INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN AID CONCEPTS

TRENDS

by

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Introduction

This paper is concerned with the role of International Humanitarian Aid (IHA) in the context of development as applied to the case of Rwanda. The general issue as well as the case are particularly relevant to the policy process of CIDA since, not only is the concern with Basic Human Needs one of the six foci of the objectives of CIDA, but the other interests of CIDA, particularly the concern with Human Rights, Democracy and Good Governance, are directly impacted by humanitarian aid. I am not referring merely to the rapid increase in the proportion of the budget of all aid agencies around the world devoted to humanitarian assistance - an increase from 2% to 10% of overseas aid in the last ten years - in the context of a significantly diminished overall budget and, thus, the rapidly decreasing amount of funds available for those other objectives. Nor am I primarily concerned with donor fatigue, the perceived diminution in support for development aid and, to some degree, humanitarian aid. Rather, the concern is with the connection between the role of development in creating the need for humanitarian aid, and, in turn, the role of humanitarian aid in creating an enormous need for more development.

Let me explain. Over and over the mantra of the continuity between aid, rehabilitation and development has been repeated. Basically, the proposition has been espoused that aid should not be offered in isolation, but should help prepare a country or a region affected by a complex emergency to rebuild itself and resume its place on the path to development. The crisis is seen as a disruption of a normal trajectory in which the aid fills the gap and restores the vehicle - in this case the state or even a region - back onto the track of self-propulsion. Development is the norm. Conflict and disruption are disruptive intervening variables. Aid is the emergency assistance, like a pit stop or an emergency centre in a major hospital which receives accident victims. The objective is to get the patient back on the road to recovery so that the society can be put back to work and resume its pattern of development.

I want to reverse this perspective. Instead of examining aid as something totally other than development that is brought in from the outside when the development process is disrupted by natural or human disasters, particularly the latter, the crisis itself may be a by-product of development, and aid a natural correlate, like the vast and accelerating amounts of garbage produced by industrialized societies, and, hence, the need for more and more garbage trucks to haul away the waste to dumps, or, more frequently now, to recycling centres. Has humanitarian aid merely become the recycling component within the

development ideology?

To answer the question, I want to summarize the development of development theory itself since World War II. (The full exposition is in a separate paper - "The Dialectic of Development: Theory and Practice.") I then want to zero in on Basic Needs Theory, not simply as it was initially enunciated as a theory of development, but as it evolved into a theory of behaviour of behaviour for the analysis, prevention and resolution of conflict. I will then apply the analysis to Rwanda, and, more particularly, to the delivery of humanitarian aid to Rwanda. Finally, I will conclude by placing this analysis within current trends of placing both development and humanitarian assistance within the framework of foreign policy and security issues rather than as a field protected by a lead shield from the radiation effects of foreign policy dominated by self-interest and security concerns.

The Development of Development Theory and Practice

Development aid by states (as distinct from philanthropic organizations[1]) began after World War II as part of the Cold War in the effort to assist states to recover from that conflict lest, in the chaos and mayhem and sense of desperation, they drift into the communist orbit. This was particularly true when Truman's Marshall Plan was extended in 1949 to apply to countries outside Europe.

Economic development assistance was connected with political classical realism which explained states' actions through a theory about human nature. Human beings are driven by their passions and assumed to be interested primarily in self-preservation and enhancement of their power.[2] The United States would help others because it was in America's economic and security interests to do so.

But if self-interest in terms of security provided the motive for development assistance, the rationale for that assistance in economic theory was liberal or Keynesian. "After the second World War governments were influenced by the international acceptance of macroeconomic policies, i.e. state intervention through financial and monetary policies to reduce the high levels of unemployment." (Svendsen 1995, 37) Canada joined the Colombo Plan to stop communism by fostering national liberation as well as economic and social progress. In the original development theory, money was dispensed to Third World states to gain security. Growth may have been the rationale, but security was the motive.

Then came the first and fundamental turning point. By the mid

1950s, the priorities were reversed. Instead of using aid to foster security, security would be the by-product of economic and social progress in "the recognition that the more quickly other people's standards of living rise the better off we shall be...economic and social progress are essential to a durable peace."[3] Thus, in the international arena, activist state intervention was seen as the key catalyst is jump-starting stagnant economies onto a growth pattern. (Rostow 1960) The development task was seen primarily as the need to transfer capital and more productive technologies from North to South to facilitate "take-off," that is, to provide a one-time initial thrust to give a society its own momentum. Economic development assistance became a goal in itself with the happy coincidence that greater security would be one consequence.

The third stage in development theory came as a result of studies which seemed to show that development was related to greater injustice and inequity. There was an inverse correlation between economic growth and equity of income distribution. As Adelman concluded (1975), "To achieve equitable growth, two extreme strategies are in principle possible: (1) grow now, redistribute and educate later; (2) Redistribute and educate now, grow later." (322) A country could not both grow and achieve equity at one and the same time. A second theoretical reversal was proposed. Raise the educational levels and the welfare of the vast majority of the population for a decade to rationalize economic incentives before embarking on a program of rapid economic growth. The strategy recommended initial resource distribution followed by massive education and then a human-resource-oriented growth as a foundation for stimulating economic growth.

Dependency theory was the external correlate to the internalist critique of the disjunction between development and equity. For dependency theorists claimed that development assistance was simply one aspect of a global enterprise intent of making Third World countries peripheral parts of the global capitalist system. Underdevelopment was not natural, but the direct product of the development ideology. History and the distribution of political and economic power determined both development and underdevelopment.

Policies on redistribution and the satisfaction of 'basic needs' were indirect responses to the dependency theory critics. (Leys 1996, 12, fn. 23) and a direct response to the critique on the divergence between growth and equity. This approach entailed redistributing income to those at the bottom with a consequent short term loss in gross national income as well as savings, and therefore a loss in immediate growth, as well as a larger role for the state. The results, however,

promised better prospects for long term savings and growth as investment in human capital laid the groundwork for faster future growth. (Moon & Dixon 1992) Robert McNamara, officially propounded the 'basic needs' approach in a speech to the Board of Governors of the bank in Nairobi in 1973.

It must be recalled that international aid agencies as separate institutions were created in the sixties in Canada, Denmark, Sweden just at the time when the new approach to development aid based on a "basic needs" approach was emerging. Both bilateral and multilateral programs stressed poverty alleviation and the satisfaction of basic needs instead of relying on the automatic benefits that were previously believed to flow from development assistance. Both advocated an integrated, coherent approach to development in which technological and capital transfers were balanced by social programs to reduce inequalities and support for education. In Canada, by the late sixties when CIDA was founded, "large infrastructural projects and commodity aid still dominated the program - but, at the rhetorical level, more attention was focused on rural development and social equality." (Morrison 1996, 6)

The fourth stage in development theory took place in another radical zig and zag in the eighties. And it created a definite bifurcation as a result of the critiques levelled at development theory. One source of criticism was Robert Bates and his followers. Robert Bates (1981, 1987, and 1988), when he applied rational choice theory to previous development policies, argued that even where there was no significant corruption, the receiving state in a Keynesian strategy tended to develop state controlled marketing boards for export crops, government monopolies for purchasing food and to act de facto as agents for private interests in industrialization. As a result, the development projects aimed at fostering growth and a take-off were all notorious failures on a macro scale because such policies lowered the prices farmers received for their crops and increased their costs for purchasing commodities. Further, when prices were subsidized for the items farmers needed to grow their crops (fuel, for example), the benefits of those subsidies were appropriated by a few rich large-scale farmers. Because such policies were project rather than price-based, that is, used to provide incentives for production by lowering input costs rather than ensuring that prices of sold goods rose to the market price, inefficiency was promoted because of market distortions, reduced competition, and poorly conceived projects, a result identical to the effects when the same policies were applied in the developed world. At least this was the case Bates made so effectively.[4]

His explanation was straightforward - the results were 'rational' given the incentives put in place, that is, the ease of organization of large-scale farmers, the development of urban support through cheap food, the creation of patronage and profit opportunities for government supporters, and, most importantly of all, the generation of rents which politicians can use for various purposes, including ensuring their continuation in power. (cf. Leys 1996, 88-89) Development aid, whether for security, as an independent objective with security as a by-product, or focused on resource redistribution and fostering education and human-resource development, resulted in economic deformations and inefficiencies which retarded rather than enhanced growth.

This fit in with a second critique that modernization theory had directed at development theory. Modernization theorists[5] argued that though some external inputs fostered development, with an ignorance of the society and culture, these economic inputs were more likely to set back modernization. The transfer of technology, commodities, production systems and ideas and knowledge could add to the obstacles to development. The real object was to counter internal barriers to modernization - traditional institutions, attitudes and values, the distribution of power and legitimacy amongst a small elite, the use of coercion for perpetuation of those elites in power rather than to maintain law and order and secure the society against external threats. The exclusive focus on the transfer of resources without regard to the social make-up of the society and without a conscious, deliberate and well-thought out plan for fostering institutional reform in a rational and orderly manner, would produce far more failures than successes overall.[6] Development policy had to concentrate primarily on reforming existing institutions and creating new ones through educational assistance (scholarships abroad, training institutes), not only to develop particular skills, but to change attitudes and values.[7]

The issue then became - do you use development theory to minimize injustice as in the basic needs theories developed in response to dependency theory and the analysis that pointed to the divergency between strategies aimed at growth and those aimed at equity, or do you go forward in a different direction? Holding onto the first goal led to ethical development theory. Those who advocated abandoning the old approach, went in two different directions. One direction advocated using development theory to change values and attitudes. The other direction requiring states to change their behavioral and institutional patterns as a condition of receiving development assistance - what became known as the structural adjustment process. Given the inaccessibility of changing attitudes and values directly, development aid had to be directed to those structural components which most

directly affected attitudes and values - education, property ownership, administrative organization.

If development policy, both through the agencies dominated by the United States as well as by social democratic states, was moving towards balancing economic growth with norms of equity and efforts at redistribution, there was a significant growth in military aid to preserve stability and order as the ultimate goal of overseas assistance by propping up and supporting praetorian regimes as a means of modernization and transforming traditional institutions. Further, development assistance, insofar as it fostered the creation of a home-grown urban intelligentsia, could be a catalyst for revolution. In other words, development assistance generally was impeded by traditional sociological systems which created frustration and demanding revolutionary changes through violent means. At the same time, development assistance nurtured the very leaders of revolutionary movements. Development assistance in quest of economic growth was not the way to foster stability and, hence, security, but a catalyst for revolution.

Modernization theory had a direct impact on foreign policy and the emphasis on maintaining social order in Third World countries rather than on development aid. For if development aid was continuously deformed by internal barriers fostered by the sociology of traditional societies, and those sociological structures continuously perverted the goals of economic assistance, then aid could be used directly instead of indirectly to assure stability and that western hegemony was not threatened. The policy was carried out by arms transfers and assistance related to supporting regimes to ensure that they did not fall into the communist orbit.[8] The efforts in Latin America are well known. Less well known is the American efforts in Africa, specifically support of Mobutu's coup in Zaire.

Thus, development practice suffered from a multiple personality disorder. On the one hand, the primary traditional approach was now the once revolutionary basic needs approach which itself overlay a Keynsian use of the state as an instrument to foster growth. These two personalities which projected a positive view of development assistance were counteracted by two other approaches. One was based on military assistance and the battle for the hearts and minds of the people against reactionary institutions. The other was based on structural adjustment. Both were highly critical of the deformations allegedly produced by the 'traditional' theories of development.

It was structural adjustment theory that impacted most directly

on development policy. The critiques by the rational choice theorists outlined in the account of Robert Bates induced the World Bank to shift its goals. Economic growth and satisfying basic needs could best be achieved as consequences of a very different goal - inducing structural change in recipients of development aid. Robert Bates analysis had been incorporated into the World Bank's *Development Report* for 1986. Douglass North, who shared a Nobel Prize in 1993, published *Structure and Change in Economic History* in 1981 and, like Bates, his ideas were incorporated into the World Bank's Reports, specifically the 1987 Report as well as subsequent annual reports. (Cf. Leys 1996, ch. 4) Structural adjustment had become the new development orthodoxy while modernization theory became a fundamental assumption of foreign policy by major powers.

What happened to basic needs?

Basic Human Needs Theory

The Case of Rwanda

Humanitarian and Development Aid, Security and Foreign Policy

ENDNOTES

1. Prior to World War II, development work depended on private foundations. The premises of development for foundations, such as the Phelps-Stoke fund, were based on the expectation that African countries would not be self-governing in the near future and that the populations in such countries would serve as vocational workers in the international capitalist system. Cf.Robert Arnove, ed. (1982) *Philanthropy and Cultural Imperialism: The Foundations at Home and Abroad*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, specifically, Edward Berman, "Educational Colonialism in Africa: The Role of American Foundations at Home and Abroad, 1910-1945," and "The Foundations Role in American Foreign Policy: The Case of Africa, post 1945," 179-232.

2. "The school of [contemporary] realism is essentially Hobbesian in that it (1) counts on the predictability of actors' motivation and behaviour; (2) equates anarchy with constant fear, struggle, and danger; (3) claims that the national interest, defined as self-preservation and advancement against others, is a dictate of nature - either a state obeys it or it is destroyed; (4) takes all other motivations besides the national interest as irrational and dangerous and therefore to be counselled against so that such motivations as national pride and ideological or religious fervour cannot be accounted for except as fatal anomalies or covers for power interests; (5) disregards the character of individual leaders as irrelevant, considering the overriding dictates of the international power structure; (6) disregards political rhetoric because it is seen as epiphenomenal; (7) counsels prudent adherence to the realist view of the world put forth by the scientists of the realist paradigm, thus claiming that science is a better source for political wisdom than the cultivation of excellence in leaders and their followers." (Johnson 1993, 70) Neo-realism or structural realism is a species of conservative realism, but differs somewhat from the traditionalist view. "(S)tructural realism or sometimes neo-realism deals only with basic structural features of the international system: the 'anarchical nature of the system, the relative distribution of power, and the importance of the balance of power..and attempts to transform classical realism into a scientific-deductive theory that focuses on the structure of the international system...It avoids questionable assumptions, ambiguities, and contradictions that Waltz and other scholars discerned in Morgenthau's writings with respect to the central concepts of power, national interest, and balance of power." (George 1993, 108)

3. Lester B. Pearson in a speech delivered to a Conference on Canadian Aid to Underdeveloped Countries, Ottawa, May 1995, cited in

Morrison (1996) 14 from a citation in McKinnell, R.T. and Tiedmann, K.H., *Canada's Development Aid*, Ottawa: CIDA, May 1982, 3. For the theoretical basis to this view, cf Lewis (1955).

4. For a critique of Bates analysis, cf. Leys 91996), ch. 4. In fact, since I have concentrated on contradictions rather than lack of comprehensiveness or inadequate empirical support for various theories, Leys' book is an excellent place to find such criticisms of most of the theories outlined in this paper.

5. The theoretician who gave voice to drawing the logical conclusions of modernization theory was Samuel Huntington (1968). For an analysis of Huntington's policies, see Colin Leys (1982) "Samuel Huntington & the End of Classical Modernization Theory," in Hamza Alavi and Teodor Shanin, eds., *Introduction to the Sociology of Developing Societies*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 332-349, reprinted as chapter 3 of Leys (1996), 64-79.

6. Adopting the critiques, Griffin and McKinley (1994), made earlier by the modernization theorists, an argument was put forth that aid, in many cases, retarded economic development by deforming the local economy. "Second, where aid flows are large in relation to the recipient's national product, relative prices are distorted in an anti-development direction. Large inflows of foreign aid tend to result in an appreciation of the exchange rate, thereby discouraging production for export or production intended to replace goods produced abroad. Large inflows of aid also tend to reduce real rates of interest in the recipient country, thereby discouraging savings, encouraging those who hold financial assets to place their holdings abroad and creating incentives for local investors to adopt techniques of production which are biased against the employment of labour. When aid takes the form of subsidized exports of commodities, the change in relative commodity prices can be devastating for local producers...That is, agricultural subsidies in Europe, disguised as foreign aid, are said to destroy the livelihood of some of the poorest people on earth." When the goal of good governance was added to the equation of economic growth and redistribution of income to guarantee basic needs, modernization theory seemed to explain not only that the economy was deformed, but so was government. "Third, the availability of foreign aid has made it easier for the governments of recipient countries to increase unproductive current expenditure, to expand the military and to reduce taxation." And, in the final analysis, "fourth, there is no evidence apart from the occasional anecdote to suggest that either bilateral or multilateral aid programmes have succeeded in reaching the poor. On the contrary, most of the available evidence indicates that most of the benefits of

foreign assistance programmes are captured by middle and upper income groups, i.e. by the élite." (Griffin and McKinley 1994, 4.

7. Inkeles and Smith in 1975 published a measure of modernization, the so-called OM scale, based on their interviews with 6,000 people in six developing countries in which they argue that modern attitudes produce modern behaviour. "The modern man's character, as it emerges from our study, may be summed up under four major headings. He is an informed participant citizen; he has a marked sense of personal efficacy; he is highly independent and autonomous in his relations to traditional sources of influence, especially when making decisions about how to conduct his personal affairs; and he is ready for new experiences and ideas, that is, he is relatively openminded and cognitively flexible." (161)

8. If only American scholars as well as politicians had been more open to the insights of marxist thinkers. After all, Paul Baran in 1962 had written that, "Bolstering the political system of power existing in backward countries by providing it with military support may temporarily block the eruption of the volcano; it cannot stop the subterranean gathering of explosive forces." (101) Given his marxist presumptions, Baran did not anticipate combining the use of a praetorian system, which strictly controlled eruptions, while modernization proceeded rather than being retarded.