitesimal is anything we can do. How infinitely important that we do it.