

**Politicizing Humanitarian Aid: The European Union's Aid Program  
and its Role in the Kosovo Crisis**

By

Melanie Solterbeck  
B.A. (Honours), Queen's University, 2003

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
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### **Abstract**

As the field of humanitarian aid continues to grow exponentially, the politicization of humanitarian aid is an increasing concern. The European Union's humanitarian aid office (ECHO) is the world's second largest aid donor and widely understood to be unpoliticized due to its multilateral nature, relative institutional isolation, needs-based mandate and use of standardized assessment indicators. Using primary and secondary literature and interview sources, this thesis takes a critical look at the EU's aid program and ECHO's work with operating partners using a framework of four degrees of politicization. These degrees are applied throughout the thesis and in a short case study of the EU's aid programs during the Kosovo crisis of 1999. It finds that while ECHO offers an outstanding example of official policy commitments to unpoliticized aid, in practice, it too is subject to the influences of politicization. The thesis concludes with an assessment of how ECHO might address the politicization of aid to improve future aid programs.

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## **Dedication**

This thesis is dedicated to my parents,

Klaus and Dörte Solterbeck

and to my sister, Bianca.

## List of Acronyms

CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
CHE	Complex humanitarian emergency
CPF	Civil Protection Mechanism
DG	Directorate-General
EAR	European Agency for Reconstruction
EC	European Communities
ECHO	European Community Humanitarian Aid Office
EU	European Union
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IGO	Intergovernmental Organization
FCA	Forgotten Crisis Assessment
FPA	Framework Partnership Agreement
GM	Genetically modified
GNA	Global Needs Assessment
GHD	Good Humanitarian Donorship
HAC	Humanitarian Affairs Committee
IDP	Internally displaced people
KLA	Kosovo Liberation Army
LRRD	Linking Rehabilitation, Relief and Development
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières/Doctors Without Borders
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCCI	NGO Coordination Committee in Iraq
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
ODA	Official Development Assistance
RELEX	Directorate-General External Relations
RRF	Rapid Reaction Facility
RRM	Rapid Reaction Mechanism
TEC	Tsunami Evaluation Coalition
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission on Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WEU	Western European Union

## Introduction

This thesis examines the degree to which the European Union's (EU) humanitarian assistance program is politicized. The EU is the second largest donor of humanitarian aid, and is mandated to provide aid on the basis of need through its Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO). ECHO – a Directorate General of the Commission – operates in relative institutional isolation from the greater political bodies of the EU and from the interests of any one member state, which should provide a certain degree of autonomy to ECHO staff in terms of decision-making and the allocation of aid

Based on these factors, a general understanding has emerged that the EU is able to provide unpoliticized aid through ECHO. Helen Versluys and Jan Orbie articulate this argument in their paper *Theorizing EU Humanitarian Aid Policy*. They write,

...since member states tend to be influenced by political considerations, ECHO can balance this with a more objective allocation of funds directed to areas of highest need...To counter possible suspicions of politically inspired or arbitrary decisions on humanitarian aid allocation, ECHO relies on a Global Needs Assessment (GNA) ranking countries in a list of relative need on the basis of selected indicators, complemented by bottom-up assessments by ECHO field experts. These instruments which measure humanitarian needs as objectively as possible and which allow for cross-country comparison, should effectively put ECHO in a position to make money available for those crises where needs are the most urgent. As such, expert authority reinforces the Commission's claims to depoliticized aid provision.<sup>1</sup>

This thesis will investigate whether the EU is providing aid on the basis of need or whether ECHO's aid program is also marked by forces of politicization.

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<sup>1</sup> Versluys, Helen and Jan Orbie. *Theorizing EU Humanitarian Aid Policy*. Paper prepared for the *Third Pan-European Conference on EU Politics*, Istanbul, 1-23 September 2006. <<http://www.jhubc.it/ecpr-istanbul/virtualpaperroom/010.pdf>> (December 22, 2006).

I will begin by looking at the phenomena of politicization and the field of humanitarian aid more broadly. Chapter one defines four degrees of politicization which distinguish between the levels or *severity* of political self interest in aid. The second chapter will discuss ECHO in detail, including its mandate, structure and policies, and identify some shortcomings. With the understanding that aid can only be unpoliticized if the aid organizations that work with ECHO in the delivery of humanitarian assistance are also unpoliticized, the third chapter sets out to discuss the role of aid organizations, specifically NGOs and their role in the politicization of aid and how they respond to donor politicization. The last chapter looks at the European Union's aid program in the Balkans during the Kosovo crisis in a focused case study. It seeks to establish whether the principles of aid set out in the first chapter were upheld and how the EU operates in practice according to the four degrees of politicization set out in chapter one.

Through the use of primary and secondary literature and one-on-one interviews, I attempt to provide an analysis of whether the European Union's aid program is politicized according to the definition of politicization provided in chapter one. It offers an assessment of how this affects the aid organizations that partner with ECHO and concludes with a practical examination of the EU's aid program in a critical case study. The Kosovo crisis was selected because it was one of the biggest humanitarian crises within close geographical proximity to Europe and received massive amounts of aid – already an indication that humanitarian assistance was not provided on the basis of need alone.

The thesis finds that ECHO is indeed influenced by political interests, and that its aid programs are not unpoliticized. It concludes that even though this is the case, ECHO

remains a leader amongst governmental donors in attempting to offer unpoliticized aid through the use of assessment indicators and institutional isolation. Finally, this thesis offers some concrete changes the EU could make to address these issues of politicization to improve its aid programs and ECHO.

## I Humanitarianism and Politicization

Since the dawn of civilization, humanity has sought to achieve gains, influence and advancement through war. Though these wars have inflicted enormous damage and immeasurable human suffering, political scientists have yet to solve the arduous puzzle of war and peace. However, while the misery of war and conflict continues to elude us, a growing desire to alleviate the very worst human suffering that incessantly accompanies war has emerged. Jean Henri Dunant founded the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) after seeing first hand the human tragedy left behind on the battlefields of Solferino in 1895. The ICRC organization committed to tending to the wounded on both sides of the conflict and the concept of neutral humanitarian aid (“aid”) during times of war was born.<sup>2</sup>

Over a century later, the humanitarian field has blossomed into a multi-billion dollar enterprise. No longer just nursing the sick and injured left in the wake of war, humanitarians are now active in areas affected by natural disasters and their activities have extended to rebuilding homes and cities, implementing social programs and assisting in the negotiation of peace settlements. With this expansion comes increasing concern and debate about the role and normative functions of donors of humanitarian aid. In particular, questions have arisen about the role of governments in an activity that is often defended as being politically neutral. Eric A. Belgrad traces the “infusion of politics into humanitarian aid policies” to the end of the First World War.<sup>3</sup> Following the catastrophic conflict, which left much of Western Europe desecrated, US President

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<sup>2</sup> Fox, Fiona. New Humanitarianism: Does It Provide a Moral Banner for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. (*Disasters* 25, 4, 2001) 276.

<sup>3</sup> Belgrad, Eric A. and Nitza Nachmias. The Politics of International Aid Operations. (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1997) 3.

Woodrow Wilson and other allied leaders recognized that the suffering was so great, European charities would not be able to meet the need. Wilson was determined to “put in place a massive rescue apparatus in those areas of Western Europe most ravaged by German war occupation.”<sup>4</sup> Soon afterward, the beginnings of America’s first official postwar humanitarian relief efforts arrived, sponsored and controlled by the US government.<sup>5</sup>

Two decades later, following the end of the Second World War, US policy makers became acutely aware of the deep-seated political, economic, military and ideological difference between the United States and the Soviet Union, a country which had been a close ally during the war years.<sup>6</sup> The Cold War was born, and with it the US policy of containment. Aid that had initially been intended to assist nations within the Soviet block - as well as central and western European nations affected by war – was redirected as the US foreign policy changed. Eligibility requirements for aid were made so restrictive that no state in the Soviet bloc could qualify, evidence that political considerations had trumped humanitarian concerns.

Though humanitarian aid programs to Europe continued throughout the post-World War II era, the field saw its most significant growth following the end of the Cold War, and throughout the 1990s. Humanitarianism has since become big business, currently involving over US\$10 billion annually.<sup>7</sup> Almost overnight, humanitarian aid

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<sup>4</sup> Belgrad, 3.

<sup>5</sup> Belgrad, 4.

<sup>6</sup> Belgrad, 8.

<sup>7</sup> Smillie, Ian and Larry Minear. The Charity of Nations: Humanitarian Action in a Calculating World. (Kumarian Press Inc.: Bloomfield, CT 2004) 8.

went from being a relatively small government expenditure to constituting a significant part of national foreign aid expenditures.<sup>8</sup>

In the post 9/11 world, aid has once again highlighted the political dimensions of humanitarian responses, particularly in the case of donor governments involved in the war on terror. In 2003, over half of the UN's worldwide humanitarian aid budget went to Iraq.<sup>9</sup> This clear concentration of funds in areas of pointed political interest and media limelight is indicative of the phenomena of politicized aid.

### **The Politicization of Aid**

It is impossible to think about humanitarian aid as entirely apolitical. Aid involves political actors and is intimately connected to the political situation of both the donor and recipient nation. So what is meant by "politicization" and what are the implications of politicization on humanitarian aid?

The fact that aid is found in the realm of politics does not automatically condemn it to being something negative. Larry Minear, Ted van Baarda and Marc Sommers define politicization as "the encroachment of political considerations into the conduct of humanitarian activities."<sup>10</sup> This definition demonstrates that politicization, taken generally, can at times be beneficial. "Political considerations" are not intrinsically harmful, and the contemplation of political goals and consequences does not always exclude providing aid according to generally accepted humanitarian principles. By way

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<sup>8</sup> Smillie, 10.

<sup>9</sup> de Torrenté, Nicolas. *Humanitarianism Sacrificed: Integration's False Promise*. (*Ethics International Affairs* 18, No. 2, 2004) 5.

<sup>10</sup> Minear, Larry, Ted van Baarda and Marc Sommers. Occasional Paper #36: *NATO and Humanitarian Action in the Kosovo Crisis*. (Providence, RI: Thomas J. Watson Jr. Institution for International Studies, 2000) 41.

of existing in the political realm and involving political actors, such as heads of states and governments, the humanitarian discourse is in a way legitimated and even advanced.

The attention aid receives when political elites become interested in a humanitarian disaster (regardless of motive) means that a particular cause or crisis will likely end up on the agendas of decision-makers and this can lead to greater public awareness. For delivery agents of humanitarian aid, most notably non-governmental organizations (NGOs), favourable public opinion is a useful tool which translates into financial gain and enhanced delivery capabilities.

However, past experiences show that politicization - more often than not - manifests itself in undesirable ways. The term "politicization," in practice delineates a situation in which humanitarian assistance is used by donor states, to fulfill self-interested goals such as achieving foreign policy objectives. This creates a situation where humanitarian aid is shaped primarily by political goals rather than humanitarian ones. This can take the form of withholding funding or supplies, imposing political or other conditionalities on aid or combining and even subsuming aid within a military response. In this type of situation Mohammed Haneef Atmar aptly recognized that "humanitarian aid works at best as a fig leaf for political inaction and at worst as an instrument of foreign policy undermining its humanitarian ethos."<sup>11</sup> For instance, in *The Charity of Nations*, Ian Smillie and Larry Minear assert a Canadian humanitarian aid "package of project approvals for Afghanistan was delayed for months until the minister could visit

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<sup>11</sup> Atmar, Mohammed Haneef. Politicisation of Humanitarian Aid and Its Consequences for Afghans. *Disasters* 25, No. 4 (2001) 322.

personally and make the announcement in Kabul.”<sup>12</sup> In this case it is evident that the needs of recipients took a backseat to the government’s political objectives.

Prior to 1990s, foreign aid expenditures made up only a small portion of any given national state budget. Between 1989 and 2000, humanitarian aid - as a percentage of Official Development Assistance (ODA) - increased from an average of 5.83 percent (between 1989 and 1993) to 10.5 percent in 2000. Overall, humanitarian aid expenditures rose from US\$2.1 billion in 1990 to US\$10.5 billion in 2000.<sup>13</sup> As these figures began to increase, states took a more active role in attempting to impose their agendas on humanitarian work.<sup>14</sup> Using the rationale of regulating their “implementing agencies,” governments aimed at compelling agencies to act in ways that often violated the agencies’ mandate or principles.<sup>15</sup> These principles retain the pragmatic effectiveness and moral authority of aid work and their violation represents a serious stumbling block that can lead to counterintuitive responses of catastrophic consequences, both in terms of human casualties and in terms of regional peace and stability. This type of politicization is usually carried out by national governments looking to achieve either strategic or economic objectives or simply to raise their own status. A good example of this is the bidding war to donate aid following the Tsunami in late December 2005.

Strategic goals can include maintaining a sphere of influence, installing or supporting a favourable government in another country, attempting to ensure stability in a region where instability could jeopardize the home front, or simply securing an interest or receiving benefits as a direct result of donating humanitarian aid. Economic reasons

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<sup>12</sup> Smillie and Minear, 172.

<sup>13</sup> Barnett, Michael. Humanitarianism Transformed. (Minneapolis: Minnesota International Relations Colloquium, 2005) 23.

<sup>14</sup> Barnett, 23.

<sup>15</sup> Barnett, 23.

include access to resources – both physical and financial, dumping surpluses in the form of food aid to protect national markets or supporting local producers who profit from selling to the aid enterprise.

In addition to providing aid for political reasons, the withholding of aid through conditionalities can also be problematic, and constitute another example of politicization. Conditionality entails providing aid that is conditional on a “moral and/or political choice, such as the legitimacy and the policies of the authority in charge.”<sup>16</sup> This can create a situation where populations are made to suffer in order to exert leverage over a political authority.

To isolate aid from politicization, operating partners usually attempt to keep aid work separate from the political imperatives of state donors. Furthermore, agencies often adhere to a set of humanitarian principles that provide some degree of immunity from politicization. These are discussed in detail below, but include delivering aid according to need, upholding neutrality and working independently of military forces.

## **Humanitarian Aid**

In its most basic form, humanitarian aid embodies a desire to relieve imminent, life-threatening human suffering.<sup>17</sup> Various conceptions of humanitarian aid have been advanced by scholars in international relations. Like other cluster concepts in political science, this is a highly contested term. For the purposes of this paper, I define humanitarian aid (or “aid) as *short-term, basic relief funding and supplies (including but*

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<sup>16</sup> de Torrenté, 4.

<sup>17</sup> Minear, Larry and Thomas Weiss. Mercy Under Fire: War and the Global Humanitarian Community. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995) 60.

*not limited to food, water, medical and other basic supplies) intended to avoid the most devastating effects of crisis or disaster for those individuals most vulnerable.*

It is not my intention to argue that needs-based, relief humanitarianism is the best course of action in dealing with complex humanitarian emergencies (see below). By definition, complex emergencies can demand an array of responses, least of which may be basic supplies. Competing notions, including David Chandler's theory of "new military humanitarianism" – which argues for the involvement of military means in humanitarian disasters precisely because simple relief aid "does not concern itself with a human rights solution beyond meeting immediate need" – is certainly a convincing argument that should not be too readily dismissed.<sup>18</sup> However, there are limits to what humanitarian aid can achieve. Political, diplomatic and military means must simultaneously be employed to deal with various facets of a humanitarian crisis in, for example, a failed or fragile state. What I am not attempting to do, is stipulate what those means should be or how to make that distinction. The scope of this paper is limited to the expanses of what humanitarian aid can be expected to achieve given the definition of humanitarian aid above. Moreover, I argue that using humanitarian assistance rather than other instruments to achieve the goals that should be pursued by political, diplomatic and military means undermines the ability of humanitarian aid to achieve its humanitarian goals.

While *relief aid* (response to a natural disaster) is included in the term *humanitarian aid*, there are significantly different problems encountered when dealing with the aftermath of a natural disaster *only*, than are encountered when dealing with a

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<sup>18</sup> Chandler, David G. The Road to Military Humanitarianism: How the Human Rights NGOs Shaped A New Humanitarian Agenda. (*Human Rights Quarterly* 23, No. 3, August 2001) 699.

*complex humanitarian emergency* (CHE). Coined by Larry Minear and Thomas Weiss, this term refers to a situation that emerges “as a result of the weakness or collapse of the state itself and the fraying of society, whether through insurgent challenge, economic and political disarray, or some combination of both.”<sup>19</sup> Because relief aid tends to produce challenges of a technical or logistical nature, this study will deal explicitly with crises involving complex humanitarian emergencies. Implicit is the fact that many of the issues surrounding the politicization of humanitarian aid also appear when discussing relief aid.

### **The State of Humanitarianism**

Since the end of the Cold War several new dynamics have surfaced in the field of humanitarian aid. With the receding of international bi-polarity, several conflicts were left uncovered in the wake. One example is Afghanistan, which,

during the Cold War years...was initially a ‘survival’ issue for the West. But following the withdrawal of the Soviets from the country in 1989, ‘the narrative of Afghanistan in the West has changed, from heroic freedom fighters to brutal, sexist bandits, despite the fact that the cast of characters remains largely the same.’<sup>20</sup>

This change in western foreign policy is compounded by the fact that the West, specifically the US, assisted anti-communist groups around the world with weapons and other military assistance during the Cold War period. Once the Soviet communists no longer constituted a threat, the now well-armed, well-equipped sometimes radical groups the US has enlisted in support of their anti-communist missions, ironically became a threat to regional and sometimes international security themselves. It is not surprising

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<sup>19</sup> Minear, Larry, Thomas G. Weiss and Nancy L. Hoepli-Phalon. Humanitarian Politics. (New York: Foreign Policy Association, 1995) 10.

<sup>20</sup> Atmar, 322.

then that the early 1990s were characterized by an increase in regional insecurity and humanitarian disasters.

With this surge in crisis and conflict came an increase in the number of actors, both state and non-state, that emerged onto an ever-growing humanitarian stage. With increasing interest came increasing dollars, and an institutionalization of the field. Competition over involvement and institutional self-interest emerged. Large non-governmental organizations began developing corporate-like internal structures and standardized response policies. Local non-governmental organizations complained that they were being relegated to serve in menial supporting functions, while foreign organizations ran the show. The so-called *CNN effect* led to a distortion of aid priorities as over-exposure of some crises led to international interest and massive funding influxes to the detriment of others. These are just some of the emerging realities of the humanitarian field, which provide a clear picture of why the simple notion of providing the most basic assistance to people in the most grievous conditions is far from simple.

In recent years the aid paradigm has found its way onto centre-stage in both national and international politics. Governments are being petitioned to give more as the technological advances of an increasingly globalized world bring horrifying stories and pictures from around the globe into living rooms across the developed world. Political leaders are aware that “as emergency assistance has become a larger piece of a smaller pie, it has attracted heightened visibility, importance and expectations.”<sup>21</sup> This has led to an increase in political involvement and earmarking of funds to allow for political control of where, when and how much aid is sent to any given crisis. Michael Barnett makes this point when he writes that governments

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<sup>21</sup> Smillie and Minear, 10.

...want to earmark to ensure that aid follows from their priorities. Accordingly, states' interests, rather than the humanitarian principle of relief based on need, increasingly drives funding decisions. For instance, of the top 50 recipients of bilateral assistance between 1996 and 1999, the states of the former Yugoslavia, Israel/Palestine, and Iraq received 50 percent of the available assistance. If funding decisions were based solely on need then places like Sudan, Congo, northern Uganda and Angola would leapfrog toward the top of the list rather than remain neglected at the bottom.<sup>22</sup>

The great expansion of aid operations during the 1990s was accompanied by a marked increase in actual and perceived operational failures. One example is the UN aid programs in Afghanistan during the mid 1990s. Designed to ensure peace, political stability and good governance, the rise of the Taliban in 1994 intensified the crisis the UN programme in Afghanistan was already facing. In the eyes of the rest of the world the political and aid missions had both failed. For one, by the mid 1990s there was no longer a legitimate government in power in Afghanistan and secondly, there was evidence the aid mission had actually assisted the Taliban in its rise to power and fuelled the conflict.<sup>23</sup> Some reports indicate that during the late 1980s donors were willing to accept 40 percent wastage and in some cases only 20-30 percent of aid reportedly went to intended recipients while the rest was channelled elsewhere, mostly into the war effort.<sup>24</sup> These developments and other well publicized failures in humanitarian assistance coincided with a general call internationally to reform the role of international assistance.<sup>25</sup> What developed was a re-politicization of aid reflecting Western, donor

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<sup>22</sup> Barnett, 25.

<sup>23</sup> Duffield, Mark, N Leader & P Grossman. Review of the Strategic Framework for Afghanistan (Final Draft, Islamabad, Strategic Monitoring Unit, 2001) 3.

<sup>24</sup> For more information see Mohammed Haneef Atmar's "Politicization of Humanitarian Aid and its Consequences for Afghans."

<sup>25</sup> Duffield, Mark, Review of the Strategic Framework, 3.

concerns and interests. For Afghanistan this was attempted through a Strategic Framework in which,

human rights and peace building were increasingly emphasised alongside humanitarian concerns and the diplomatic process. New conditionalities were placed on aid in the belief that they could induce behavioural change within the Taliban on issues such as gender, human rights, peace and drugs.<sup>26</sup>

The Afghanistan experience was by no means unique. Across the field, calls were heard for a more involved approach to aid that could offer solutions to overcoming past failures. This approach became known as “new humanitarianism” and is closely related to the coherence agenda.<sup>27</sup> Broadly defined, new humanitarianism is sceptical of traditional principles of humanitarian assistance and advocates for the use of aid as a tool to advance human rights and achieve political goals such as state-building and the advancement of democratic ideals. It dismisses the traditional notions of aid being neutral, impartial and independent as “naïve and morally suspect.”<sup>28</sup> New humanitarianism advocates a more involved, goal-oriented approach based on the assumption that lessons learned in the past should be used to guide future aid endeavours.

Fiona Fox argues that while this approach may seem like a compelling “new moral banner to march behind” in light of the humanitarian failures punctuating the 1990s, in fact, new humanitarianism simply introduces new problems. She cautions that a hierarchy of victims will result in which some are more deserving than others (for example, people of the “right” religion or in support of the “right” government) and that

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<sup>26</sup> Goodhand, Jonathan. Aiding Violence or Building Peace? The Role of International Aid in Afghanistan. (Third World Quarterly. 23, No. 5, 2002) 845.

<sup>27</sup> The coherence agenda advocates carrying out lifesaving assistance while at the same time promoting longer-term conflict resolution and development. Instead of impartiality its operating principle is triage between “deserving” and “undeserving” beneficiaries, under which aid is allocated based on people’s expected contribution to the presumably higher goals of peace and development (de Torrenté, Nicolas. Humanitarianism Sacrificed: Integration’s False Promise. *Ethics International Affairs* 18, no. 2, 2004, p.4).

<sup>28</sup> Fox, 275.

it allows for aid to be withheld in support of wider goals.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, she questions the legitimacy and moral authority of aid workers making important political decisions and warns that a loss of humanitarian space will result because recipient governments will refuse to accept “non-neutral” aid projects.<sup>30</sup>

The coherence agenda is a similar approach to renewing humanitarian assistance, but is also problematic. Unlike new humanitarianism which focuses mainly on a wider, goal-oriented approach to humanitarianism, the coherence agenda is most concerned with ensuring co-ordination in an increasingly complex field of humanitarian actors. While many agencies and governments have lamented the need for increased coordination and cooperation, Erin Simpson cautions that the coherence agenda can lead to the blurring of lines between combatants and non-combatants, as well as the blurring of agendas. She quotes Joanna Macrae on the issue:

The challenge of the coherence agenda is that, by redefining the humanitarian mandate and associating humanitarian action with the very partisan and geopolitical agendas from which it has historically sought to distance itself, it threatens the deal between humanitarian organizations and the warring parties.<sup>31</sup>

Simpson goes on to say that what is needed is a coherence framework to ensure co-ordination among actors but that this co-ordination must respect the principles of humanitarian aid and be based on human rights and humanitarian law.<sup>32</sup> Questions remain, however, about how such an agenda can be created and what is at stake when the

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<sup>29</sup> Fox, 275.

<sup>30</sup> Fox, 281-282.

<sup>31</sup> Macrae, Joanna. Understanding Integration from Rwanda to Iraq. Ethics and International Affairs 18, No. 2 (2004) 1, quoted in Simpson, Erin Is coherence a Trojan horse for the politicization of aid? Policy coherence in fragile states. A conference paper presented at “Fragile, Dangerous and Failed States: Implementing Canada’s International Policy Statement.” (University of Victoria, Victoria, Canada November 25, 2005) 9.

<sup>32</sup> Simpson, 3.

goals of humanitarian aid are expanded beyond those of saving lives and easing human suffering. What is certain, is that humanitarian aid appears to be increasingly at risk of politicization as the humanitarian field continues to expand and its agents seek to address historical failures.

## Principles of Humanitarian Aid

In June of 2003, representatives of donor governments, United Nations agencies, NGOs and other stakeholders participated in the *International Meeting on Good Humanitarian Donorship* held in Stockholm, Sweden. Delegates discussed past successes and current challenges in global humanitarian aid action. When the meeting concluded, 16 of the 22 nations,<sup>33</sup> ECHO and other key stakeholders such as the UN, ICRC and various NGOs endorsed the 23 *Principles and Good Practice of Humanitarian Donorship*, commonly known as the Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD) Initiative (see Appendix 1).

The meeting signified a growing awareness among donors of the widespread criticisms levelled against them. These criticisms included assertions that humanitarian responses were often “weakly articulated, ad hoc and uncoordinated...driven by political interests, [and that] funding allocations were often inequitable, unpredictable and untimely in responding to crises.”<sup>34</sup> The articulation of the GHD was presented as a voluntary initiative which allowed many more donors to commit to the initiative.

<sup>33</sup> These include: Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom and United States.

<sup>34</sup> Harmer, Adele and Lin Cotterrell. From Stockholm to Ottawa: A progress review of the Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative. HPG Research Briefing 18, October, 2004  
<<http://www.odi.org.uk/HPG/papers/HPGbrief18.pdf>> (April 23, 2006) 1.

The GHD established that humanitarian actions should be guided by four fundamental principles. These were termed “Humanitarian Principles” and include:<sup>35</sup>

- *Humanity* - meaning the centrality of human life and elevating suffering wherever it is found.<sup>36</sup>

This notion is underpinned by the principle of cosmopolitanism, which states that “each person is of equal moral worth and a subject of moral concern, and that in the ‘justification of choices one’s choices one must take the prospects of everyone affected equally into account.’”<sup>37</sup> This is also a key underlying assumption of the principle of impartiality discussed below.

- *Independence* - meaning the autonomy of humanitarian objectives from the political, economic, military or other objectives that any actor may hold with regard to areas where humanitarian action is being implemented.

Following the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, the US Agency for International Development (USAID) stipulated that NGOs identify themselves as an arm of the American operation in Iraq to retain US funding.<sup>38</sup> This led to serious problems of perception among local Iraqis. Major Lin Mellens admitted “Iraqis’ negative views of the US presence had ‘led to misperceptions that NGOs were not helping the people but the occupier.’”<sup>39</sup> Ultimately, the safety of aid workers and the success of the aid projects was jeopardized as a result.

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<sup>35</sup> Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative Website. 23 principles and good practice of humanitarian donorship. <<http://www.goodhumanitarianandonorship.org>> (December 22, 2006).

<sup>36</sup> Willitts-King, Barnaby and Paul Harvey. Managing the Risks of Corruption in Humanitarian Relief Operations. Humanitarian Policy Group, Overseas Development Institute. Final Report <<http://www.reliefweb.int/library/documents/2005/odi-gen-31mar.pdf>> (April,23 2006) 7.

<sup>37</sup> Barnett, 11.

<sup>38</sup> Frangonikolopoulos, Christos A. Non-governmental Organizations and Humanitarian Action: The Need for Viable Change of Praxis and Ethos. (*Global Society* 19, No. 1, January, 2005) 59.

<sup>39</sup> Integrated Regional Information Networks. Divergent Views over Relationships Between NGOs and Coalition. *Global Policy Forum*. May 4, 2005. <<http://www.globalpolicy.org/security/issues/iraq/attack/consequences/2005/0504ngos.htm>> (September 22, 2005) 2.

- *Impartiality* - meaning the implementation of actions solely on the basis of need, without discrimination between or within affected populations.

This means that no distinction can be made with regard to a person's nationality, race, religion, social position, political affiliation or any other similar criteria,<sup>40</sup> and includes individuals who belong to the same nationality or ethnic group as that of the aggressors. When operationalized, this principle calls on funding and delivery of aid and services according to need.

- *Neutrality* - meaning that humanitarian action must not favour any side in an armed conflict or other dispute where such action is carried out.

When Haiti was hit with economic sanctions following the military coup in 1991, thousands of children were killed or debilitated by the onset of a measles epidemic. Although a UNICEF project was in the area, and had the supplies, funding and manpower to begin massive vaccinations, UNICEF workers were warned that doing so would support the military regime in power (as the public would give the military government at least partial credit for instating the vaccination clinics) and thereby undermine the international communities' efforts to reinstate a democratic authority. The western powers decided "to take no action out of respect for President Aristide's constitutional government..." and although UNICEF vehemently opposed, the agency was forced to comply.<sup>41</sup> As aid workers sat on the sidelines and waited, millions of children were put at risk of injury and death. Ultimately a middle ground was found and vaccinations clinics were permitted to operate. This example is particularly astute in demonstrating how violating the principle of neutrality of aid programs interference of political

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<sup>40</sup> Pirotte, Claire, Bernard Husson and François Grunewald. Responding to Emergencies and Fostering Development : the Dilemmas of Humanitarian Aid. (New York : St. Martin's Press, 1999) 128.

<sup>41</sup> Gibbons, Elizabeth. Danieli, Yael, ed. Sharing the Front Lines and the Back Hills. (Amityville, NY: Baywood Publishing Company, Inc., 2002) 112.

considerations can threaten the very recipients it is intended to help. While it may be impossible for governments to provide aid in strict accordance to this principle, governments should at minimum ensure that humanitarian aid groups, such as NGOs and especially intergovernmental organizations are permitted to retain their neutrality, both directly - as we have seen in the above example - and indirectly, through funding, access to humanitarian space and so forth.

While these constitute the four central principles, the GHD Initiative also reaffirms the importance of various other operational principles<sup>42</sup>

- *Timeliness* – meaning aid should be delivered within reasonable time-frames and without undue delays.

The importance of timeliness is clear; inherent in a humanitarian emergency is the fact that time is at a premium. A delay in sending supplies or funding can have tragic results including great loss of life.

- *Flexibility* - meaning that whenever possible aid should not be ear-marked for specific projects, but rather allow for manoeuvrability and sensitivity.

Ultimately, flexibility ensures recipients will have a say in what aid they receive and in practice protects against tied aid. This is particularly important when it comes to food aid, which has social, religious and cultural implications. In 2002, the Zambian government stopped a US aid shipment of genetically modified (GM) maize from entering its borders during a time of near famine conditions in the country.<sup>43</sup> The US government is accused of using its food aid program to find new markets for GM food products. GM products are banned from some markets including the EU, and this has prompted many to suspect the US is dumping agricultural GM surpluses in developing

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<sup>42</sup> Simpson, 12.

<sup>43</sup> Food Aid or Hidden Dumping, Oxfam Briefing Paper, 2005.

<[http://www.oxfam.org/en/files/bp71\\_food\\_aid\\_240305.pdf](http://www.oxfam.org/en/files/bp71_food_aid_240305.pdf)> (February 8, 2006) 22.

countries; a practice which simultaneously ensures domestic price stability and assists in meeting US aid commitments overseas. GM foods are controversial for a variety of reasons. Some argue that their safety and long term effects have not been studied. Others say the introduction of GM products will later disallow recipient countries like Zambia from exporting to markets, such as the EU, which has strict anti-GM laws.<sup>44</sup> Flexibility in what kind of aid is supplied ensures donors can be receptive to the wishes of recipient countries and is an added safeguard to ensure aid is given on the basis of need and not donor interest.

- *Proportionately* – meaning that aid should be proportionate to the degree and scale of suffering, regardless of where or to whom the suffering occurs.

Underlying this principle is the idea that every human life is of equal worth.<sup>45</sup> This principle is best demonstrated in its absence in Sierra Leone. For years the small West African nation was plagued by poverty and years of civil war. Being of little historical, political or economic importance, Sierra Leone suffered from international neglect and indifference that had devastating consequences. By 1991 the country reached the lowest place on the UN development index and still little attention was paid to the small West African nation.<sup>46</sup> While Kosovo and Somalia took centre stage, the situation in Sierra Leone deteriorated rapidly. In 1998, the UN Consolidated Appeal asked donors for \$20.2 million to address food and health needs, displaced people and refugee issues. By the year's end less than half that amount was received.<sup>47</sup>

- *Division of Roles* – meaning civilian and military action should be kept separate as much as possible.

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<sup>44</sup> Food Aid or Hidden Dumping, 22.

<sup>45</sup> Minear, Larry and Thomas Weiss. Mercy Under Fire: War and the Global Humanitarian Community. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995) 63.

<sup>46</sup> Smillie and Minear, 25.

<sup>47</sup> Smillie and Minear, 30.

Following September 11, 2001, the US led a military campaign against the Taliban government of Afghanistan. British and American military personnel delivered humanitarian aid supplies in civilian clothing while at the same time conducting surveillance operations.<sup>48</sup> This is problematic because it violates the neutrality of aid programs. Consequently, there is a risk that humanitarian space is lost as local authorities and populations begin to view humanitarian aid assistance as part of military operations. Furthermore, the safety and well-being of all aid workers is put at risk as locals become unsure of whether other aid groups even those that work independent of military forces and without military protection are indeed there representing humanitarian goals alone. This example reveals the delicate situation that emerges when blurring the roles of the military and civilian relief work.

These principles were affirmed by governments participating in the GHD Initiative, but also represent a set of values generally agreed upon by academics, non-governmental agencies and other members of the humanitarian community. Taken together, they create a fairly complete picture of the theoretical underpinnings of humanitarian action and form an ideal conception of aid donorship and delivery. In reality, aid donors and agencies would likely be the first to admit that these principles are often difficult to implement, overlooked or overtly ignored. Nonetheless, they provide normative goals that should continuously be aspired to and form the baseline against which aid politicization will be compared and assessed in subsequent chapters.

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<sup>48</sup> Butler, Genevieve. EU Constitution Risks Politicising Aid. *Global Policy Forum*, Alertnet. October 24, 2003. <<http://www.globalpolicy.org/ngos/aid/2003/1024eu.htm> (September 22, 2005).

As with aid agencies, the best way for donors to preserve humanitarian space is to maintain a high level of commitment to the Good Donorship Principles agreed to in Stockholm in 2003. This means providing assistance on the basis of needs, remaining committed to high quality assistance and maintaining a transparent dialogue with other key players, both bilaterally and in multilateral humanitarian forums. The experiences of recent crises in Afghanistan, the Middle East, Iraq, Darfur and elsewhere demonstrates that the aforementioned principles are key requirements for the effective delivery of aid, as well as maintaining access to populations in need, and for safeguarding the lives and security of humanitarian workers.<sup>49</sup>

As the above principles suggest, there are numerous ways in which aid can be distorted. It is misused to prop up totalitarian governments, regional warlords or militia forces; it can prolong conflicts, be misappropriated and/or be delivered with short-term objections only creating a situation of dependency. However, this thesis will deal specifically with donor aid distortion. This type of politicization is demarcated by the fact that the very governments that are providing humanitarian relief may be using this aid primarily to further their own goals and interests. As indicated below this threshold is usually identified by looking at whether the principles of aid have been upheld and by identifying both the direct and indirect power influences of the political in the realm of humanitarian aid. These two characteristics are examined in the context of each of the four categories introduced below.

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<sup>49</sup> Report from the Commission - Annual Report 2004 - (ECHO) {SEC(2005) 1481} /\* COM/2005/0580 final \*/ < <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52005DC0580:EN:HTML> > (September 22, 2005).

## Degrees Of Politicization

While all aid is political, there is a point at which political influence becomes politicization. To establish a better conceptualization of this transition into politicization, four distinct but sometimes overlapping situations of political involvement are discernable based on two key characteristics. The first is whether the principles of humanitarian assistance are respected and upheld in so far as possible. The second is the understanding of the relationship between politics and humanitarian aid.<sup>50</sup> Both the relationship between humanitarianism and the political, and the sanctity of humanitarian principles of aid, are generally understood to be important factors when looking at whether a donor or aid organization is operating in a politicized manner.

These two characteristics of discerning politicization can be placed on a spectrum of degrees of politicization. On the one end we find *pure humanitarianism*, in other words, situations in which absolute altruism rules and the principles of aid are all upheld void of all donor political interests. On the other end we find the most politicized type of aid, *self-interested humanitarianism* where donors use aid only to further their own objectives, where no consideration given to the recipients in need. Arguably both extremes of the first and last degrees are theoretical conceptions only.

In the following sections I define all four degrees of politicization. Each category is applicable particularly to aid agencies but I will also be using the categories to discuss the European Union's aid program. The creation of four categories is intended not to oversimplify the phenomenon, but rather to demonstrate the range of political involvement and different assumptions that underline each in order to provide some

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<sup>50</sup> Michael Barnett makes this distinction in his creation of three camps of humanitarian organizations. (*Humanitarianism Transformed*, 12).

clarity in what is occurring at each particular degree. It also provides a framework to analyze what degree of political influence is inevitable due to the inseparable interplay of the political factors of planning and delivering humanitarian assistance, and where aid transitions from the realm of the political to the realm of the politicized.

### ***Pure Humanitarianism***

At the farthest end of the politicization spectrum we find pure humanitarianism. Upholding all the principles of aid and believing that humanitarian aid and politics should be strictly dichotomized, this is the least politicized (at the furthest end, unpoliticized) and theoretically most effective form of humanitarian aid. It is characterized by its minimalist aim of saving lives and the assumption that this is the first and foremost aim of humanitarianism. This type of humanitarian aid remains a goal towards which many of the main aid agencies strive. In reality, aid actors are often swept up in the politics that by definition accompany a CHE.

When the idea of humanitarianism was first conceptualized and into the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, most charitable organizations had a pure humanitarian approach to their work. However, in the current state of international affairs where in many countries “there is no regard for international humanitarian law by war criminals and even child soldiers, where civilians, relief personnel and journalists are targets; where foreign assistance fuels warfare and the local war economy”<sup>51</sup> many have turned away from what they believe is an over-simplistic, philosophical interpretation that is unable to deal with the current realities of humanitarian emergencies.

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<sup>51</sup> Weiss, Thomas G. Researching Humanitarian Intervention: Some Lessons. (*Journal of Peace Research* 38, No. 4, July 2001) 422.

In many cases, the failure of aid operations was blamed on the inability of one or several principles to ensure a positive outcome. However, this perception, I would argue, is based on the inability to uphold one or more of the principles in a given situation despite the desire to abide by them. In other words, the movement away from or beyond this type of an approach reflects the acknowledgement that it is virtually impossible to achieve a situation where all principles are met at all times, rather than a turn away from them because of an ideological rejection.

However, the criticisms of this model are in principle the same ones that have been used to criticize the humanitarian enterprise itself. Namely, that the realities of complex humanitarian emergencies are not easily solved by principles that can seem idealistic at times. For example, CHEs do not always allow for neutrality, such as in the case of genocide where one group are aggressors and the neutral provision of humanitarian assistance would support the perpetrators of violence also. Furthermore, providing food, water and supplies (which are overwhelmingly what humanitarian aid consists of) to save lives in the short-term does nothing to address the structural causes that led to the crisis in the first place. In some cases, humanitarian aid policies, such as a focus on short-term, emergency assistance can actually create additional problems, such as a situation of dependency.

### ***Wilsonian Humanitarianism***

The term “Wilsonian organizations” was coined by Michael Barnett to describe a more expansive and involved approach to humanitarian work based on Woodrow Wilson’s humanitarian efforts following the First World War.<sup>52</sup> Found next to pure

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<sup>52</sup> Barnett, 13.

humanitarianism on the politicization spectrum, this category takes into account the complexities of humanitarian emergencies and attempts to advocate on behalf of the victims of humanitarian crises. Adherents of Wilsonian humanitarianism will act in political spheres yet oppose politicization. The difference is in the fact that humanitarian interests are pursued via political means, as opposed to a situation of politicization where other interests (i.e. domestic or foreign policy issues) are pursued by humanitarian means.

Practitioners of Wilsonian humanitarianism generally uphold humanitarian principles and aim to extend universal values to vulnerable people, for example by speaking out against human rights violations. However, they are not “principle fundamentalists” in the sense that their first priority rests on whether or not impartiality, independence, neutrality and so forth have been maintained. Rather they tend to use a first-order and second-order dichotomy. The only first-order principle is life and human dignity (or humanity) and it trumps all other considerations. All remaining issues are considered second-order principles and function as operational principles rather than moral absolutes.<sup>53</sup> So while Wilsonian humanitarianism respects all humanitarian principles, in a situation where some of the principles must be compromised – such as violating the principle of neutrality by speaking out against what they perceive to be causing or exasperating a humanitarian crisis– they would go ahead and do so.

The criticisms of Wilsonian humanitarians are varied. Some would argue that Wilsonian humanitarians - although they will lobby governments and the public in support of those they assist through advocating and promoting respect for the principles of humanitarian - still do nothing to address the structural causes of many of the world’s worst humanitarian disasters, and in some cases potentially sacrifice longer term

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<sup>53</sup> Weiss, Researching Humanitarian Intervention: Some Lessons, 422.

solutions to help those presently at risk. These critics would argue that without addressing the underlying causes of humanitarian emergencies, all we can hope for is a type of band-aid response, which ultimately does nothing to achieve long-term solutions. Those more closely aligned with a pure humanitarian perspective would caution against entering the political realm at all. They argue this will lead to partisanship and could risk violating the principle of independence as agencies enter into symbiotic relationships with political actors, and could jeopardize their ability to work according to their mandate alone.

### *New Humanitarianism*

Fiona Fox acutely describes new humanitarianism as “principled, human rights based, politically sensitive and geared towards strengthening those forces that bring peace and stability to the developing world.”<sup>54</sup> As mentioned, this approach is a recent addition to the discipline. It developed in the early 1990s as an orthodoxy that was premised on a belief that aid should play an active role in responding to the causes of a conflict.<sup>55</sup> Like the Wilsonian model, new humanitarianism developed out of a desire to correct past failures, specifically it opposes the idea of the “well fed dead”. New humanitarianism prioritizes human rights over traditional humanitarian principles, which it sees as “naïve and morally questionable.”<sup>56</sup> Alain Destexhe writes:

It must be stated once more that passing food through the window when nothing is being done to get the assassin out of the house is not a humanitarian act...In cases of aggression, crimes against humanity and genocide, the international community can no longer invoke neutrality and be satisfied with an exclusively humanitarian

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<sup>54</sup> Fox, 275.

<sup>55</sup> Macrae, Joanna. *Aiding Recover? The Crisis of Aid in Chronic Political Emergencies*. (London: Zed Books, 2001) 2.

<sup>56</sup> Fox, 275.

approach. Doing so renders it an accomplice to the most criminal regimes.<sup>57</sup>

New humanitarianism attempts to use a broader approach to meet the needs of people beyond those of basic subsistence and over a longer period of time than emergency or recovery stages would warrant. This could include condemning the actions of a leader or his party all the way to working towards regime change and the implementation of a functional democracy with popular elections. New humanitarianism acts on the basis of an understood solidarity with the victims of humanitarian disasters. Proponents act to assist in finding long-term solutions forged with humanitarian and political tools.

This type of response, therefore, requires that various parties, including governments, but also non-governmental organizations, make decisions about how *best* to address a complex crisis including ensuring that systematic human rights violations are addressed. This is one of new humanitarianism's weaknesses in that many argue that NGOs specifically are not in a position, both in terms of ability, but also mandated legitimacy, to make these types of decisions. They argue this type of response is nothing more than "an exercise in ideological vanity – polishing one's own political correctness in public."<sup>58</sup> Furthermore, it presumes that there is a consensus among aid agencies on the ground, surrounding what action should be taken next, and what the desired result in a particular emergency should be.

Perhaps new humanitarianism's greatest strength (which perhaps leads to its greatest weakness) is its recognition that providing relief supplies does not address the

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<sup>57</sup> Destexhe, Alain. The Shortcomings of 'New Humanitarianism.' in Between Sovereignty and Global Governance: The United Nations, the State and Civil Society, eds. Paolini, Albert J., Anthony P Jarvis and Christian Reus-Smit. (New York: St. Martin's Press Inc., 1998) 99.

<sup>58</sup> Fox, 281.

underlying political, economic, and social factors and structures that may have led to the crisis in the first place. It argues that providing aid is not enough; one must “add a rights-based approach which suggests that...aid must also be judged against how it contributes to promoting human rights.”<sup>59</sup> However, taking a human rights based approach can at times mean withholding aid as new humanitarianism takes a more holistic approach to solving crises. The implication here is that the humanitarian imperative of providing assistance simply to save lives is not sufficient. Adherents to new humanitarianism argue that in some cases making aid conditional on the fulfillment of certain requirements is in the best interests of the recipients as it will bring about a long-term solution. By contrast pure humanitarians and to a lesser degree Wilsonian humanitarians, while being mindful of the effects of their aid programs on human rights, will not attach aid to wider political goals.

Nonetheless, some NGOs oppose this new view on humanitarianism and fear that it “undermines the principle of a universal right to relief and allows for the creation of ‘deserving and undeserving victims.’”<sup>60</sup> Once that occurs Jean Herve Bradol describes the ensuing result as a “fatal selection process” that must be vehemently opposed in principle and avoided in practice.<sup>61</sup> This type of “peace before people” method, while it focuses on a long-term solution and the creation of a lasting peace, accepts a “scenario in which people are left to suffer and die in the interests of a long-term political solutions.”<sup>62</sup>

### *Self-Interest Humanitarianism*

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<sup>59</sup> Fox, 278.

<sup>60</sup> Fox, 282.

<sup>61</sup> Weissman, Fabrice. *In the Shadow of ‘Just War’: Violence, Politics and Humanitarian Action*. (Ithica, New York: Cornell University Press, 2004) 9.

<sup>62</sup> Fox, 284.

This final degree of politicization is found at the other end of the spectrum, and thus stands in opposition to pure humanitarianism. At the furthest point, self-interest humanitarianism embodies a theoretical conception whereby the principles of aid are secondary considerations and humanitarian considerations are deeply embedded within political aims. As seen with new humanitarianism, some principles, such as the principle of humanity (we help because we value life) are logically implicit in all donor aid funding and it is therefore difficult to conceive a situation void of all humanitarian principles. Self-interest humanitarianism tends to view humanitarian aid as a tool for achieving political interests such as creating a sphere of influence, pursuing foreign policy objectives and so forth. By achieving this goal through the provision of aid, the situation appears to be “win-win”, however in practice the wider political concerns may trump the needs of recipients and these then become secondary. In this way, the politicization of aid results and the effectiveness and integrity of aid is jeopardized.

Therefore, as one might anticipate, this is a broad category, which includes various degrees of politicization. One example might be when a state uses the word “humanitarian” primarily to win public support or gain legitimacy for its foreign affairs policies. The war in Iraq was legitimized, we now know, based on false evidence provided by the Bush administration about the danger Saddam Hussein’s government posed to the international community, and also through Bush’s expressed desire to extend “freedom, liberty and democracy” to the Iraqi people. In retrospect, this defined “humanitarian” action was steeped in US gain and self-interest. Furthermore, using the word “humanitarian” to describe the US aid programs in Iraq some argue is “purely propaganda because international law requires occupying forces take care of the basic

needs of the population.”<sup>63</sup> From these two examples – both the justification for going to war and the aid program in its aftermath – it is evident that humanitarian acts and employing humanitarian language can be used to garner support for a particular policy.

This form of politicization is the most troubling in that the needs of victims take a backseat to political interests. Moreover, the fact that a field and its associated terminology - which is fundamentally about a desire to assist others - is used to win support or in some cases mislead people into supporting political actions, even wars, is equally worrisome. This is particularly true in the current information age where omnipresent media make it imperative that governments justify foreign policy actions, particularly in the case of deploying military forces. The use of humanitarian terminology invokes a sympathetic response in people that lends itself easily to political manipulation; people tend to have emotional responses to human suffering and favour humanitarian assistance in response to a variety of international crises. It is therefore tempting for political elites to dress their foreign policies in humanitarian clothes as a means of drumming up popular support. When this happens, self-interest humanitarianism can lead to a situation that is benefiting not the recipients but the donors. It is not always clear whether states claiming to act on humanitarian principles are actually doing so or whether they are using the enterprise to gain legitimacy, support and/or an acceptable rationale for their actions. In order to make this distinction, it is imperative that the situation of local populations is taken into account and questions are asked about whether their needs and interests have been given primary consideration.

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<sup>63</sup> Frangonikolopoulos, 53.

These categories are much less clear in practice than the above descriptions might initially suggest. They are neither exhaustive nor mutually exclusive, as various aspects of aid projects may fit into different categories. Also, there is a great deal of variation within each category. For instance there is a clear difference between how the first and the last category might appear as theoretical constructs versus how they manifest themselves in real-life situations. What this spectrum does provide, however, is a framework with which to analysis the European Union's aid programs (discussed in chapter two), and its operating partners (discussed in chapter three), who together play equally important roles when it comes to upholding the principles of humanitarian aid and in constructing and defining the relationship between the political and the humanitarian spheres. The four degrees of politicization also allow for normative discussion about what degree of politicization is both realistic given that aid is political, and which is most useful in dealing with humanitarian emergencies. Finally, the four categories provide a better understanding of the slippery slope that leads to politicization, for example in assessing how certain aspects of Wilsonian or new humanitarianism might easily lead to self- interest humanitarianism.

## **Conclusion**

It is clear that the humanitarian paradigm is growing exponentially. It is simultaneously quickly evolving as donors and practitioners attempt to explain and learn from past failures. This chapter has provided a background on the history and current challenges encountered in the field of humanitarian aid particularly in the case of complex humanitarian emergencies. It has argued that while politicization is not

intrinsically negative in that political interest can lead to increased awareness and funding, it argues that when it is left unchecked, the interference of political interests into the goals and motivations of aid in most cases result in negative consequence for recipients.

To understand politicization better, and to identify a baseline of what unpoliticized aid would look like, four degrees of politicization were discussed, based on whether the principles of aid are upheld and what the relationship is between political and humanitarian realms. The first degree of politicization is totally void of politicization at its purest theoretical end. It embodies an ideal conception and baseline for pure unpoliticized aid both in terms of upholding the principles of aid and isolating the humanitarian realms from greater political powers. The next, Wilsonian humanitarianism still supports the principles of aid but will undertake political activities to advocate for the plight of those they support. Next on the spectrum, new humanitarianism represents the latest trend in humanitarian work. It advocates for aid programs that are both rights-based and goal-oriented in support of long-term solutions. Finally, self-interest humanitarianism subordinates the principles of aid to foreign policy objectives, institutional self-interest or other self-serving aims, privileging them over the needs of recipients.

Many organizations and governments have expressed support for upholding the principles of aid, which are generally understood to ensure unpoliticized and effective humanitarian assistance. Paradoxically, the principles re-affirmed at Stockholm in 2003 are also under siege following several perceived humanitarian failures. However, it is imperative to emphasize that aid should not be supplied in lieu of political or military

responses in the case of a CHE. The purpose of humanitarian aid should not be expanded beyond relieving the most basic of suffering. It should be used to address humanitarian need in the face of disaster while other means are sought to address underlying causes.

The next chapter will assess the European Union's aid programs in light of the discussion on politicization set out in this chapter. It will describe ECHO's institutional structure, policies and how these look in practice, in order to analyze whether these have allowed ECHO to operate relatively free from political interference, as is often suggested, or whether a higher degree of politicization is discernible. It also addresses some of the challenges ECHO faces from other EU instruments that work in the area of humanitarian assistance.

## II The European Union's Aid Program

This chapter sets out the legal framework, mandate, and structure of the European Union's Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO). It discusses the decision-making processes and the needs assessment indicators used to inform ECHO's funding decisions. Some operational shortcomings are also discussed including ECHO's visibility requirements, operational dependence and projectification which threaten the unpoliticized nature of ECHO's aid. The chapter concludes with a discussion about possible future encroachments ECHO must face from within the European Union as other agencies become involved in humanitarian work. In many ways, ECHO appears to be a pure humanitarian organization operating with a needs focus and respecting the principles of aid. Furthermore ECHO enjoys relative institutional autonomy from the more political bodies of the EU. However, ECHO falls short of pure humanitarian aid program in several ways: it lacks clear policy for operationalizing its needs assessment indicators, access to Emergency Reserve funding requires political approval and the opaque and flexible decision-making processes are inevitably left vulnerable to political influence.

### Background

The European Union is one of the largest contributors of humanitarian aid in the world.<sup>64</sup> In 2005, ECHO spent €652 million on humanitarian assistance through partner organizations including intergovernmental organizations (i.e. UN agencies), NGOs and the ICRC. ECHO is a Directorate-General (DG) of the European Commission, the

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<sup>64</sup> Macrae, Joanna, ed. The New Humanitarianisms: A Review of Trends in Global Humanitarian Action. (HPG Report 11, April 2002) 11.

executive of the EU. The Commission is the primary policy engine of the EU and is charged with taking the initiation of legislative proposals and the execution of legislation and policies in the interest of the Union as a whole, rather than individual member states. It is led by a College of Commissioners consisting of one Commissioner for each of the 27 member states and is structured into DGs (likened to Ministries) and smaller Services that work in preparation and implementation of the College's decisions.

Humanitarian aid is not an area of authority bestowed onto the European Community when it was established under the Treaty of Rome in 1957. However, EC policy in the area of humanitarian activities dates back to the 1970s.<sup>65</sup> Spending in the area of humanitarian aid began to increase significantly in post-war years and especially in 1991 against the backdrop of the 1990-91 Gulf War. As spending increased "it was clear that the small secretariat of specialists, located in DG VIII (development cooperation) needed augmentation."<sup>66</sup> This was confirmed by a widespread acceptance that the EU's aid response to the Gulf War was inadequate. Moreover, a general understanding emerged that the EU was well-positioned to take on a coordinating role amongst member nations in the area of humanitarian aid. At the same time many "Eurocrats" advocated for the creation of a humanitarian aid office to give the EU's humanitarian aid effort a higher profile both at home and abroad.<sup>67</sup>

The implication here is that ECHO's creation had both practical benefits in terms of coordinating the community's humanitarian assistance, but also strategic benefits such as increasing the European Union's profile and influence abroad. Joanna Macrae argues that "although humanitarian aid was explicitly seen as non-political, the criteria for and

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<sup>65</sup> Macrae, *The New Humanitarianisms*, 55.

<sup>66</sup> Macrae, *The New Humanitarianisms*, 55.

<sup>67</sup> Macrae, *The New Humanitarianisms*, 1.

method of intervention by the EC were never precisely defined leaving a wide margin for interpretation.”<sup>68</sup>

Although it was expected that ECHO would eventually become involved in delivery and implementation of humanitarian aid programs, it has in fact never developed an operational capacity with the exception of ECHO Flight.<sup>69</sup> The official status of ECHO was not clarified until its 2001 mission statement in which the DG committed to working as a funding body of humanitarian aid only.<sup>70</sup> As such, ECHO distributes funds through operational agencies including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), including UN Agencies, and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).<sup>71</sup> ECHO works primarily with operating partners that are pre-approved as signatories of Framework Partnership Agreements (FPA).

FPA's govern ECHO's relationship with its implementing partners and are a means “of seeking to enhance trust and transparency between donor and recipient organizations, while maintaining the benefits of more loosely tied aid.”<sup>72</sup> FPA's also allow ECHO to work quickly in releasing funds in the wake of a natural or otherwise unexpected disaster. Because of the pre-approved status of organizations that are signatories to the FPA, ECHO can quickly disperse much needed funds, often within 24-48 hours.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Macrae, *The New Humanitarianisms*, 55.

<sup>69</sup> ECHO Flight is an air transport service serving remote communities in the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes Region that would otherwise be inaccessible (For more information see ECHO's website at [http://ec.europa.eu/echo/field/flight/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/echo/field/flight/index_en.htm)).

<sup>70</sup> Mowjee, Tasneem and Joanna Macrae. *Accountability and Influence in the European Community Humanitarian Aid Office*, (HPG Background Paper, December 2002) 4.

<sup>71</sup> The benefits of working through operating partners in the field are discussed further in Chapter 3.

<sup>72</sup> Macrae, *The New Humanitarianisms*, 13.

<sup>73</sup> ECHO website <[http://ec.europa.eu/echo/partners/first\\_emergency\\_aid\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/echo/partners/first_emergency_aid_en.htm)> (September 19, 2006).

## Legal Framework and Mandate

ECHO was established in 1992 under the first pillar of the three pillar framework codified by the Maastricht Treaty (or formally: Treaty on European Union). The Maastricht Treaty changed the institutional structure of the EU; the first pillar encompasses the Three Communities<sup>74</sup> or the Treaty on European Union, the second became the Common Foreign and Security Policy and the third established Cooperation on Justice and Home Affairs.

ECHO manages the Community's humanitarian aid funding as allocated in the Community budget. Council Regulation 1257/96 states ECHO's mandate is to "prevent or relieve human suffering, according to victims without discrimination on the grounds of race, ethnic group, religion, sex, age, nationality or political affiliation and must not be guided by, or subject to, political considerations."<sup>75</sup> Special attention is given to forgotten crises as a principle of ECHO's needs-based mandate. A forgotten crisis is defined as a situation "where there is a combination of major humanitarian needs, little, if no media coverage, and also little funding, often the sign of a lack of political interest, resulting in limited presence of humanitarian organization."<sup>76</sup> But ECHO does more than just fund humanitarian aid, according to the DG it also:

- carries out feasibility studies for its humanitarian operations.
- monitors humanitarian projects and sets up coordination arrangements.

<sup>74</sup> The European Communities included the European Economic Community (EEC), the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom) and the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC).

<sup>75</sup> Council Regulation (EC) No 1257/96 of 20 June 1996 Concerning Humanitarian Aid. (*Official Journal* L 163, 02/07/1996) 1.

<sup>76</sup> DG ECHO 2006 Operation Strategy. <[http://ec.europa.eu/echo/pdf\\_files/strategy/2006/strat\\_2006\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/echo/pdf_files/strategy/2006/strat_2006_en.pdf)> (October 5, 2006) 2.

- promotes and coordinates disaster prevention measures by training specialists, strengthening institutions and running pilot micro-projects.
- gives its partners technical assistance.
- raises public awareness about humanitarian issues in Europe and elsewhere, through actions carried out directly by ECHO in order to promote the awareness of humanitarian aid, and
- finances network and training study initiatives in the humanitarian field (NOHA).<sup>77</sup>

ECHO's 2006 Operation Strategy outlines three main additional priorities. First, to facilitate the return of self-sufficiency for affected populations<sup>78</sup>; second, to work towards disaster preparedness to reduce the vulnerability of populations at risk; finally, to assist in enhanced coordination of aid between member states and to support the United Nations in its international coordination of humanitarian aid.<sup>79</sup> These three priorities are addressing issues within the area of best practices for aid delivery, based on past experiences and lessons learned. They do not specifically relate to the issues of political influence and therefore do not reveal especially useful information in terms of a measure of politicization. The Strategy does affirm ECHO's commitment to the Good Humanitarian Donorship Principles agreed on in Stockholm in June 2003 and places specific emphasis on the principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence.

An ECHO discussion paper published in May of 1999 entitled *Towards a Human Rights Approach to European Commission Humanitarian Aid* argues "From a rights perspective, access to victims...is not at any cost...[it] will be sought if it is the most effective way to contribute to the human rights situation."<sup>80</sup> Therefore, it appears there

<sup>77</sup> DG ECHO Website < [http://ec.europa.eu/echo/presentation/mandate\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/echo/presentation/mandate_en.htm) > (October 5, 2006).

<sup>78</sup> What is meant here is concern that issues of dependency be avoided, attention is not given to solving wider structural problems that caused the crisis in the first place.

<sup>79</sup> DG ECHO 2006 Operation Strategy. 2.

<sup>80</sup> Quoted in Fox, 279.

was some discussion at the turn of this century regarding the role of human rights within ECHO's funding initiatives. A Communication from the Commission (to Parliament and the Council) in 2001 clarified ECHO's position:

Regulation 1257/96 states unequivocally that EC 'humanitarian aid decisions must be taken impartially and solely according to the victims' needs and interests'. EC humanitarian aid is therefore provided to all victims of crises, unconditionally, impartially and independently of political convictions. It is not subject to recipient countries' human rights records.<sup>81</sup>

The communication affirms that ECHO-funded humanitarian activities should seek to respect and promote human rights, even if aid decisions can not be based on a country's acceptable human rights record. Consequently, since February 1, 2001, applications submitted to ECHO for funding must describe how the proposed activities would affect the human rights situation in the field.<sup>82</sup>

The inclusion of human rights concerns, in this case, however, does not push ECHO into the new humanitarianism category. The recognition of various human rights issues on the ground relate (as was the case above) directly to best practices. In this sense, human rights are used to guide service delivery. The human rights agenda is not – as would be characteristic of new humanitarianism – used as leverage to achieve wider political goals, nor is it invoked as the basis of aid conditionalities. ECHO is concerned primarily with operational partners being mindful of the effects of their activities on the human rights of the recipients.

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<sup>81</sup> Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament, The European Union's Role in Promoting Human Rights and Democratization in Third Countries. (Brussels, 8 May 2001 COM(2001) 252 final) 12.

<sup>82</sup> The European Union's Role in Promoting Human Rights, 12.

According to the first characteristic of determining politicization, described in chapter one, ECHO's formal mandate is indicative of pure humanitarianism. However, the operationalization of these policies in accordance to pure humanitarianism is not an inevitable outcome of this as discussed in detail below.

## **Structure**

ECHO is under the direction of a Commissioner it shares with DG Development. Michael Louis, a former Belgian Minister of Foreign Affairs is currently the Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid. All Commissioners are supported by a personal Cabinet of around six top officials and support staff. The main responsibility of Cabinet members is to keep their Commissioner informed of developments within his or her policy area. Cabinet members will also liaise with other parts of the Commission and generally act to influence and shape policy proposals.<sup>83</sup>

The balance of power between member states and the Commission depends on the interests of the member states and the legal standing of the Commission's actions.<sup>84</sup> Through the principle of comitology,<sup>85</sup> member states are able to maintain a certain amount of control. Comitology is used in the case of humanitarian aid as well. The Humanitarian Aid Committee (HAC) which was first established in 1999 to govern the humanitarian affairs regulation consists of representatives of the member states. It must approve long-term spending decisions, called Global Plans and holds several meetings annually to discuss general policy issues. The role of the HAC is discussed in further detail below.

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<sup>83</sup> Nugent, 118.

<sup>84</sup> Macrae, *The New Humanitarianisms*, 52.

<sup>85</sup> Comitology is the term used to describe the arrangements through which the Commission consults with member states in the implementation process. Member state representatives form part of these committees that are chaired by the Commission. (Nugent, 136.)

## **Budgetary Decisions**

ECHO's annual budget is determined through a consultation procedure between the College of Commissioners and the budgetary committees of the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers.<sup>86</sup> Because humanitarian aid is considered a non-obligatory expenditure, the European Parliament – not the Council – has the final authority. Once an amount has been determined, each state's contribution is automatically determined.<sup>87</sup> There are three major types of financial decisions: primary emergency decisions, emergency decisions and non-emergency decision (ad hoc or global plans). Unless otherwise indicated, the following three sections are based on information from an internal ECHO document entitled, *ECHO Humanitarian Aid Decisions – Manual of Procedures*.

### ***Primary Emergency Decision***

This type of decision is taken to address the immediate needs following an unforeseen natural or man-made disaster. The decision is prepared by the relevant desk officer and must be taken within 72 hours of the outbreak of a new crisis (for example the beginning of refugee movements). Primary emergency decisions can not commit more than €3 million. The duration of the operation can be no longer than three months and requires operating partners to have signed the FPA. The General Director of ECHO takes the primarily emergency decisions. The Commissioner must be kept informed and consulted but does not take the decision. Cabinet, the HAC and other services of the

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<sup>86</sup> Randel, Judith and Tony German. *Global Humanitarian Assistance 2000*. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee, United Nations. < <http://www.devinit.org/0p5-1.pdf> > (September 9, 2006) 40.

<sup>87</sup> Randel, 41.

commission do not need to be consulted. Commission services, HAC and the College of Commissionaires are informed by ECHO once the decision is taken.<sup>88</sup>

### ***Emergency Decision***

Emergency decisions are taken in similar situations as primary humanitarian emergencies. However, emergency decisions do not need to be taken within 72 hour of a crisis. There is also no limit to the amount of funding that can be committed (aside from those of budgetary restraint). As with primary emergencies decisions, emergency decisions must also be delivered by agencies that are signatories to the FPA. They must be delivered within six months and are made by the Director General. They do not require approval of the Commissioner or Cabinet nor do they require approval of other services within the Commission or the HAC. As with primary humanitarian emergencies, the Commissioner is notified and informally consulted.

### ***Non-emergency Decisions***

#### **Ad hoc decisions**

According to ECHO's *Manual of Procedures*, Ad hoc or non-emergency decisions are typically taken as a follow-up to humanitarian emergencies, and usually address a specific, short term objective. They entail comparatively small funding allocations, usually below €10 million, and work with a relatively small number of partners, for example, a vaccination campaign. Usually these are implemented following the end of the six months during which emergency decisions are in effect. However, any decision with an operational time frame of more than six months would fall into this

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<sup>88</sup> Personal email correspondence with ECHO staff member, October 18, 2006.

category. Thus in practice, many Ad hoc Decisions are relatively large funding allocations and involve many operating partners.<sup>89</sup>

### **Global Plans**

While ECHO continuously reaffirms its mandate to provide short-term humanitarian aid in disaster situations, it also employs longer six to 12 month strategies called Global Plans. These are created for regions where the scale and complexity of an emergency is such that the need for humanitarian aid is likely to continue. Theoretically, there is no financial limit for Global Plans, and their duration can be extended for up to 18 months.

Global Plans are prepared by a desk officer in consultation with field offices, delegations, other Commission services (such as DG External Relations and DG Development) and often in coordination with international organisations. Cabinet and other Commission Services must be given five working days to approve a Global Plan. The Plan then goes before the HAC for final approval.

There are three main benefits to using Global Plans. First, they are easier to administer because only one funding decision is taken. Second, they allow ECHO to take a more proactive role as opposed to simply responding to partners' requests for funding. Finally, they allow for better coordination as various aspects of humanitarian aid planning is encompassed in a single document.<sup>90</sup> One ECHO official estimates 70 percent of ECHO funds are allocated through Global Plans.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> This is discussed in further detail in the Assessment Indicators section below.

<sup>90</sup> Mowjee and Macrae. Accountability and Influence, 11.

<sup>91</sup> Mowjee and Macrae. Accountability and Influence, 11.

## **Emergency Reserve**

In addition to its annual budget, ECHO can also use funds from an emergency reserve for unforeseeable humanitarian emergencies. To access this reserve, an inter-institutional procedure called the trilogue (Council, Parliament and Commission) is used. The initial request for emergency reserve funding can come from any of the three institutions. The procedural steps such as the preparation of necessary documents are initiated by the Commission services concerned, in the case of Humanitarian Aid, this is done by ECHO staff often in consultation with other Commission services. Approval must be obtained from all three institutions before the emergency reserve funds can be released and this can take many months. However, there have been cases where this has been done within weeks such as during the Kosovo crisis discussed in chapter four.

The emergency reserve fund can be accessed once 80 percent of the annual budget has been committed.<sup>92</sup> The reserve budget allocated for any particular year cannot be carried over into the next fiscal year. Any unused portion is lost to ECHO and the emergency reserve for the following year is likely to decrease. Thus, there is a clear incentive to use the entire reserve fund. There is some evidence that suggests the budgetary authorities prefer to provide a large reserve fund for ECHO instead of a larger budget because only about half of ECHO's budgetary funding can be allocated in advance.<sup>93</sup>

## **Assessment Indicators**

As mentioned, ECHO's mission is to provide assistance based primarily on need and pays specific attention to forgotten crises. To do so, it has established two indicators

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<sup>92</sup> Randel, 41.

<sup>93</sup> Randel, 41.

to determine need: the Global Needs Assessment (GNA) indicator and the Forgotten Crisis Assessment (FCA) indicator. Both indicators are based on several data sets provided by various international organisations and research institutes. These “top down” indicators are combined with “bottom up” reports from ECHO field offices to rank selected countries<sup>94</sup> according to need.<sup>95</sup>

The GNA indicator is based on data in four main categories of 8 indicators. They are as follows:

**Table 1 - GNA Assessment Indicators By Category**

<i>Category</i>	<i>Indicators (followed by measurement tool in brackets)</i>
Overall Situation	1. Human Development (HDI) <sup>96</sup> 2. Human Poverty (HPI) <sup>97</sup>
Exposure to Major Disasters	3. Natural Disasters (CRED) <sup>98</sup> 4. Conflicts (HIIK) <sup>99</sup>
Humanitarian Effects of Population Movements	5. Refugees (UNHCR) <sup>100</sup> 6. Internally Displaced Persons (UNHCR, US Committee for Refugees, Global IDP Project <sup>101</sup> ) <sup>102</sup>
Situation of Children	7. Malnutrition/Undernourishment (UNICEF) <sup>103</sup> 8. Mortality (UNICEF) <sup>104</sup>

Source: Methodological Note, European Commission, Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO 4/ML (2006)

<sup>94</sup> In total, 140 countries and territories were chosen based on the World Bank’s list of world economies. To arrive at this list the following were deleted: all countries classified by the World Bank as High-income economies, as it is assumed that those countries are able to cope themselves with a humanitarian disaster; all Member States as well as the EU candidates, as they are not mentioned in DG ECHO’s legal base as a priority for its operations; and some small islands with limited sovereignty including American Samoa, Marshall Islands, Northern Mariana Islands and Mayotte. (GNI and Forgotten Crisis Indicator Methodological Notes, February 2006).

<sup>95</sup> DG ECHO Methodological Notes, February 2006,

<[http://ec.europa.eu/echo/pdf\\_files/strategic\\_methodologies/methodology\\_2006.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/echo/pdf_files/strategic_methodologies/methodology_2006.pdf)> (Accessed Sept 18, 2006) 2.

<sup>96</sup> Human Development Index (HDI) of the United Nations Development program.

<sup>97</sup> Human Poverty Index (HPI) of the United Nations Development program.

<sup>98</sup> International Disaster Database maintained by the Centre for Research of the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED).

<sup>99</sup> Data provided by the Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research (HIIK).

<sup>100</sup> UNHCR Population Statistic (Provisional).

<sup>101</sup> Directed by the Norwegian Refugee Council.

<sup>102</sup> Due to the difficulty in collected reliable data in this area three sources are used.

<sup>103</sup> UNICEF’s *State of the World’s Children Report, 2004*.

<sup>104</sup> UNICEF’ *State of the World’s Children Report, 2004*.

A score of 1 (low need), 2 (medium need) or 3 (high need) is assigned to each country in every category. These are then tallied to determine the final ranking.

ECHO officials have acknowledged there are limitations to the GNA. These include the fact that all information is relative, which can be at times misleading. For example, countries are ranked in ordinal values. This means a country that is ranked at the number four position is not twice as badly off as country two. Furthermore, the GNA does not take into account returnees who have gone back to their homes following displacement, nor does it factor in the coping capacity of a country because this data is often not available.<sup>105</sup> However, while the indicators are not perfect, they allow a kind of semi-objective assessment that when added together with a field officer's report is intended to provide a fairly accurate assessment of need and in accordance with pure humanitarianism.

In 2006, six new countries were added to the GNA list (Kiribati, Maldives, Oman, Palau, Samoa and Suriname) while two were taken off the list (the Bahamas and Croatia). Also, in an attempt to take account of the special situation found in Chechnya, a sub-national category was created for the region. However, many of the required data was not available for the Chechnya specifically (just for Russia as a whole) and thus a middle score of 2 was assigned to those categories.<sup>106</sup> Therefore the accuracy of this ranking is obviously questionable.

The Forgotten Crisis Assessment (FCA) is arrived at in much the same way. By using the four indicators outlined below, ECHO staff attempt to determine as best they

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<sup>105</sup> ECHO Methodological Note, 8/9.

<sup>106</sup> ECHO Methodological Note, 2.

can with the information available, areas of the world that have high need but that are for a variety of reasons overlooked by most other humanitarian actors.

- Need (based on the GNA without Official Development Assistance)
- External Assistance (Net ODA per capita)
- Media Coverage (Statistical analysis of news media relating to individual countries by key themes, such as “humanitarian crisis” or “conflict”)
- Assessment by ECHO units

Countries are selected to undergo the FCA based on whether they received a 2 or higher on the GNA indicator.<sup>107</sup> The four indicators above are applied and those countries that receive a specific score are then classified as a forgotten crisis. As with the GNA, the FCA also has limitations. For example, collecting and assessing media coverage is a perilous and fantastically imperfect task, if only because it involves selecting key words and searching various media sources in several languages.<sup>108</sup>

While theoretically these needs assessment indicators are achieving their intended purpose – to establish priorities according to need – it is unclear how the country rankings translate into actual funding. Without a policy on how these rankings will translate into proportional funding allocations, ECHO will not always provide funding on the basis of need. For example, ECHO allocated 50 million to the Palestinian Territories according to Humanitarian Aid Decision 23 02 01.<sup>109</sup> This amount is the second highest single allocation in funding decisions in 2006. The rationale, in part, is explained in the decision as follows:

Following the success of the Change and Reform’s party in the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) elections...the Government of Israel (GOI)

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<sup>107</sup> ECHO Methodological Note, 9.

<sup>108</sup> ECHO Methodological Note, 10.

<sup>109</sup> ECHO Humanitarian Aid Funding Decision 23 02 01.

<[http://ec.europa.eu/echo/pdf\\_files/decisions/2006/dec\\_pse\\_01000\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/echo/pdf_files/decisions/2006/dec_pse_01000_en.pdf)> (September 21, 2006).

stopped the transfer of Palestinian value added taxes (VAT) and customs taxes...this accounts for around 50 percent of the PA budget – thus precipitating a fiscal crisis. The decision of local banks not to cooperate with the PA due to concerns over their legal liability under US anti-terror legislation is also restricting payments that the PA can make and funds that it can receive. The fiscal crisis is resulting in the non-payment of salaries of 152,000 PA employees who directly support another one million people, or more than 25 percent of the Palestinian population. At the same time, main donors have reduced various categories of foreign assistance, mainly budgetary support to the PA.<sup>110</sup>

While certainly the situation is pronouncedly dire, a serious “fiscal crisis” does not seem to require priority over much more critical humanitarian disasters occurring in other parts of the world. As one might expect, the Palestinian Territories are ranked 56<sup>th</sup> on the GNA and given a need rating of only 2, or medium need (31 other countries, as noted earlier, were listed as being “high need” in the 2006 GNA and assigned a GNA rating of 3).<sup>111</sup> As illustrated by this example, there are clearly other factors that influenced this particular Decision including possible foreign policy objectives such as expanding the EU’s sphere of influence in the Middle East. This allocation was taken as an Ad Hoc Decision, and approved by the HAC on July 28, 2006 with an operational time limit of 18 months. The €50 million funding commitment was drawn from the emergency reserve fund. According to stipulated procedures, this means the Council, Parliament and the Commission had to approve the Decision. As stated above, the trilogue approval required to access the reserve will always be an indication of political will and support.

To further underline the disconnect between the GNA and ECHO funding allocations, a table listing the top needs countries (without ODA) and their associated funding allocations in 2005 and 2006 is attached as Appendix 2. A review of these

<sup>110</sup> ECHO Humanitarian Aid Funding Decision 23 02 01.

<sup>111</sup> ECHO Global Needs Assessment 2006.

<[http://ec.europa.eu/echo/pdf\\_files/strategic\\_methodologies/glob\\_needs\\_ass\\_2006\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/echo/pdf_files/strategic_methodologies/glob_needs_ass_2006_en.pdf)> (September 21, 2006).

figures raises several concerns. Not only do some funding figures seem relatively low considering ECHO has indicated these countries should be given top priority, but in many cases there was no funding provided at all. When questioned about this disconnect between funding and assessment results, one ECHO staff member explained the GNA and FCA do not differentiate between vulnerability caused by structural causes

of poverty or by disasters, natural or man-made. ECHO's mandate is limited to crises situation due to occurrence of a natural disaster or in case of conflict; also, if the needs are addressed by the development donors, ECHO has no more reason to continue its funding.<sup>112</sup>

However, it should be noted that the current GNA and FCA give credence to where crises either natural or “man-made” have occurred. The GNA includes a category titled, “Exposure to Major Disasters: Natural Disasters, Conflicts” and the FCA is based on the GNA. Therefore, it appears that ECHO is having difficulty aligning the two assessment indicators with funding allocations. One reason is likely the influence of political interests. The largest funding allocations were made to areas that were political sensitive (Afghanistan), geographically significant (Chechnya) or received recent and significant media attention and public support (Sudan, Congo and the Tsunami affected countries in 2005). The final category is particularly telling of a disconnect between the assessment indicators and funding decisions as the FCA indicator is intended to focus funding on crises that have effectively been overlooked by other donors and the media.

An interview in Brussels with a staff member of a large intergovernmental organization confirmed this problem. She stated that in some cases, a high ranking on ECHO’s GNA or FCA indicators is not sufficient to guarantee ECHO funding. She explained that she had contacted a desk officer for Iraq to discuss a proposal for funding.

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<sup>112</sup> Personal Email correspondence, Dec 4, 2006.

The response she received was that the Commissioner was looking to make Africa a priority and to increase focus on the African continent so there was no money available for projects in Iraq for that time. When questioned about this in a subsequent interview, an ECHO staff member explained that Iraq was no longer a nation that requires humanitarian assistance because the “war has ended” and that ECHO therefore felt the Development DG should take over.<sup>113</sup>

This flies in the face of ECHO’s normal long term humanitarian work through Global Plans in countries where there is a prolonged humanitarian crisis. Recent and ongoing events in Iraq, a country already fragile following 12 years of sanctions and two wars, has left a humanitarian disaster by any standards. As expected, Iraq was ranked 5th in the 2006 GNA assessment indicator and given an overall rating of 3 or “high need”. Based on this evidence, it is clear ECHO does not always operate according to its needs-based mandate and that political goals can at times supersede humanitarian ones.

The NGO Coordination Committee in Iraq (NCCI) representing 50 NGOs from 12 EU member nations and Norway has been critical of ECHO’s withdrawal from Iraq. The NCCI has publicly stressed the acute humanitarian needs facing Iraqis and recently petitioned the EU in a statement signed on November 8, 2006 to reconsider funding initiatives in Iraq. The statement urges ECHO to provide humanitarian assistance in accordance to its mandate to provide aid on the basis of need.<sup>114</sup>

This example is evidence of the fact that ECHO’s assessment indicators are still imperfect, and highlights the lack of a clear policy on how the indicators should translate into actual and proportionate funding. Interviews with ECHO staff revealed that both

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<sup>113</sup> Confidential interview with representative of ECHO, Brussels, June 2006.

<sup>114</sup> NGO Coordination Committee in Iraq Website <<http://www.ncciraq.org/spip.php?breve701>> (November 18, 2006).

funding indicators are currently being revised and will likely continue to be revised in coming years. However, the improvement of methodology or data collection will not make the indicators any more valuable if ECHO is not willing or able to operate according to the principles outlined in its mandate by implementing a policy to operationalize its assessment indicators.

### **Institutional Autonomy**

Notwithstanding the role of the Parliament and Council in accessing the emergency reserve and the problems associated with the GNA and FCA indicators, ECHO has successfully maintained a significant degree of “institutional autonomy from external intervention by member states and the other external relationship services, and from the [Common Foreign and Security Policy] CFSP.”<sup>115</sup> An evaluation of ECHO, published in a European Parliament session document states “The evaluation explicitly recommends that ECHO’s current status be maintained i.e. that the office be kept as a separate service in order to preserve and protect its capacity to respond rapidly and effectively to humanitarian crises.”<sup>116</sup> Thus ECHO’s institutional isolation appears to have broad support among the other bodies of the EU, largely, it appears, because of the recognition that the goals of aid are best achieved when it is delivered according to the principles of aid and independent from the organs of the EU influenced more acutely by the politics of member states.

As a former service, and now a DG of the Commission, it is intended to serve the interests of all EU nations, and is therefore not at the behest of any single member state.

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<sup>115</sup> Macrae, *The New Humanitarianisms*, 56.

<sup>116</sup> Report on the Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament: Assessment and future of Community humanitarian Activities. (European Parliament Report. A5-0191/2000, 28 June 2000)12.

It has greater budget flexibility than any other service of the Commission, and has priority access to the emergency reserve fund valued at €229 million in 2005.<sup>117</sup> While the HAC must approve ECHO's Global Plans, the HAC have never rejected such a plan, and is considered by some as no more than a rubber stamping body where "the dialogue tends to flow from ECHO, rather than in both directions."<sup>118</sup>

However, some have argued that the member states as well the EU as a whole, do exercise substantial indirect influence. For example, the Humanitarian Affairs Committee allows states the opportunity to comment on Global Plans before they are adopted. While it is true that HAC has never rejected a Global Plan, the accepted practice tends to be that ECHO staff will create a plan that is acceptable to all member nations before the HAC members are ever asked to comment on said plans.<sup>119</sup>

Another example is seen in the procedures ECHO follows to access the emergency reserve fund. One interviewee explained that generally the Commission will petition the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament for access to these funds. Both bodies then in turn must approve before the money is made available, "so if there is no political willingness, you don't get that amount of funds."<sup>120</sup> Often the initial impetus to use emergency funding even originates with either the Parliament or Council as both are sensitive to public opinion. Considering the substantial amount of money in the emergency fund, it is clear a significant percentage of ECHO's aid is released at the request and indeed approval of the EU's political bodies.

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<sup>117</sup> Macrae, *The New Humanitarianisms*, 57.

<sup>118</sup> Mowjee and Macrae, *Accountability and Influence* 17.

<sup>119</sup> Mowjee and Macrae, *Accountability and Influence*, 17.

<sup>120</sup> Confidential interview, with ECHO representative, Brussels, June 2006.

A similar situation is discernable in the creation of Global Plans. “There does not appear to be a standardised decision-making procedure for deciding how much funding to allocate to a Global Plan and ECHO’s choice of partners.”<sup>121</sup> The same is true for emergency funding. A report published by the Tsunami Evaluation Coalition (TEC) entitled *The International Community’s Funding of the Tsunami Emergency and Relief* says of ECHO’s funding decisions: “[the] initial commitments in response to the Tsunami took place before the international community started to donate so heavily in the early days of January. How the amount of the overall pledge of €123 million was decided remains unclear.”<sup>122</sup> While some might argue this allows a necessary degree of flexibility, it necessarily leaves ECHO Decisions open to the influences of undocumented political persuasions.

One interviewee commented that many decisions appeared to be made *before* various committees or conferences actually convened. She described the process using the metaphor of a black box in which decisions are actually made, and which is largely veiled from public scrutiny. The inputs are obvious: assessment indicators, reports from field experts, consultations with NGOs. The outputs are also evident as they are clearly stated in template style Decision papers. However, the middle section – the part of the process where funding and policy decisions are actually made – remains largely a mystery. The lack of transparency here is of particular concern because this is where the “politics” takes place; discussions over lunch, telephone calls with the Commissioner, understood priorities etc. that are not documented, do indeed matter. And it is these

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<sup>121</sup> Mowjee and Macrae. *Accountability and Influence*, 11.

<sup>122</sup> Hidalgo, Silvia, Ricardo Sole and Kim Wuyts. *The International Community’s Funding of the Tsunami Emergency and Relief*. Tsunami Evaluation Coalition (TEC), June 2006 <[www.tsunami-evaluation.org/NR/rdonlyres/95418E71-FDDD-4071-9398-B5C3487F2AF4/0/government\\_funding\\_eu.pdf](http://www.tsunami-evaluation.org/NR/rdonlyres/95418E71-FDDD-4071-9398-B5C3487F2AF4/0/government_funding_eu.pdf)> (October 2, 2006) 28.

influences that are most challenging both in terms of the control of these factors, but also in measuring and identifying the influence they represent.

### **Identifying Influence: Direct and Indirect Power**

In their article, *The Two Faces of Power*, Bachrach and Baratz quote E.E. Schatt-Schneider on the inherent power of persons and groups in seeking to realize their preferences. Schatt-Schneider explains, "all forms of political organizations have a bias in favour of the exploitation of some kinds of conflict and the suppression of others because organization is the mobilization of bias."<sup>123</sup> In the same way states operate to serve their own interests and advance their particular preferences, so do other organizations.

This "mobilization of bias" manifests itself in the exercise of direct and indirect power. This is important because the ability of state donors to advance their preferences vis-à-vis aid groups and other actors using both direct and indirect power is central in identifying the phenomena of politicization. The ability of political actors to fund and ensure specific aid programs are delivered to certain areas, or in the case of sanctions or conditionalities, are *not* delivered is pivotal in determining whether aid has been politicized.

The "unmeasurable" influences that are the result of a preference or action *not* taken can be as meaningful as those that are taken when looking at the direct exercise of power. And by extension, an investigation of the dynamics of non decision-making can be as revealing in terms of who or what exercises power, as a traditional study of direct power and decision-making actions. For example, the HAC is an apt example of this

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<sup>123</sup> Bachrach, Peter and Morton S. Baratz. *Two Faces of Power*. (*The American Political Science Review*, 56, No. 4, December 1962) 949.

indirect power dynamic. As mentioned, the HAC has never refused one of ECHO's Global Plans. One explanation for this is that ECHO staff members are aware of the individual member states' preferences, and will work within those constraints when preparing decisions to ensure they are acceptable to HAC members. In this way, power is exercised in an indirect and unmeasurable fashion and beyond what an outside researcher is privy to.

A second explanation is that ECHO is in fact in a position of power over the member states represented in the HAC. For example, Bachrach and Baratz argue,

power...is often exercised by confining the scope of decision-making to relatively 'safe' issues...to the extent that A succeeds in [preventing B] from bringing to the fore any issues that might in their resolution be seriously detrimental to A's set of preferences.<sup>124</sup>

By limiting Global Plans to funding amounts and for regions ECHO knows the member states will be comfortable with, the DG could theoretically "save" more controversial engagements or decisions for areas of little political interest for emergency decisions, which do not require pre-approval of the HAC. While this type of indirect power cannot be fully measured or otherwise documented, it should nonetheless be one recognized that interests or "bias" are articulated in various indirect ways and ultimately affect the allocation of aid.

### **Shortcomings**

Beyond the wider political influences that affect ECHO's ability to provide unpoliticized and effective aid, there are some concrete concerns that undermine ECHO's

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<sup>124</sup> Bachrach and Baratz, 948.

apolitical mandate which could be more easily addressed. Some of these issues are explored below:

### ***Operational Dependence***

ECHO's role as a funding agency entails providing grants to partners for approved projects. While ECHO's mandate states that its priority is to provide humanitarian assistance based on need, with special consideration being given to forgotten crises, it remains dependent on operational partners to carry out these projects. Even though it posts requests for proposals, expressions of interest and tenders, the way ECHO operates effectively means that it cannot fund projects unless a partner comes forward with an appropriate proposal. This is of particular concern in regions that are considered forgotten crises by the FCA where, by definition, there are few if any appropriate operating partners at work. If ECHO is to provide aid to countries on a needs priority basis, it needs to be able to ensure that the necessary operating partners are in place to do so.

### ***Imposing Aid***

In terms of upholding a positive working relationship with recipient countries, ECHO also falls short. An aid project that has been approved by ECHO (and where the operating partner is in place) may be launched without request from (or consultations with) the recipient country, and indeed at times against its wishes.<sup>125</sup>

Article 6 of Resolution 1257/96 states:

Humanitarian aid operations financed by the Community may be implemented either at the request of international or non-governmental agencies and

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<sup>125</sup> EU Crisis Management – A Humanitarian Perspective. (Voluntary Organizations in Cooperation in Emergencies (VOICE) Briefing Paper, January 2004) 5.

organizations from a Member State or a recipient third country or on the initiative of the Commission.<sup>126</sup>

Experience demonstrates that the effectiveness of aid increases with local consultation and cooperation. ECHO should be encouraged to begin these discussions at the onset of any aid program. Although political authorities of failed and fragile states are often part of the problem, their cooperation can be equally important in finding solutions. Moreover local village leaders and elders offer a wealth of information and assistance to foreign aid workers.

This involvement is equally important as a safeguard against politicization. An astute example, as mentioned above is states such as the US providing genetically modified (GM) food aid. Faced with widespread famine, countries left with few other options usually accept GM products but are ultimately faced with more problems including biodiversity and other risks to local agriculture, as well as a possible boycott of their local exports in international markets as mentioned in chapter one.<sup>127</sup>

Overcoming the maxim “beggars can’t be choosers” and providing aid based on the assumption that those in a humanitarian crises are *entitled* to assistance from the wealthy nations of the world, is one way to begin addressing this issue. One clear safeguard against imposed, politicized aid is ensuring the recipients are active in the decision-making on the ground. While beneficiaries may not be able to control if and how much outside humanitarian assistance is received, the ability of affected people and their local leaders to determine at least in general what type of aid is in their own best interests should be respected and more often than not will be contrary to the counterintuitive aid characteristic of politicization.

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<sup>126</sup> Council Regulation (EC) N<sup>o</sup> 1257/96. Official Journal L 163, (02/07/1996).

<sup>127</sup> Smillie and Minear, 9.

### ***Organizational Identity***

Since its inception, ECHO has had the intention of being “more than a bank”.<sup>128</sup> This is evident in its mandate which states that it will be both an “agency that promotes and coordinates disaster prevention measures by training specialists, strengthening institutions and running pilot micro-projects” and one that seeks to “provide technical assistance” to partners.<sup>129</sup> Thus there is a degree of institutional arrogance in that ECHO believes it has specific humanitarian know-how and expertise in the area of best practices that it can and indeed should offer implementing agencies. Operational expertise is usually one of the common reasons donors turn to NGOs as implementing partners and a characteristic of NGOs normally recognized by donors. In fact, members of global civil society are often consulted if an expert opinion is sought and are invited to participate in committee meetings and conference to share their knowledge. While ECHO certainly does offer NGOs some expertise, specifically smaller and newer organizations, ECHO’s resolve to use a top down approach across the board in this way can lead to earmarking and inflexibility of projects on the ground.

### ***Reporting Requirements***

Interviews revealed<sup>130</sup> there were split opinions among ECHO’s operating partners about the importance of strict reporting requirements. One interviewee explained that it is common knowledge among NGOs and IGOs working for ECHO that the DG’s funding reports are complicated and time consuming compared to other donor governments. This staff member of an international organization claimed ECHO was her

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<sup>128</sup> Mowjee and Macrae. *Accountability and Influence*, 4.

<sup>129</sup> ECHO Website <[http://ec.europa.eu/echo/presentation/mandate\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/echo/presentation/mandate_en.htm)> (October 6, 2006).

<sup>130</sup> Admittedly, not a statistically significant sample of NGO staff were interviewed.

organization's third biggest donor, but confessed it was "least liked because of the difficult reporting procedure and the amount of paperwork that is required."<sup>131</sup> She voiced concern that her organization often had difficulty completing the reporting requirements. Another NGO staff member interviewed - though he admitted filling out ECHO reporting documents was not part of his work responsibilities - did indicate that he understood funding reports to be a crucial element in maintaining accountability and endorsed strict reporting requirements. While reporting is vital to maintaining accountability, ECHO could evidently improve its requirements to make reports less complex and time consuming, specifically for long-standing recipients of ECHO funds who are FPA signatories.

### ***Projectification***

Paul Stubbs has commented that it appears that the international humanitarian aid agencies are obsessed with working in clearly defined, short term, and outcome specific projects.<sup>132</sup> He argues, the "dominant mode of assistance has reinforced 'projectification' at all levels in which longer-term visions, wider objectives, much less any kind of coherent articulation of need, are subsumed within discrete 'project proposals' which identify particular, narrow objectives."<sup>133</sup> This creates an array of problems for NGOs including a reliance on short-term goals that may not necessarily be beneficial to supporting community resiliency of self-sufficiency once the crisis has ended. It creates a type of instability for NGO staff members and may even take away from an organization's focus on the task at hand as it seeks to renew existing sources of funding

<sup>131</sup> Confidential interview with representative of IO, Brussels, June 2006.

<sup>132</sup> Stubbs, Paul. *Civil Society, NGOs and Global Governance*. GASPP Occasional Paper No 7/2000. <<http://gaspp.stakes.fi/NR/rdonlyres/21A69AA8-DF6D-497E-9CD7-F20E4AC33444/0/GASPP72000.pdf>> (November 20, 2006) 30.

<sup>133</sup> Stubbs, 30.

or find new ones. ECHO field experts are also known to have applied pressure to ensure projects are on time because lengthening projects may mean changing the Commission's financial decision.<sup>134</sup> This is a problem that is not unique to ECHO and even contracts considered "long" by ECHO's standards face the same challenges. Andrew Rigby explains the implications of projectification with a USAID example,

the normal funding period for projects supported by USAID's Office for Transitional Initiatives is two years. Thus one has the unedifying image of peripatetic agencies moving, seemingly en bloc, from one crisis zone to the other, from the Great Lakes to Kosovo to Belgrade, following the priorities of the funders, and leaving behind...what?<sup>135</sup>

This dilemma continues to haunt aid workers and leaves perilous conditions in areas that are already fragile. It is one of the reasons that ECHO has turned to a more involved approach including attempts to eliminate the "grey zone" including implementing a policy of Linking Relief Reconstruction and Development (LRRD). However, ECHO has not made a concerted effort to eliminate the short-sightedness that is at the core of working in a project driven sector.

While pure humanitarianism emphasises that humanitarian aid should be short-term emergency assistance to alleviate the most serious of human suffering in the wake of a humanitarian crisis, it is expected that once humanitarian aid projects end, local populations will be left in a situation where they can return to self-sufficiency. In other words, the understanding is that when dealing with short term aid programs, arrangements must be made for community involvement and resiliency planning that will allow recipients to be self sustaining once NGOs leave. The Good Humanitarian

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<sup>134</sup> Mowjee and Macrae. *Accountability and Influence*, 30.

<sup>135</sup> Rigby, Andrew. *Humanitarian Assistance and Conflict Management: The View from the Non-Governmental Sector*. (*International Affairs* 77, No. 4, 2001) 961.

Donorship principles state that aid should be provided in such a way “to ensure support, where appropriate, to the maintenance and return of sustainable livelihoods and transitions from humanitarian relief to recovery and development activities.”<sup>136</sup>

### ***Demonstrating Success and Funding Inflexibility***

When interviewed, one staff member of an intergovernmental organization voiced frustration that ECHO will initially only provide 80 percent of funding for a project to international organizations and 50 percent to NGOs. The provision of the balance is then contingent on whether the organization is able to convince ECHO monitors in the field that the money was “well spent.”<sup>137</sup> ECHO field officers must then recommend the remainder of the funds be released. While there is clearly an issue of accountability here, the contentious point is how performance is being measured. Many of the projects funded by ECHO include long-term goals that may not be measurable in the short-term and certainly should not be evaluated on the basis of how many ECHO stickers and billboards are on display for ECHO monitors to see. However, some NGO staff in the field appears to be of the opinion that this is the superficial way in which their work is sometimes evaluated.<sup>138</sup>

### ***Visibility***

Finally, ECHO’s visibility requirements also raise questions about the intent and needs-oriented nature of its programs. Visibility requirements are standard for all contracts providing ECHO funding. This usually means several thousand Euros are allocated to brand supplies with the EU flag or to purchase promotional materials

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<sup>136</sup> Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative Website. 23 principles and good practice of humanitarian donorship. <<http://www.goodhumanitariandonorship.org>> (December 22, 2006).

<sup>137</sup> Confidential interview with representative of International Organization, Brussels, June 2008.

<sup>138</sup> Confidential interview with representative of NGO, Amsterdam, June 2006.

(stickers, signs, billboards etc.). This mandatory element is intended to educate, inform and garner support for the work and goals of humanitarian aid. The reason for these visibility requirements are outlined in ECHO's communications strategy, which states:

In a media-oriented world... there is also a need proactively to communicate the concrete achievements of humanitarian actors as well as the values and principles that underpin their work... [it is] all the more important given the challenge faced by the humanitarian aid community in preserving its "space" in many crisis zones.<sup>139</sup>

This need, the guidelines state, is important for five specific reasons. These are as follows:<sup>140</sup>

- *The obligation to be transparent. The Commission's Humanitarian Aid Directorate-General (DG) manages public funds and has a duty to inform EU citizens about how the money is spent. Few EU citizens are aware that the Commission is one of the world's largest humanitarian donors.*

There is a clear indication here that the communications policy is intended to benefit EU citizens and the EU itself. Affixing the EU emblems onto aid supplies delivered and used in recipient countries outside of the EU is arguably not the most effective way to convey this notion of transparency to people within Europe. Moreover, funds that could have been spent on humanitarian aid are instead diverted to benefit the donor.

- *"Getting closer to the citizen". This is a Commission commitment that entails pro-active communication efforts. Most Europeans support the idea of aiding the world's most vulnerable people through relief assistance. They should be informed that this support is reflected in the humanitarian work of the Commission and its implementing partners.*

The self-interested rationale alluded to in the first point, is clearly articulated again here. EU politicians know that in general, EU citizens support the funding of humanitarian aid

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<sup>139</sup> ECHO Visibility Guidelines. A Partnership for Communication  
<[http://ec.europa.eu/echo/pdf\\_files/guidelines-ngo\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/echo/pdf_files/guidelines-ngo_en.pdf)> (October 14, 2006) 2.

<sup>140</sup> ECHO Visibility Guidelines, 2.

projects and are therefore keen to advertise the EU's aid activities because of the benefits and popular approval these are certain to provide. The values and preferences expressed through EU collective public opinion in support of aid funding is therefore serving to garner support for the EU as a whole.

- *Underlining European solidarity. People living in countries affected by crises (victims, host populations and opinion leaders) should be aware of the EU's solidarity expressed in concrete terms through humanitarian aid. Messages such as the impartiality of aid, the fact that it is needs-based, and its nondiscriminatory nature are particularly significant here.*

This rationale is questionable for even if we assume recipient populations actually take stock of which states send aid, the second point (emphasizing the fact that the EU's adherence to aid principles is particularly worth noting) once again provides evidence that positive advertising of the EU and its aid programs is ultimately what is being sought.

- *Highlighting a 'badge of quality': Given the stringent criteria for acceding to the Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA), partner organizations can benefit from publicizing their quality relationship with the European Commission.*

This point is predicated on the assumption that the EU is viewed around the world as a responsible, effective donor, that acts in accordance to the principles of aid. It offers NGO partners the opportunity to benefit from this established reputation, while at the same time encouraging partners to display the EU emblem. The self-interest is once again evident.

- *The changing framework of the European Union (enlargement, a possible new Constitution, new Commission etc.) In a period of flux, it is important fully to inform EU decision-makers about the Commission's role in delivering effective assistance to victims of humanitarian crises.*

While the intent here is not to argue that any self-serving element of funding aid programs is politicization, there are certainly instances where this element is a zero sum trade off. Often, in practice, this standard request leads to the use of humanitarian funds to increase visibility – not necessarily the effectiveness – of projects funded by ECHO in the recipient country. The practice of branding or ensuring visibility of donors in recipient countries continues to create concern among NGOs. For example, NGOs have voiced frustration at having to affix stickers to almost anything with a flat surface.

ECHO's visibility requirements state that

the visual identity of the Humanitarian Aid DG, which incorporates the European emblem, must therefore be prominently displayed on all items mentioned above (including, where feasible, containers, tents, sacks, plastic sheeting and individual packaging used for foodstuffs and other supplies), accompanied where appropriate by a specific acknowledgement of the Commission funding.<sup>141</sup>

However, a far more serious concern was revealed by NGOs in Iraq who claim the US's insistence that NGOs display American logos on aid supplies has compromised the neutrality of their work and put aid staff at risk. It should be mentioned therefore, that the EU does recognize the need for flexibility in sensitive conflict situations. Article 6.1 of the *Framework Partnership Agreement* states "The humanitarian organization shall contribute to the visibility of the humanitarian operations financed by the European Community, provided that this does not harm the organization's mandate or the safety of its staff."<sup>142</sup>

The key issue here is that there is a continued acceptance and widespread support among European governments that humanitarian aid is a useful means of bettering a

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<sup>141</sup> ECHO Visibility Guidelines, 7.

<sup>142</sup> ECHO Visibility Guidelines, 7.

government's profile abroad and around which to build a common European identity. While critics have argued it is impractical to have donors represented in the field, it is probably naïve to assume governments will forgo the prestige and other benefits of advertising their aid funding altogether. What is clear is that visibility or communications requirements can undermine the maximum benefit which would otherwise be derived from any given aid project through diverting funds away from core humanitarian needs. For instance, the EU, which purports to put the needs of the recipients of aid first (codified in both policy and guidelines) compromises this spirit of altruism in the following section of its visibility guidelines, *A Partnership for Communication* recently revised in September of 2006. In a section explaining how the required visibility funds are *not* to be used, the manual states:

Incorrect use of visibility funds for communication purposes:

- (i) Publication of a practical manual on how to maintain Commission-funded wells that have just been constructed.
- (ii) Organization of a seminar for local staff on how to keep the project running.
- (iii) Broadcast of educational TV messages on good hygiene as part of a health project.<sup>143</sup>

From the above list it would appear that all these projects would offer more value to the recipients in need than erecting billboards or printing stickers. Moreover, these projects could still serve to fulfill most if not all of the intended purposes of visibility listed in the communications policy, such as showing European solidarity with recipients, by mentioning ECHO in the opening pages of the manual, or during the educational televised message, for example.

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<sup>143</sup> ECHO Visibility Guidelines, 7.

## Challenges and Potential Encroachments

As the field of humanitarian aid increased and changed following the creation of ECHO, so did opinions surrounding what its role and responsibilities should be. The criteria on which decisions were based, and the methods of intervention used were never clearly stated by the European Union, enabling ECHO to maintain a fairly wide scope of activity above and beyond its core areas of assistance, relief and protection. These additional operations included short-term rehabilitation and reconstruction as well as some preventative actions.<sup>144</sup> This could be construed as problematic because it implies a more involved, goal-oriented approach beyond that advocated by pure or Wilsonian humanitarianism. However, ECHO's work in these activities appears is based on a philosophy of eliminating the so called "grey zone" between humanitarian and development aid and less focused on political or democratic objectives.<sup>145</sup>

While ECHO remains the EU's primary and largest distributor of humanitarian aid, both in terms of budget and focus, it is by no means the only EU body that is active in field of humanitarian assistance. Under Pillar One both the DG External Relations and the DG Environment also have a mandate to provide humanitarian assistance in certain situations. In 2001, Council Regulation (EC) No 381/2001 created a Rapid Reaction Mechanism (RRM) managed by the DG External Relations. The RRM has the primary responsibility to provide "rapid civilian stabilisation of crises while plans for long-term

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<sup>144</sup> Macrae, Joana, Sarah Collinson, Margie Buchanan-Smith, et al. Uncertain Power: The Changing Role of Official Donors in Humanitarian Action. (HPG Report 12, December 2002) 56.

<sup>145</sup> Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament: Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development – An assessment. COM (2001) 153 final. <<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/32/3/34224438.pdf>> Brussels (November 19, 2006).

assistance and reconstruction are underway.”<sup>146</sup> This includes a mandate to bring political stabilisation to a “crisis or emerging crisis, situations posing a threat to law and order, the security and safety of individuals, situations threatening to escalate into armed conflict or to destabilise the country.”<sup>147</sup>

The activities of the RRM can include humanitarian missions, such as delivering food aid and reconstruction efforts, but also more political activities such as democratization, re-establishment of rule of law and civilian administration and financing mediation efforts and monitoring of implementation of peace or cease fire agreements.<sup>148</sup> The principles of independence is compromised as the RRM operates in delivering humanitarian assistance while maintaining involvement in political activities such as election monitoring and cease-fire negotiations, something ECHO has avoided. Thus if the Commission moves towards increasingly mobilizing the RRM, the EU’s humanitarian aid character is likely to become increasingly politicized.

RRM has a significantly smaller budget than ECHO (€30 million in 2005<sup>149</sup>), but both ECHO and RRM can access the reserve fund for emergency crises not planned for in regular budget allocations. RRM’s budget is much smaller and theoretically would have access before ECHO once its yearly budget is depleted. It should be stated however, that interviews with ECHO staff indicate that this was not an issue of concern as ECHO maintains priority access to the emergency reserve.

<sup>146</sup> NGO Voice. EU Crisis Management – A Humanitarian Perspective. Briefing Paper, January 2004. <[http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/lib.nsf/db900SID/LGEL-5WGFDR/\\$FILE/voice-EUCrisisMgmt-jan04.pdf?OpenElement](http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/lib.nsf/db900SID/LGEL-5WGFDR/$FILE/voice-EUCrisisMgmt-jan04.pdf?OpenElement)> (November 22, 2006) 3.

<sup>147</sup> Conflict Prevention & Civilian Crisis Management. External Relations DG Website <[http://ec.europa.eu/comm/external\\_relations/cpcm/rrm/index.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/comm/external_relations/cpcm/rrm/index.htm)> (November 19, 2006).

<sup>148</sup> Conflict Prevention & Civilian Crisis Management. (November 19, 2006).

<sup>149</sup> Conflict Prevention & Civilian Crisis Management. (April 4, 2006).

The Environment DG has also taken on a role in humanitarian emergencies through its Civil Protection Mechanism (CPM). This mechanism was also established in 2001. Its role was defined as “facilitating co-operation in civil protection assistance interventions in the event of major emergencies” in both natural and man-made disasters.<sup>150</sup>

Beyond encroachment on humanitarian issues from within Pillar One, ECHO also has competition from the CFSP of Pillar Two. Article 17.1-2 of the CFSP states:

The common foreign and security policy shall include all questions relating to the security of the Union... [and] shall include humanitarian and rescue tasks, peacekeeping task and tasks of combat forces in crisis management including peacemaking.<sup>151</sup>

The inclusion of humanitarian “tasks” has led to the creation of the Rapid Reaction Facility (RRF) which was established with the intent of upholding the Petersburg Tasks. Originally defined in 1992 by the Western European Union (WEU)<sup>152</sup> defence collective, the Petersburg Tasks were adopted by the EU in the Treaty of Amsterdam in 1997. It effectively established a new, broader mission that included humanitarian and rescue efforts, peacekeeping, and crisis management involving the deployment of the military.<sup>153</sup> From a humanitarian perspective, the engagement of the military as per the CFSP in humanitarian affairs is troubling because unlike RRM, CPM or ECHO, the RRF is under the direct authority of political leadership from the Council.

<sup>150</sup> Conflict Prevention & Civilian Crisis Management, (April 4, 2006).

<sup>151</sup> EU Crisis Management – A Humanitarian Perspective, 2.

<sup>152</sup> Set up in 1948 by the Treaty of Brussels, the WEU is a European organisation established for the purposes of cooperation on defence and security. It consists of 28 countries divided into four categories of membership. In 1999, the EU voted to absorb all the functions of the WEU in preparation for making the EU a defensive and peacekeeping military organization as well as a social and economic one. "Western European Union." The Columbia Electronic Encyclopaedia, Sixth Edition. Columbia University Press, 2003.

<sup>153</sup> Hay, William Anthony and Harvey Sicherman. Europe's Rapid Reaction Force: What, Why, and How? Foreign Policy Research Institute's *Watch on the West* Newsletter, 2 No. 2, February 2001. <<http://www.fpri.org/ww/0202.200102.haysicherman.euoperapidreaction.html>> (April 4, 2006).

With the emergence of so many EU actors engaged in delivering humanitarian assistance, some have called for a centralization of these agencies to increase clarity and coordination. In his report *For a European Civil Protection Force: Europe Aid* published in 2006, former EU Commissioner Michael Barnier envisions a type of “one-stop shopping” in the EU humanitarian aid department. “One of the lessons to be drawn from these disasters [Tsunami in Indonesia and Earthquake in Pakistan] is that we need to boost our capacity to assess needs and provide a rapid response. These two key aspects require cooperation between civil protection and humanitarian assistance departments.” (footnote, Barnier Report pg. 18). His recommendation is that the proposed “coordination mechanism for civil protection” be attached to ECHO in order to coordinate future responses to humanitarian disasters

However, Barnier also provides evidence for why this may be troubling for many people. He states, “In order to perform its various funding, political and operational roles successfully, the Commission must ensure a consistent humanitarian response.”<sup>154</sup> This kind of encompassing fusion is likely to blur the boundaries between responses to natural disasters and complex humanitarian emergencies, and those that are required for terrorist attacks and other more political situations. Whether the recommendations of the Barnier Report will be implemented remains to be seen. However, it appears EU political elites are looking in deploy humanitarian activities that are more sensitive to political considerations. The implications of creating a newly designed “Europe Aid” could threaten the very institutional isolation that ECHO has fought so hard to maintain.

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<sup>154</sup> Barnier, Michael. *For a European civil protection force: Europe Aid* May 2006  
<[http://ec.europa.eu/commission\\_barroso/president/pdf/rapport\\_barnier\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/commission_barroso/president/pdf/rapport_barnier_en.pdf)> (September 23, 2006) 18.

## Conclusion

ECHO's mandate, structure and policies create a model of autonomy, prioritize needs-based funding and create a situation of relative political isolation. However, the agency does not act as a pure humanitarian body, as one would naturally assume. There are serious challenges currently facing ECHO in its ability to provide principled, effective and unpoliticized aid.

ECHO lacks the clear policies and procedures needed to translate its main needs assessment tools into appropriate funding allocations. Furthermore, access to the substantial emergency reserve requires the approval of the main political bodies of the EU. ECHO has also fallen into many of the common pitfalls characteristic of donors in the field: it relies on short-sighted projectification, has questionable visibility requirements and holds paternalistic tendencies towards recipient countries. It also relies heavily on partners, uses a top-down approach in planning aid delivery, and has questionable reporting requirements and standards for evaluating whether a project was successful in the field. All these factors negatively affect the overall unpoliticized quality of the EU's aid programs.

ECHO also faces many challenges to the institutional position it enjoys within the greater EU. These include threats of being subsumed under security and foreign affairs issues or being moved under a new, much wider "civil protection" umbrella. As it stands ECHO has an enormous influence on the direction and type of aid allocated to many of the world's worst disasters, however its relation vis-à-vis the other institutions and agencies that work in the field or close to it, is still unclear. The Article 20 Report did reveal that ECHO would refocus its mandate on short-term, emergency aid, and attempt to pull out of working in the "grey zone" found between humanitarian aid and

development, however in later years ECHO was working on a Linking Rehabilitation, Relief and Development (LRRD) policy, therefore it is evident that the exact scope and involvement of ECHO continues to fluctuate.

Interviews and primary and secondary sources reveal that one of ECHO's biggest shortcomings is in the area of transparency; the input and outputs to its funding decisions are clear, however there is little clarity about what happens in the middle in terms of how funding decisions are made. While flexibility is clearly a desirable trait in planning and delivering aid programs, it can also be problematic in that it leaves considerable room for outside influence and political intrusion.

### III Aid Organizations and Politicization

This chapter explores the role of NGOs and other aid organizations within the context of politicization. It will begin by discussing civil society and what benefits are offered by these “third sector” organizations to explain why ECHO and many nation states and IGOs rely on NGOs for humanitarian aid service delivery. Next, the chapter will discuss the relationship between aid organizations and donors, and the extent to which an NGO’s freedom in responding to politicized aid is based on the organization’s diversification of its funding sources. The chapter then looks at three NGOs found in the first three categories of politicization outlined in chapter one to explain the various underlying beliefs and practices that will inform how they respond to politicized aid. Direct and indirect power dynamics between ECHO and its operating partners are discussed next. The chapter will argue that there is evidence that partner organizations do have some ability to influence ECHO decisions, but ultimately these rest with ECHO. Finally, constraints within the field itself, primarily that of institutionalization and the media, are discussed.

Civil society aid organizations, and in particular NGOs, play a vital part in providing service delivery, infrastructure and research, assisting donors with local access and providing cultural and language capabilities. Of all humanitarian aid supplied around the world, more than 60 percent is delivered by NGOs.<sup>155</sup> Inherent here is the fact that there is also a “growing willingness of humanitarian organizations to work alongside states potentially undermin[ing] their neutrality and independence.”<sup>156</sup>

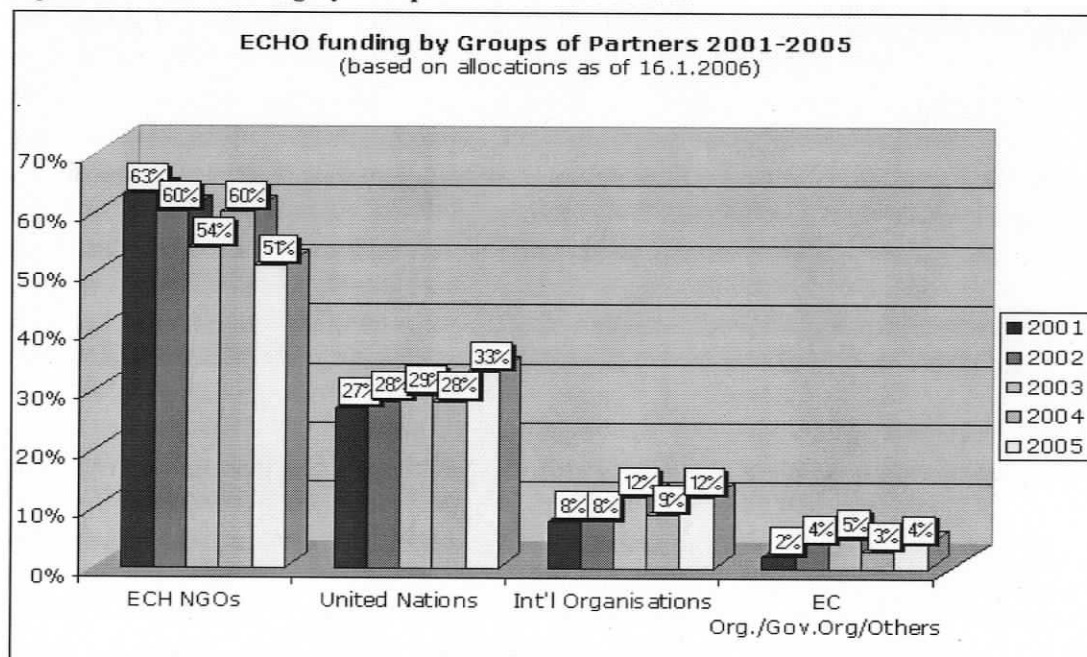
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<sup>155</sup> Smillie and Minear, 5.

<sup>156</sup> Barnett, 4.

ECHO currently works with approximately 200 aid organizations (including NGOs, IGOs, UN agencies and the ICRC) that have signed Framework Partnership Agreements (FPAs).<sup>157</sup> In 2005, ECHO channelled 51 percent of its funding through NGOs, up from 40 percent in the 1990s.<sup>158</sup> ECHO works primarily with European NGOs that have signed FPAs. This policy has been defended by ECHO, based on its responsibility towards EU taxpayers; ECHO would have significantly decreased oversight of third country or local organizations based in recipient countries. Figure 1 shows that ECHO has increased funding to UN agencies as well in recent years, however the primary recipients of ECHO funding remain NGOs.

**Figure 1 - ECHO Funding By Groups of Partners 2001-2005**



Source: ECHO Website ([http://ec.europa.eu/echo/statistics/echo\\_en.htm#defgp](http://ec.europa.eu/echo/statistics/echo_en.htm#defgp))

Larry Minear and Thomas Weiss point out in their book *Charity of Nations* that US\$6 billion in humanitarian aid is delivered annually through NGOs.<sup>159</sup> Of this, roughly 75

<sup>157</sup> ECHO website, <[http://ec.europa.eu/echo/finances/transparency\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/echo/finances/transparency_en.htm)> (September 18, 2006).

<sup>158</sup> Macrae, *The New Humanitarianisms*, 24.

<sup>159</sup> Smillie and Minear, 236.

percent is handled by fewer than fifteen large transnational organizations.<sup>160</sup> The humanitarian aid field is thus characterized by an oligopoly of a few key players whose actions are of major significance and who more or less dominate the field. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) and Oxfam International are all part of the oligarchy and are among the top twenty funding partners<sup>161</sup> used by ECHO to deliver humanitarian aid during the previous year. Each represents a different approach to humanitarian aid and therefore falls into a different category of politicization as outlined in chapter one (discussed further below).

While most aid organizations have mission statements or mandates that endorse the principles of humanitarian aid, the complexities that often accompany humanitarian emergencies and donor specifications have not always allowed them to do so. The work of NGOs in the context of aid politicization is discussed in the next section.

### **Introducing Civil Society**

The concept of civil society has been understood differently “across different time periods, places, theoretical perspectives and political persuasions.”<sup>162</sup> Civil Society remains an essentially contested term among scholars and politicians. For this reason Jan Aart Scholte starts with a definition of what civil society is not. He defines civil society as neither governmental nor the market (although it can promote market interests in the form of business lobbies or bankers’ associations).<sup>163</sup> It is the “third sector” which includes those activities that “involve a deliberate attempt - from outside the state and the

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<sup>160</sup> Smillie and Minear, 236.

<sup>161</sup> For more information see: [http://ec.europa.eu/echo/statistics/echo\\_partners\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/echo/statistics/echo_partners_en.htm)

<sup>162</sup> Scholte, Jan A. “Global Civil Society”, in Ngaire Woods, ed. The Political Economy of Globalization. (NY: St. Martin’s Press, 2000) 174.

<sup>163</sup> Scholte, 174.

market, and in some other organized fashion – to shape policies, norms and/or deeper social structures.”<sup>164</sup> Scott Turner provides further clarification by stating that civil society groups “don’t include inter-state or terrorist groups and separatist groups simply seeking to form new ones, rather that these [civil society] groups are motivated by social or political concerns that the state or market have failed to address.”<sup>165</sup>

In terms of humanity’s quest for an enduring peace, Mary Kaldor puts the case for civil society plainly, by saying “deliberation offers the best hope for something better, the concept of civil society allows us to hold such conversations.”<sup>166</sup> In the *Global Civil Society 2005/06 Yearbook*, the editors posit that the modern state was intended to protect people from risk, but that this risk is “de-bounding” in three dimensions; it is spatial (can cross borders) temporal (can happen far into the future) and social (increasingly the outcome of actions by many individuals). The post-Cold War order is characterized by all three, especially in the case of humanitarian emergencies. A humanitarian crisis is often a transborder issue as refugees flee into neighbouring states; many crises are protracted and complex, particularly in the case of fragile or failing states; and finally, where traditionally, political heads of state retained control over state and political affairs, the current globalized environment has created a situation in many countries that is characterised by an interplay of actors and influences including transnational corporations, that can combine to create humanitarian catastrophes.

It is the threat of these new types of risks that gives rise to new pressure for global cooperation, and *global* civil society is the arena where these risks are enunciated,

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<sup>164</sup> Scholte, 175.

<sup>165</sup> Turner, Scott. *Global Civil Society, Anarchy and Governance: Assessing and Emerging Paradigm*. (*Journal of Peace Research* 35 No. 1, 1998) 29.

<sup>166</sup> Kaldor, Mary. *Global Civil Society: An Answer to War*. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003) 160.

exaggerated, discounted, debunked, assessed and debated”<sup>167</sup> in a social sphere that is above and beyond local, regional or national societies.<sup>168</sup>

Most NGOs are part of this global sphere in that they transcend national boundaries in their work and often their organizational structure. They offer donors many benefits that come from this unique situation, including considerable expertise and experience in grassroots, community-based development issues. They possess extensive knowledge and have a more comprehensive understanding of the relevant issues than any politician, diplomat or EU civil servant might possess, with the exception perhaps of ECHO’s field experts.<sup>169</sup> They are often “rooted in” and interact with constituencies that are not easily accessible by government channels.<sup>170</sup> The prolonged engagement many NGOs have from working under ECHO’s Global Plans in recipient countries means they have existing networks and infrastructure that are extremely valuable for effective and timely implementation of ECHO projects.

Unlike governments, which have an array of issues to deal with, NGOs are often single issue advocacy groups that are able to concentrate their resources on acute crises or events. They tend to be very cost-effective because of their lean organizational structures, low administrative overhead costs, and because of the important role volunteerism plays within these organizations.<sup>171</sup> This efficiency, coupled with a record of successful programs, continues to raise the profiles and status of many NGOs.

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<sup>167</sup> Glasius, Marlies, Mary Kaldor and Helmut Anheier, eds. *Global Civil Society 2005/06* (Sage Publications, London, 2006) 1.

<sup>168</sup> Kaldor, Mary, Helmut Anheier and Marlies Glasius, eds. *Global Civil Society 2003* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

<sup>169</sup> Clark, 4.

<sup>170</sup> Owen, Tim “NGO- Government Partnerships” *Journal of International Migration and Integration* 1 No. 1 (Winter 2000) 132.

<sup>171</sup> Owen, 132.

In the emerging information age, perhaps the biggest strength of non-governmental organizations is in the area of public opinion. “While representatives of social movements and NGOs may employ traditional strategies of political persuasion such as lobbying, their greatest power resides in their capacity to influence public values and norms on a global scale.”<sup>172</sup> NGOs are active in using the media to influence public opinion and rely on their good relationship with the public to create interest and support for their campaigns. However, these agencies differ in what messages they present to the public. The message of pure humanitarian groups will likely be focused on the human suffering of any particular crisis in an attempt to garner financial support. Wilsonian and new humanitarian groups will go one step further. Wilsonian organizations will enter the political realm, to advocate for humanitarian goals including pointing the finger of blame. For example, a Wilsonian organization might launch a campaign to bring attention to the dire situation of displaced people in the Sudan’s Darfur region, and advocate the need for a concerted international response to stop the mass killings by the Janjaweed militia accused of perpetrating the killings.

New humanitarians enter the political realm in a more significant way in terms of the actions they advocate and the goals they hope to achieve. A new humanitarian organization might charge the Sudanese government of supporting the Janjaweed militia and advocate and take action in support of the removal of Sudanese President Omar Hasan Ahmad al-Bashir and other top officials, as a means to achieve a long term solution to the conflict.

The ability of aid organizations to market themselves as defenders of the public good is crucial to their ability to garner large-scale public support and funding, and by

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<sup>172</sup> Turner, 39.

extension their ability to persuade governments to consider their recommendations for action. In general, the public has demonstrated it strongly supports the work of NGOs. This is an added value to the EU's aid programs which are delivered by many of the most well known of these agencies. The personification of NGOs as watch-dog, whistle-blower, expert and defender of the common good are just some of the reasons aid organizations and particularly NGOs have flourished in recent decades and explains why states as well as the EU and the UN rely on NGOs to fulfil their mandate of providing relief and humanitarian services.<sup>173</sup>

### **The NGO Response**

While supporters have argued that NGOs are natural guardians of the principles of humanitarian aid, critics question whether they can act as independent advocates given their reliance on official government funding.<sup>174</sup> While some organizations cap donations from governments, most are heavily reliant upon them. Some of the largest groups get 90 percent of their funding from governments.<sup>175</sup> This creates a situation of dependency within which NGOs may attempt to uphold the principles of aid in their work but often find they are unable to withstand donor pressure. The question is how can NGOs respond to the qualities of funding that undermine the principles of aid or are closely aligned with political objectives? The answer, in part, depends on how groups identify themselves in terms of the degrees of politicization posed in chapter one. NGOs as well as donors can be more or less 'politicized', based on their understandings about the role the principles

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<sup>173</sup> Kamat, Sangeeta. The Privatization of Public Interest: Theorizing NGO Discourse in a Neoliberal Era. *Review of International Political Economy*. 11 No.1 (February 2004) 163.

<sup>174</sup> Macrae, The New Humanitarianisms, 16.

<sup>175</sup> Weiss, Thomas G. and Leon Gordenker. NGOs, the UN and Global Governance. (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1996) 31.

of aid should play and what the nature of the relationship between humanitarianism and politics should be.

It is clear, however, that the primary factor in an NGO's ability to maintain autonomy from political interference to carry out their mandates is power of the purse. NGOs can increase their operational control through diversifying sources of funding. Without diverse sources of income, NGOs are caught between competing interests, often those of their organization's mandate and interests, and those of their donors.

The Oxfam International chapter in Great Britain has approximately 550 000 regular individual donors and was able to speak out firmly against the war in Iraq. However, the American chapter of CARE receives about half of its US\$561 million budget from the US government, thus it had tread carefully.<sup>176</sup> In retrospect, it did so with due diligence: shortly after Save The Children spoke out against the Iraq war, the US government threatened to take away the NGO's funding. Such a decision would have been disastrous for Save The Children, which receives US\$71 million of its US\$119 million budget from the US government.<sup>177</sup> Independent income allows NGOs to stand up to state donors, it also allows aid organizations to go beyond what donors might pay for and enables them to provide services free of specific donor imposed limits.

The following discussion analyses three organizations of different politicization categories chosen on the basis of their work with ECHO and by nature of their different approaches to humanitarian aid work. It explains how each views the principles of aid and describes what their understanding is of the relationship between humanitarian aid

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<sup>176</sup> Farooq, Rano. *Where the Money Is?* *Global Policy Forum*, September 5, 2005  
<<http://www.globalpolicy.org/ngos/credib/2005/0905money.htm>> (September 28, 2006).

<sup>177</sup> Frangonikolopoulos, 61.

and politics. Here the assumption is that no aid agency will fit in the most politicized category of self-interested humanitarianism, since this degree of the spectrum of politicization assumes the principles of aid are secondary and humanitarian considerations are entirely subsumed within wider political aims. Yet, it is unlikely an NGO delivering humanitarian aid, would work entirely void of all principles of aid and solely to serve government interests (if these do exist they would not be approved by ECHO as operating partners). Furthermore, any institutional self-interest NGOs exhibit would not extend beyond the edges of new humanitarianism, as the advancement of an organization whose mandate it is to assist in humanitarian emergencies, does not preclude a high degree of respect for the principles of aid and the needs of most vulnerable recipients, although admittedly the latter may not be *best* served. That is to say the actions of a self interested NGO will still be more desirable than those of a self interested government.

### ***International Committee of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Society (ICRC)***

The ICRC is an organization dedicated to humanitarian work in conflict and notably carrying out detainee visits. It is a “neutral” organization and falls into the pure humanitarian category, albeit on the moderate end. The ICRC views the *humanitarian* and *political* as separate and distinct spheres. The principle of neutrality is a central tenant of its operations, while the other principles of aid remain of critical importance. The ICRC is not like any other non-governmental organization because the protection of the ICRC, its work, symbols and members is outlined in the Geneva Convention. The ICRC is therefore given special recognition in the international community. Other than

the UNHCR, no other humanitarian relief organization has a mandate assigned to it under international law.<sup>178</sup>

The ICRC is more concerned about protecting humanitarian space than the politics of states. One ICRC staff member stated: “We don’t give a damn about Greater Serbia, but we do get excited about ethnic cleansing and rape when it is used there as a tactic of war.”<sup>179</sup> The organization rarely speaks out against human rights violations to maintain access to detainees of conflict. The ICRC visits detainees to ensure they are treated humanely and are kept in decent conditions, a central aspect of the ICRC’s mandate. The ICRC believes the best way it can prevent or halt torture, and ensure decent conditions for detainees is by getting repeated and unrestricted access to prisoners. To retain this access, the ICRC maintains a strict policy of confidentiality, meaning ICRC officials will only discuss their findings with the authorities concerned and will not release information to the media. However, in rare cases, when the authorities are entirely unresponsive to the ICRC’s request, the organization may go public on behalf of victims.

There is a notable difference between the ICRC and the 182 national societies of the Red Cross. The latter tend to operate in a quasi-governmental manner. David Forsythe argues that in most countries, the public tends to view their national Red Cross or Red Crescent society not as neutral or impartial, much less independent from governments, but rather as a medical component in support of their national military.<sup>180</sup> He offers the example that “one can only imagine the furor in the United States if the

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<sup>178</sup> Natsios, Andrew S. *NGOs and the UN system in Complex Humanitarian Emergencies: Conflict or Cooperation?* (*Third World Quarterly*, 16, No. 3, 1 September 1995), 412.

<sup>179</sup> Minear, Larry. *The Humanitarian Enterprise: Discoveries and Dilemmas*. (Bloomfield, CT: Kumarian Press Inc., 2002) 78.

<sup>180</sup> Forsythe, David. *The Humanitarians*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) 127.

American Red Cross had shown an interest in the health of Al Qaeda or Taliban fighters, or other detainees, after 9/11 on grounds of neutral and impartial humanitarianism.”<sup>181</sup>

And indeed, the American Red Cross website states, “It seems a horror to many Americans that anyone—especially the Red Cross—would be interested in the welfare of the Afghan war detainees being held by the US military in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.”<sup>182</sup>

One can only assume the reference to the American public being horrified that a US organization is attempting to ensuring humane treatment for other human beings (albeit suspected terrorists) is based on some form of public outcry or backlash towards the society. The site goes on to explain that the American Red Cross is not directly involved in the visits, and no part of donations to the American Red Cross is used to fund them.<sup>183</sup>

It also affirms the American Red Cross’s support for international law including the Geneva Conventions and explains that the US government requested the ICRC visits in part to ensure the protection of captured US combatants in foreign countries.<sup>184</sup>

The governance structure of the American Red Cross is also particularly telling of the quasi-governmental quality of national Red Cross/Red Crescent societies. Both, the Hon. Michael Chertoff, Secretary of the US Department of Homeland Security and the Hon. Carlos M. Gutierrez Secretary of the US Department of Commerce, sit on the Board of Governors of the American Red Cross, and both were appointed directly by the President of the United States.<sup>185</sup> In India, the ties between the national Red Cross and

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<sup>181</sup> Forsythe, *The Humanitarians*, 127.

<sup>182</sup> American Red Cross Website < <http://www.redcross.org/news/in/intllaw/guantanamo1.html> > (November 23, 2006).

<sup>183</sup> American Red Cross Website < <http://www.redcross.org/news/in/intllaw/guantanamo1.html> > (November 23, 2006).

<sup>184</sup> American Red Cross Website < <http://www.redcross.org/news/in/intllaw/guantanamo1.html> > (November 23, 2006).

<sup>185</sup> American Red Cross, Board of Governors 2006/07 <<http://www.redcross.org/images/pdfs/2006-2007BOG.pdf>> (September 29, 2006).

government are even closer. The President of India is also the President of the Indian Red Cross and nominates six members and the Chairman of the National Managing Body.<sup>186</sup> While national societies vary in their governance structures and relations with national governments, most society tend to have close ties with their national government.

There is a general sense that the larger Red Cross movement is fundamentally fractured between the ICRC and national Red Cross/Red Crescent societies. Since the mid-seventies there has been a call within the ICRC to review the statues of national societies to ensure they remain in compliance with the rules and mandate of the greater movement. There has been some work done in this respect including a review of national societies by an ICRC-federation Commission.<sup>187</sup> However, historically national governments have come to the defence of “their” societies when criticized by outsiders.<sup>188</sup>

The ICRC's adherence to neutrality has also been heavily criticized in the wake of humanitarian catastrophes such as the Holocaust in Nazi-Germany or the genocide in Rwanda. The ICRC stayed silent about the Holocaust despite having knowledge of the concentration camps. There seem to be two main reasons for this neutral stance: First, ICRC officials in Geneva did not want to offend Nazi Germany and risk an offensive against Switzerland; and second, there was a belief among ICRC assembly members that Adolf Hitler had demonstrated such unwavering commitment to the death camps that no amount of public objection would effect any significant change. Indeed, the Allied

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<sup>186</sup> Indian Red Cross Website <<http://www.indianredcross.org/managing.htm>> (November 18, 2006)

<sup>187</sup> Forsythe, *The Humanitarians*, 306.

<sup>188</sup> Forsythe, *The Humanitarians*, 307.

governments did speak out against Nazi brutality and achieved little if any effect.<sup>189</sup> By remaining silent the ICRC was able to continue its work in Germany, including maintaining access to some Allied prisoners in Germany.<sup>190</sup> However, the ICRC was severely criticized as a result. Many argued the ICRC had been complacent and could have done substantially more or taken innovative approaches to stop the genocide. Instead the ICRC appears to have continued doing what it always does, ignoring the fact that millions were being killed to secure even the most limited of access for the organization.

In Rwanda, the ICRC stayed and saved 50 000 Tutsi at the expense of not speaking out against the genocide that ended up killing 800 000.<sup>191</sup> The ICRC had informed the outside world of what was occurring in Rwanda, but it stopped short of using the term “genocide” to describe the situation. There is evidence that had the ICRC passed legal judgment it would not have been permitted to continue operating in the country.<sup>192</sup>

The ICRC maintains it does not stay silent when it comes to voicing the suffering of victims, but it is firm that it must not venture into the political causes of humanitarian crises – as some groups have – if it is to continue to do its work effectively. However, historical examples show that the cost of the organization’s strict adherence to the principle of neutrality as a pure humanitarian organization has caused the agency to stand by while some of the worst crimes against humanity are perpetrated. However, as indicated above, the ICRC’s public condemnation of what was going on in Nazi-

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<sup>189</sup> Forsythe, The Humanitarians, 49.

<sup>190</sup> Forsythe, The Humanitarians, 48.

<sup>191</sup> Forsythe, The Humanitarians, 122.

<sup>192</sup> Forsythe, The Humanitarians, 122.

Germany or Rwanda would have had only minor effects on the overall situation in both countries. The crux here is whether raising awareness and speaking out again humanitarian disasters and especially crimes against humanity is or should be one of the central roles of aid organizations, particularly those that operate in accordance to pure humanitarianism. As a pure humanitarian organization, the ICRC is committed to upholding the principles of aid, including that of neutrality in conflict. As a result, the organization has been able to maintain its operations in places other organizations could no longer work (discussed further in the next section). Thus one can say there is some value in upholding the principles of aid even when this demands outward silence. However, the media and political leaders must also perform their respective roles; specifically, the media must educate and inform the public when humanitarian crises occur, wherever they occur. Moreover, political actors must seek political and economic solutions in parallel with humanitarian efforts.

### *Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)*

MSF describes itself as a humanitarian medical aid agency committed to providing aid wherever it is needed and raising awareness of the plight of the people it helps.<sup>193</sup> MSF was originally established in 1971 when a few members of the ICRC broke away from the organization following an internal ICRC dispute. This dispute centred around the Biafra conflict in Nigeria during which the break away members felt the ICRC had failed to promptly and professionally “intervene to relieve the starvation within the breakaway province of Biafra in the Nigerian civil war.”<sup>194</sup> Since its inception, MSF has

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<sup>193</sup> Médecins Sans Frontières Website, <<http://www.msf.org/>> (November 28, 2006).

<sup>194</sup> Smillie and Minear, 14.

grown to include 19 national sections. The NGO was founded on the basis of raising awareness for the issues affecting the people the organization helps and continues to speak out against human rights violations.<sup>195</sup>

MSF is a good example of Wilsonian humanitarianism. From its inception, Médecins Sans Frontières or Doctors Without Borders has been avid in speaking out on behalf of those the agencies helps. It routinely withdraws its projects if aid programs are thought to be contributing to harm. In terms of maintaining humanitarian space, a noteworthy difference between MSF and the ICRC is their respective understanding of, and response to situations where their work has been compromised. If MSF perceives its actions are causing harm, it will pull out of a region or country rather than contribute to the harm being caused. The concept of “do no harm” originated in the US in 1996 and borrows from the Hippocratic Oath of Western medicine. It refers to the hijacking or otherwise misuse or misallocation of aid often in support of warring parties, and argued to prolong or intensify a humanitarian crises. Some argue that the “do no harm” axiom is contentious because it blames aid for supporting a particular group when in fact it is often the result of political and military failings. Others say the “do no harm” argument is employed by those that seek to limit aid expenditures and bring humanitarian activities under closer state control.<sup>196</sup>

The ICRC is much more likely to stay in the region and attempt to improve relations. This is the case for the ICRC even if the implications of this choice means operating within the governmental structures of a regime known to be violating human

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<sup>195</sup> MSF Article. About MSF: The MSF role in emergency medical aid

<[http://www.msf.org/msfinternational/invoke.cfm?objectid=130CB2BA-E018-0C72-097046C7C42A8573&component=toolkit.indexArticle&method=full\\_html](http://www.msf.org/msfinternational/invoke.cfm?objectid=130CB2BA-E018-0C72-097046C7C42A8573&component=toolkit.indexArticle&method=full_html)> (March 2, 2006).

<sup>196</sup> (The State of the International Humanitarian System 1998 (1) March, Overseas Development Insitutive, Briefing Note. <[http://www.odi.org.uk/publications/briefing/1\\_98.html](http://www.odi.org.uk/publications/briefing/1_98.html)>, accessed Nov 19).

rights or otherwise acting inhumanely. The ICRC's first priority is to serve people in need regardless of whether they are in some way justifying, legitimizing or in any other way supporting the government, as long as they are able to continue their work. MSF by contrast, sees aiding violent or oppressive governments through humanitarian work as unacceptable and will refuse to be an "accomplice" in such actions. In 1994, MSF became aware that their aid to Rwanda was helping the murderers of the genocide, and so the agency withdrew from the country.<sup>197</sup> Usually, in cases where humanitarian aid becomes a tool of social and political control, MSF eventually comes into conflict with local authorities and decides to leave.<sup>198</sup>

Another issue of stark contrast between the MSF and ICRC is funding. In 2004, 80-85 percent of the ICRC's budget came from voluntary governmental contributions, the majority of which comes from wealthy, western democratic government.<sup>199</sup> MSF by contrast only accepts 20 percent of funding from government or corporate sources. The great majority, around 80 percent comes from private donations.<sup>200</sup> Thus, the ICRC is arguably less likely to speak out against human rights violations committed by states, particularly the wealthy democracies because the organization receives most of its funding from national societies. Adding to this, is the fact that national societies are closely related to domestic governments.

MSF, by contrast has much more autonomy because the majority of its funding comes from private donors. Since private donations tend to keep pace with the size and scale of humanitarian disasters brought to the public's attention, it is actually in the

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<sup>197</sup> Brauman, Rony. Politics and Humanitarianism. Edited Transcripts of remarks, Achieving Global Justice Seminar (Carnegie Council of Ethics and International Affairs. April 12, 2004 ) 8.

<sup>198</sup> Braumann, 7.

<sup>199</sup> Forsythe, The Humanitarians, 4.

<sup>200</sup> Forsythe, The Humanitarians, 317.

organization's best interest to inform the public of the atrocities of humanitarian disasters.

Where the ICRC stands firmly by the principles of aid, MSF, a Wilsonian organization, is more likely to operate to view the principles of humanitarian aid as operating guidelines. In Rwanda – ironically given the history of the organization – MSF staff members were forced to work under the Red Cross emblem in order to survive when the genocide began. They had to agree to the ICRC's terms of engagement including staying silent about human rights violations and international humanitarian law in order to be perceived as neutral.<sup>201</sup>

### ***Oxfam International***

Oxfam International is one example of an organization dedicated to new humanitarianism. It is a confederation of 13 organizations that seeks to “find lasting solutions to poverty, suffering and injustice.”<sup>202</sup> To assist in achieving these goals, the organization undertakes “high-level research and lobbying aimed at changing international policies and practices in ways which would ensure that poor people have the rights, opportunities and resources they need to improve and control their lives.”<sup>203</sup> It seeks to effect political change if this change will alleviate the suffering of the victims of humanitarian emergencies. Oxfam, while in support of the principles of aid, takes an outcome-oriented approach. Although the organization would be hesitant to admit its commitment to the principles of humanitarian aid is weaker than those of the ICRC or MSF, Oxfam has been known to act contrary to the principles of aid, specifically the

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<sup>201</sup> Forsythe, *The Humanitarians*, 122.

<sup>202</sup> Oxfam International Website <<http://www.oxfam.org/en/about/>> (November 18, 2006).

<sup>203</sup> Oxfam International Website <<http://www.oxfam.org/en/about/>> (November 18, 2006).

principle of neutrality as in the example discussed below. Oxfam also takes a more politically involved and politically goal-oriented approach to its humanitarian work. It acts in solidarity with the victims of humanitarian disasters to create long-term solutions, whether they be social, economical or political.

For example, Oxfam Belgium launched a campaign in 2003 intended to support the end of Israel's occupation of Palestinian Territories. The campaign encouraged EU consumers to boycott Israeli produce, using posters and other promotional materials that read: "Israeli fruits have a bitter taste...reject the occupation of Palestine, don't buy Israeli fruits and vegetables." NGO Monitor, a group run out of the Institute of Contemporary Affairs based in the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs criticized the Oxfam campaign for being "purely political" and contrary to Oxfam's mission statement.<sup>204</sup> After receiving a complaint from the group, Oxfam subsequently altered its posters and website and issued an apology. However, the apology written by Ian Anderson, Chairman of Oxfam International was not entirely remorseful. The letter states that Oxfam's "involvement in the campaign was to target only those goods grown in the occupied territories and exported into the EU. As such, the campaign is against certain actual policies of the Israeli government. It is not against the Israeli or Jewish people."<sup>205</sup>

It is evident that this was a political campaign intended to address the humanitarian situation of the Palestinians by advocating for political change. As such, it was received by some as an affront to Israel and as a result undermined the organization's claims to neutrality and independence – certainly within Israel – but also in the wider sphere of international public opinion as well. Even with the risks associated with

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<sup>204</sup> NGO Monitor Website <<http://ngo-monitor.org/img/oxfam.htm>> (October 7, 2006).

<sup>205</sup> NGO Monitor Website <<http://ngo-monitor.org/img/oxfam.htm>> (November 22, 2006).

running a partisan campaign, Oxfam seems confident that it acted in solidarity with suffering Palestinians of the occupied territories. Clearly Oxfam staff decided political change is the only means to bring about a long-term solution to the current cause of the Palestinian's suffering.

As a new humanitarian organization, Oxfam likely believes that any amount of humanitarian aid is ultimately fruitless unless greater political change occurs. Under this assumption, Oxfam launched a campaign that – while highly political – was hoped could lead to long-term relief for the people of the occupied territories. As indicated in chapter one, there is a danger in humanitarian organizations providing a political response when what is really needed is humanitarian assistance from humanitarian groups such as Oxfam, and a political response by political actors. Until political bodies are willing to provide solutions, new humanitarian agencies will likely continue to venture into political arenas and discard humanitarian principles if they are thought to impede a holistic solution to the underlying causes of a humanitarian crisis.

### **Power Dynamics Between Aid Organizations and ECHO**

The relationship between ECHO and its operating partners is defined by a constant effort to articulate and realize preferences. This interplay manifests itself most obviously in clear, discernible rules between the DG and aid agencies. In many ways this “direct” face of power is dominated by ECHO. The DG is able to create clear and binding rules which operating partners must adhere to as a condition of receiving funding from ECHO. This includes when and where aid is delivered by way of calling for tenders for specific regions or crises. ECHO also specifies what types of activities it will fund and what the timeframes for these activities are.

Within these constraints, aid organizations attempt to lobby ECHO staff to fund activities in their area of expertise and in their preferred regions (for example, where their organization is already active). One interviewee revealed that NGOs, IGOs and other operational partners will lobby senior ECHO staff or contract desk officers each fall when the budget allocations are being planned through Global Plans in an attempt to try to influence the next year's funding allocations.<sup>206</sup> Beyond this, operating partners contact ECHO staff throughout the year if they feel a project in a specific region should receive funding.

The articulation of these indirect or structural powers is evidence of the fact that the creation of Global Plans and other ECHO decisions involves many more factors than the assessment indicators discussed in the previous chapter. Moreover, while ECHO's mandate is to provide funding on the basis of needs, there are other factors that influence where and how much ECHO funding is actually allocated. Aid organizations, while they are at the behest of ECHO in terms of direct power, do exercise indirect power in the creation of funding decisions through personal lobbying. Because ECHO depends on NGOs to operationalize funding decisions, there is a certain amount of negotiating that inevitably takes place. However, if ECHO commits to a funding decision that is in violation of the principles of humanitarian aid, aid agencies have limited ability to raise significant objections if they want to be involved in the decision's delivery. Some of the pressures that lead agencies to agree to become involved in politicized aid programs are discussed next.

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<sup>206</sup> Confidential interview with representative of ECHO, Brussels, June 2006.

## **Institutionalization**

While the donor-partner relationship offers unique challenges, NGOs also face challenges from within the sector itself. In the burgeoning field of aid that has become a humanitarian enterprise, it is little wonder a kind of institutionalization has taken place. What were once unassuming grassroots associations, operating out of small offices with pitiful budgets, have since become corporate-like organizations with transnational reach and operating budgets that rival the GDPs of some nation states.

Non-governmental organizations began to institutionalize as the stakes (read: funding) dramatically increased and the price of appearing wasteful, unprofessional and ineffective became too costly. “The more NGOs act like businesses, the more they struggle to find a bottom line—a non-profit equivalent of profit.”<sup>207</sup> NGOs began to develop best practices, standardized responses and specialized training in an attempt to perform better and to gain the trust and confidence of stakeholders as well as donors. The fierce competition in the international humanitarian funding market inevitably leads agencies to exaggerate their competencies and at times their need.

Despite recent exponential growth in the funding of humanitarian aid, it is still very limited when compared to the overall need worldwide. Furthermore, there are some donors who are preferred over others, based on their reporting requirements, eligibility requirements and funding amounts available. As a result, NGOs and other civil society organizations are pitted against each other, often working in similar areas with similar strengths and proposing very similar activities to access the preferred channels of funding.

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<sup>207</sup> Farooq, Where the Money is. < <http://www.globalpolicy.org/ngos/credib/2005/0905money.htm> > (November 18, 2006).

Moreover, the cost of “sitting out” a major crisis has created additional problems as institutional needs increasingly become a priority. In addition to losing agency revenue, Larry Minear argues not participating in a major crisis can also lower perceptions of the agency, leave an organization unable to recapture lost market share (because of strong outside competition), limit potential influence on policy and limit possible future media coverage.<sup>208</sup> All of these are fundamental to the organizational well-being of an aid organization and may mean the difference between becoming one of the big players and being pushed to relative obscurity.

These intense pressures can at times lead agencies to act in ways that are politicized. This includes participating in aid operations in areas other than where need is greatest and doing activities that are not always in the best interests of the recipients. Furthermore, institutionalization of NGOs into large corporate-like organizations, creates enormous pressures for NGOs to work with donors in politicized projects unless NGOs are willing and able to ensure they have funding independence primarily through diversification of funding sources.

### **The Role of the Media**

Many of the world’s worst humanitarian disasters are given little or no media attention. And as a result these disasters tend to attract far less in humanitarian aid funding. This is not always the case, as in the example of North Korea which receives almost no media coverage but consistently high levels of humanitarian aid.<sup>209</sup> However,

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<sup>208</sup> Miner, Larry. *A Moment of Truth for the Humanitarian Enterprise*. Foreign Policy in Focus, *Global Policy Forum*. <<http://www.globalpolicy.org/ngos/aid/2003/0714iraq.htm>> (September 22, 2005) 1.

<sup>209</sup> Smillie and Minear, 178.

in general media attention is critical in initiating mass public support.<sup>210</sup> Because governments are sensitive to public opinion, media attention does matter in determining whether a crisis becomes an international “cause” or a much smaller story. Though media attention is not the deciding factor in determining the provision of humanitarian aid, crises that are not given media attention are much more likely to end up forgotten crises. ECHO’s FCA indicator addresses this ongoing and established problem by assembling a list of crises that are “forgotten” as mentioned in chapter two. ECHO defines a forgotten crisis as one where there is high need but low donor contributions and little media attention.<sup>211</sup>

The media, NGOs and donor governments interact in a unique and changing relationship that can range from mutually supportive to deeply antagonistic, depending on the circumstances. The media relies on governments and NGOs in humanitarian disasters to provide interviews, access to information and cooperation to build compelling and emotional news or public interest stories.

NGOs rely on the media or the so-called CNN factor to generate increased public interest in their work, which generally translates into increased private donations and a strengthening of their position vis-à-vis state donors. One ICRC staff member identified media coverage as a key determinate in attempting to secure funding.<sup>212</sup> He confirmed that it is close to impossible to generate sufficient funding for programs in areas where there is little or no media attention.

The media also provides NGOs a means to exert leverage on local recipient governments. For example, some sources report that NGOs often pay as much as 25 to

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<sup>210</sup> Smillie and Minear, 178.

<sup>211</sup> ECHO Methodological Note, 9.

<sup>212</sup> Confidential interview with representative of NGO, Victoria, August 2006.

35 percent of aid to local governments in the form of taxes.<sup>213</sup> When the situation gets beyond that, NGOs have resorted to using the media to exert pressure on local authorities.<sup>214</sup>

Although donor governments try to avoid and ignore negative media attention when it comes in the form of news stories about government inaction or incompetence<sup>215</sup> they do depend on the media to justify and create acceptance for policies and funding decisions. For example, “they may actually work to generate media coverage to justify disproportionate spending in major political-humanitarian emergencies such as Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Iraq.”<sup>216</sup>

It is important to recognize the role of the media in contributing to the politicization of humanitarian aid including the fact that NGOs must play media politics to do many aspects of their work including spreading public awareness and fund-raising. However, the influence of the media should not be overstated either, as media coverage is not a guarantee that policies will change. For example, in the early 1990s, during the initial phases of the crisis in East Timor, despite intense attention by the international media, western governments were appallingly slow to take action.<sup>217</sup> Just as the limits of humanitarian aid organizations must be recognized, so too must the role of the media not be exaggerated. The intention here is to show that beyond whether an organization falls into a more or less politicized category, there are external factors such as institutional constraints to the funding market and the media that effect where and how much aid funding is allocated to a humanitarian crisis. Moreover, the media is an integral partner

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<sup>213</sup> Braumann , 7.

<sup>214</sup> Braumann , 7.

<sup>215</sup> Smillie and Minear, 179.

<sup>216</sup> Smillie and Minear, 179.

<sup>217</sup> Smillie and Minear, 57.

in enabling NGOs and other aid organizations to demonstrate their achievements to donors, and donors rely on media sources as an agenda-setting agent which when favourable, permits governments to send aid to regions of political interests if that region's need is highlighted by the media.

Beyond favouring some crises at the expense of others, the media can also act as a smoke screen to hide wider political failure. Michael Ignatieff states, "Television coverage of humanitarian assistance allows the West the illusion that it is doing something; in this way, coverage becomes an alternative to more serious political engagement."<sup>218</sup> In this way, the media acts as an enabling agent, producing television and radio broadcasts that tell domestic audiences of the government's action in the face of humanitarian disasters, when in fact it has exchanged political tools, which could address the causal factors of many crises, for humanitarian ones in a type of superficial "band-aid" solution. As stated in chapter one, humanitarian organizations tend to slide towards increased politicization as a means to redress perceived and actual past humanitarian failures. While humanitarians have certainly made mistakes in the past, military and especially political inaction is more often than not the key factor in determining whether humanitarian emergencies are solved or become long-term hotspots of political and economic instability and humanitarian suffering.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has shown that politicization is not only a phenomena that aid organizations are forced to deal with through partnering with ECHO or other donor

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<sup>218</sup> Moore, Jonathan, ed., Hard Choices: Moral Dilemmas in Humanitarian Intervention. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1998) 298.

states, but that the aid organizations themselves can also be more or less politicized. In this way it has expanded on the degrees of politicization outlined in chapter one to offer a more complete assessment of how aid is politicized. It has evaluated the power relationships between ECHO and its operating partners to explain that while aid organizations attempt to articulate their preferences through lobbying, the relationship dynamics tend to favour ECHO.

For many NGOs, the realities of the field including the funding market, institutionalization and the importance of the media have required agencies to become donor driven organizations. This means that the organization acts primarily in areas in which there is funding, not necessarily the highest level of need. NGOs and other operating partners need to make concerted efforts to align funding decisions with need and to distance themselves from becoming too close to donor governments, including diversifying their organization's sources of funding. Moreover, aid organizations need to strike a balance between the needs of the recipients and the agencies themselves. The next chapter looks at the role of civil society and ECHO in the Kosovo crisis of 1999, in a single case study of the practical realities of a field that is intensely political and all too easily politicized.

## **IV The Question of Politicization in Kosovo**

This chapter seeks to assess ECHO's humanitarian assistance allocated in response to the Kosovo crisis in light of the politicization debate. It is not intended to provide a detailed account of the role of humanitarian aid during the Kosovo crisis nor does it purport to be a holistic and meticulous case study as this could fill many lengthy volumes. Rather it seeks to analyze ECHO's funding decisions using the principles established in chapter one and by looking at the relationship between political and humanitarian interests to determine the degree of politicization of ECHO's aid programs during the Kosovo crisis and how, if at all, this differs from the theoretical assessment of ECHO provided in chapter two.

It will begin with a short history of the region to situate the Kosovo conflict. It then offers an account of ECHO's work in the area between 1999-2001. Subsequent sections outline how aid was politicized according to the framework set out in chapter one and in reference to issues identified in chapters two and three. It concludes with an overall assessment, and an account of how ECHO's policies and aid practices have changed since the Kosovo crisis.

### **Kosovo: A Short History**

Bitter tensions and sporadic violence have plagued the Balkans for the last thousand years. These mostly ethnic and religious tensions came to a head most recently in the early winter months of 1998. Both the Serbs and the Albanians claimed rights to

the region on historical and ethnodemographic grounds for generations.<sup>219</sup> The mid-eighties saw a rise in Serbian nationalism that coincided with the election of Slobodan Milosevic. In 1990, the Serbian authorities under Milosevic rescinded the self-administration of Kosovo, which had been declared an autonomous province in the 1974 Yugoslav constitution.<sup>220</sup> Serbian authorities also took additional measures to 'Serbianize' the province. These included restricting land sales to Albanians, discriminatory Albanian language policies, offering incentives for Serbs and Montenegrins to return to Kosovo, family planning for Albanians and encouraging Albanians to seek work in other areas of Yugoslavia outside of Kosovo.<sup>221</sup> In response, the 90 percent majority Albanian population in Kosovo set up a parallel state structure, which included a functioning presidency, government, legislature, education and medical system as well as other political and cultural institutions.<sup>222</sup>

The international community remained largely indifferent to Kosovo during this time. For example the Dayton Peace Accords, negotiated in November of 1995 effectively ignored the situation in Kosovo and an International Contact Group set up in September 1997 failed to achieve any real solution to the growing unrest. As a result many Kosovar Albanians began to lose patience with passive, non-violent means to resist Serbian oppression<sup>223</sup> and by 1997 political violence in Kosovo increased significantly.<sup>224</sup> Mass student demonstrations, and continuous violence between Serbian police and

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<sup>219</sup> Schnabel, Albrecht and Ramesh Chandra Thakur eds. Kosovo and the Challenge of Humanitarian Intervention: Selective Indignation, Collective Action and International Citizenship. (New York : United Nations University Press, 2000) 19.

<sup>220</sup> International Independent Commission on Kosovo. The Kosovo Report Conflict, International Response, Lessons Learned. (New York : Oxford University Press, 2000) 35.

<sup>221</sup> International Independent Commission on Kosovo, 41.

<sup>222</sup> Schnabel, 21.

<sup>223</sup> International Independent Commission on Kosovo, 50.

<sup>224</sup> Schnabel, 21.

military, and Kosovo rebels (calling themselves the Kosovo Liberation Army or KLA) punctuated the increasingly tense civil and political environment. By 1998, Serbian authorities under Milosevic had begun a brutal campaign of ethnic cleansing<sup>225</sup> against ethnic Albanians in an effort to stamp out the KLA and the Kosovar resistance.

By February 1999, in response to escalating and ruthless violence, the Contact Group once again put pressure on both sides to come to an agreement. They presented both the Albanian delegation and the Serbian authorities with a proposal at Rambouillet. The Rambouillet Accords called for Kosovo to be given some form of self-government and called for the presence of an international force to stabilize the region and ensure compliance with the agreement. Although the Albanians would eventually sign, the Serbian authorities in Belgrade refused to accept the terms. This precipitated the decision to resort to military action to bring about an end to the hostilities. NATO air strikes began on March 24, 1999 and lasted for eleven weeks before the conflict finally came to an end. The western allies of NATO made it clear that they were not willing to accept casualties among their own forces and indeed the campaign was an example of a successful “zero-casualty” strategy.<sup>226</sup> However, by engaging in high altitude air warfare, the burden of risk and harm was shifted completely to the target society.<sup>227</sup> Thus, this method ironically protected military personnel, while leaving civilian populations in Serbia and Kosovo at risk.

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<sup>225</sup> “Ethnic cleansing can be understood as the expulsion of an ‘undesirable’ population from a given territory due to religious or ethnic discrimination, political, strategic or ideological considerations, or a combination of these. (Andrew Bell-Fialkoff. *A Brief History of Ethnic Cleansing*, *Foreign Affairs* 72, N.3, Summer 1993, p. 110).

<sup>226</sup> Megevand Roggo, Beatrice. *After the Kosovo conflict, a genuine humanitarian space: A utopian concept or an essential requirement?* (*International Review of the Red Cross*, no. 837, March 2000) 5.

<sup>227</sup> Schnabel, 499.

Although the conflict and ethnic violence had receded by the summer of 1999, a humanitarian crisis remained in its wake. The conflict and subsequent air strikes created one of the most acute refugee crises the modern world has ever seen. Within weeks an estimated 860 000 ethnic Albanian Kosovars, out a total population of about 2 million, fled or were deported to neighbouring states.<sup>228</sup> This situation was then further aggravated when voluntary repatriation of Kosovo Albanian refugees and displaced persons starting later that same year.<sup>229</sup> Returnees found their homes and villages in ruins and required continued assistance even when they were no longer refugees. Further aggravating the humanitarian situation were a serious of vicious reprisal killings by ethnic Albanians against Serb and other minorities that were believed to have supported Serbian police and paramilitary units. These revenge killings in turn precipitated a quarter million Serb and other minorities to flee Kosovo by the middle of 1999.<sup>230</sup>

### **ECHO in Kosovo**

While the UNHCR was designated as the lead humanitarian agency during the Kosovo refugee crisis in early 1999, ECHO still played a substantial role in relieving the humanitarian disaster in Kosovo and surrounding areas.<sup>231</sup> In 1999, ECHO spent a total of €378 million in response to the Kosovo crisis, up significantly from the €22 million it allocated to Kosovo in 1998. ECHO's contribution accounted for approximately 25

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<sup>228</sup> UNHCR Website *The Balkans: Kosovo*. <<http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/balkans-country?country=kosovo>> (October 16, 2006).

<sup>229</sup> Baker, Jock and Hilde Haug *The Kosovo Women's Initiative: An independent evaluation*. UNHCR EPAU/2002/12 (November 2001)18.

<sup>230</sup> Schnabel, 497.

<sup>231</sup> Baker and Haug, 21.

percent of the overall aid flows sent in response to the emergency.<sup>232</sup> Of the €378 million spent, €32 million was taken from the regular ECHO budget while €346 million was accessed through the emergency reserve.<sup>233</sup> Approximately €112 million in ECHO funding of this was spent on projects within Kosovo in 1999 and 2000. However, the aid was also used to assist neighbouring countries including Albania, Montenegro, and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia all affected by the crisis.<sup>234</sup> These projects provided assistance to refugees in camps, collective centres and to those living with host families. ECHO also provided more than 22,000 returnee families with shelter materials, funded the treatment of 8,400 wells and rehabilitated over 200 schools and health facilities in the province.<sup>235</sup> ECHO reduced its programming in Kosovo substantially in 2001 and by 2003 ECHO ceased operating in the Balkans region.<sup>236</sup>

### **The Politicization of Aid in Kosovo**

The following section will assess ECHO's humanitarian aid contributions against three of the main principles of humanitarian aid.

#### ***On Impartiality***

- *Impartiality* - meaning the implementation of actions solely on the basis of need, without discrimination between or within affected populations.

<sup>232</sup> Court of Auditors Special Report No 2/2001, *Official Journal of the European Communities*, C168 Vol. 44 (June 12, 2001) 168/6.

<sup>233</sup> Court of Auditors Report, 168/7

<sup>234</sup> As the crisis was categorized by massive refugee flows the surrounding countries were also affected. This chapter, looks primarily at the humanitarian crisis and response to the conflict in Kosovo, not necessarily aid programs delivered in Kosovo, and will therefore also include projects in neighbouring countries where relevant.

<sup>235</sup> ECHO Publications. ECHO in the Balkans: 12 years of humanitarian action 1991 –2003

<[http://ec.europa.eu/echo/pdf\\_files/leaflets/balkans\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/echo/pdf_files/leaflets/balkans_en.pdf)> (November 18, 2006) 12.

<sup>236</sup> European Liaison Office in Kosovo Website How is the EU represented in Kosovo?

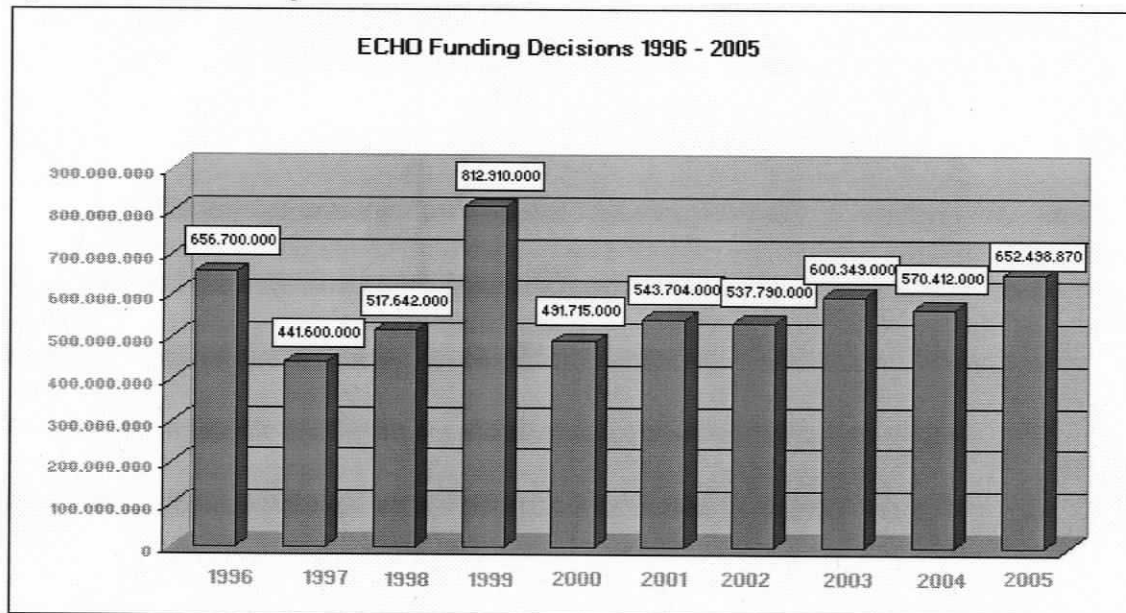
<[http://www.delprn.cec.eu.int/en/eu\\_and\\_kosovo/echo.htm](http://www.delprn.cec.eu.int/en/eu_and_kosovo/echo.htm)> (May 10, 2006).

The Kosovo crisis exploded on Europe's doorstep. As a result, it received an enormous amount of attention both in the media and in domestic politics within the EU. Some argue that the geographic proximity and the EU's interests in the region were what prompted such significant aid flows. Indeed in some sense the EU was able to defend and justify the enormous aid package allocated to the Kosovo crisis because the heightened media attention exaggerated the situation and led to a perceived notion that an incredible amount of aid was required to deal with such a significant crisis.

A more cynical version argues that media images of ethnic cleansing of "white people" or "old Europeans" resonated with western democratic publics, because people were able to easily identify and therefore sympathize with people from the region. This in turn created a strong, often emotional desire on the part of the European Union public to send aid.

In reality, it was probably some combination of the three – the EU's interests in the region, its geographical proximity and Europeans' ability to sympathize with the victims of the ethnic cleansing, collectively – that led to support and action in what was Europe's largest aid package to date and accounted for the biggest budget ECHO has ever seen (see Figure 2). The provision of this enormous aid package was made based on factors beyond simple need as the principle of impartiality requires.

Figure 2 - ECHO Funding Decisions 1996-2005



Source: ECHO Website ([http://ec.europa.eu/echo/statistics/echo\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/echo/statistics/echo_en.htm))

It should also be stated, that during the delivery of aid programs on the ground, complete impartiality was maintained between serving affected Albanian and Serbian populations. According to one interviewee, ECHO-funded programs, as well as other international humanitarian aid programs were delivered impartially to Serbs, Albanians and other affected minorities of the region.<sup>237</sup>

### *On Independence*

- *Independence* - meaning the autonomy of humanitarian objectives from the political, economic, military or other objectives that any actor may hold with regard to areas where humanitarian action is being implemented.

In terms of the principle of independence, two closely related but separate issues arise when looking at ECHO's aid to the Kosovo crisis. One is in reference to the relationship between ECHO and NATO and the other is the preplanned nature of what

<sup>237</sup> Confidential interview with representative of UN, Prishtina, June 2006.

can only be described as a humanitarian response complementary to NATO's military campaign.

The Kosovo crisis "highlighted the ambiguous and sometimes fraught relationship between humanitarian and military interventions"<sup>238</sup> In what is now commonly recognized as the blurring of lines between humanitarian and military activities, NATO insisted on coordinating humanitarian action "in order to sell the war at home... [by helping] them win the hearts and minds campaign integral to the war effort."<sup>239</sup> A central aspect of this was feeding the media with images of NATO soldiers assisting in the delivery of humanitarian aid, setting up refugee camps and so forth. This type of activity is a clear violation of the principle of independence, which calls for the autonomy of humanitarian objectives from the political, economic and military. Moreover, reports indicate that NATO even approached ECHO to request aid funding for their activities. What is surprising is that ECHO "turned down requests for funding from NATO related military contingents, reportedly because the activities didn't fit ECHO's priorities rather than because they were not being carried out by its traditional partners."<sup>240</sup>

The second and closely related issue is the way in which parties to the military campaign were also organizing the humanitarian response. One interviewee revealed that the major players, including the EU (likely including ECHO representatives), Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), NATO and UN agency representatives met before the air strikes began to discuss humanitarian activities and to

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<sup>238</sup> Macrae, *The New Humanitarianisms*, 59.

<sup>239</sup> Barnett, 24.

<sup>240</sup> Minear, van Baarda and Sommers, *NATO and Humanitarian Action*, 28.

allocate responsibilities.<sup>241</sup> It seems therefore that the humanitarian response was planned with a top-down approach, including co-coordinating a humanitarian response and delegating duties before the NATO strikes began – by many of the same actors that were engaged in planning NATO’s military strategy. Humanitarian aid provisions are usually understood as a response to an acute (implying, unforeseeable) emergency. Here, however, humanitarian aid was orchestrated as quasi-part and parcel of the military campaign and more closely resembles activities required by the Geneva Conventions relating to the provision of aid for affected populations of military aggression, than anything humanitarian. “For an act to be humanitarian, it should be freely given and be neither obliged by law nor owed as compensation for harm done. Giving people goods of which we ourselves have deprived them is not a donation but restitution.”<sup>242</sup>

My intention here is neither to make judgements as to whether the NATO offensive was the best means to end the violence in Kosovo, nor is it to comment on the legality of the air strikes. What I am saying is that the independence of ECHO’s humanitarian response, and by extension the independence of ECHO’s operating partners was compromised because of the EU’s simultaneous roles in humanitarian aid in the military campaign through NATO.

The independence of humanitarian projects could not be sustained if these were funded by NATO members, which of course includes ECHO funds since many EU states are members of NATO. MSF for example refused funding from any NATO member,

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<sup>241</sup> Confidential interview with representative of UN, Prishtina, June 2006.

<sup>242</sup> Baumann, 4.

stating that the organization would not work with belligerents of any conflict.<sup>243</sup>

Furthermore, MSF “used their international structure to place a symbolic distance between NATO forces and their organisations. They only used staff and national chapters unconnected with the nationality of the troops in each camp.”<sup>244</sup> Finishing sentence?

### ***On Proportionality***

- *Proportionately* – meaning that aid should be proportionate to the degree and scale of suffering, regardless of where or to whom the suffering occurs.

Underlying this principle is the idea that every human life is of equal worth.<sup>245</sup>

Judging by previous and later budgets, the 1999 budget for ECHO would have been significantly smaller if the Kosovo crisis had not occurred. Likely it would have been around €300 million less than the €812 million that was allocated in 1999. This enormous spike in aid in 1999 is due largely to the €378 million allocated to the crisis<sup>246</sup> of which €346 was allocated from the Emergency Reserve.<sup>247</sup> There was undoubtedly an enormous spike in humanitarian aid in 1999. In 1998, ECHO’s annual expenditures totalled €518 million and in 2000 the total aid expenditure was only €491 million. The question is whether aid monies that would have gone to other regions was redirected to Kosovo or whether there was an increase in aid money made available to address the Kosovo crisis that year.

<sup>243</sup> Orbinski, James. MSF Article: Aid Under Siege Once again.

<[http://www.msf.org/msfinternational/invoke.cfm?component=article&objectid=0F722CC0-BF6A-11D4-852200902789187E&method=full\\_html](http://www.msf.org/msfinternational/invoke.cfm?component=article&objectid=0F722CC0-BF6A-11D4-852200902789187E&method=full_html)> (December 3, 2006)

<sup>244</sup> Porter, The Partiality of Humanitarian Assistance.

<sup>245</sup> Minear and Weiss. Mercy Under Fire, 63.

<sup>246</sup> ECHO Publications. ECHO in Kosovo 1998-2001. (Prishtina: ECHO Prishtina, November 2001) 5.

<sup>247</sup> ECHO Publications. East Timor: Looking for a Peaceful Solution. *ECHO Annual Report 1999.*

<[http://ec.europa.eu/echo/pdf\\_files/annual\\_reviews/1999\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/echo/pdf_files/annual_reviews/1999_en.pdf)> (November 19, 2006) 28.

A comparative analysis of financial decisions published in ECHO's Annual Reviews finds that other crises did receive fewer funds, likely because of the attention given the Kosovo crisis. This however, cannot be confirmed for a number of reasons. First, the decrease in funding to other parts of the world may very well have occurred in response to a perceived or actual decrease in need and not as a result of diverted funds to the Balkans.<sup>248</sup> Since ECHO had not yet developed the GNA and FCA indicators, it is impossible to compare the regions of greatest need with where funding was allocated. Second, in 1999 'regional' funding categories were added to the country breakdown. For example, Yemen received €1.6 million in 1998, but only €1.3 million in 1999. However, in addition to country based funding, €11 million was allocated to a regional Middle East fund in 1999, therefore it is unclear whether Yemen received funding from this allocation. These regional categories are only used in 1999 and do not appear in 1998, 2000 or thereafter. One explanation for this is that an acute staffing shortage did not allow ECHO staff to compile exact funding statistics on a per country basis. During the Kosovo crisis, staff were asked to produce daily briefings on the situation in Balkans. In addition to this, ECHO had an additional €400 million in its budget which effectively doubled ECHO's original budget and meant that ECHO had to manage 12 additional decisions and 500 extra contracts with virtually no additional staff.<sup>249</sup> Furthermore, regional categories are also changed between 1998 and 2000. In 1998, ECHO used the following categories (among others):

- *Ex-Yugoslavia* (Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the FRY)

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<sup>248</sup> At this time the GNA and FCA assessment indicators had not yet been introduced, and need assessments were primarily carried out by humanitarian organizations including NGOs, UN agencies and the ICRC. This was then used to form ECHO's yearly strategy. (Court of Auditors Report, 168/7)

<sup>249</sup> Court of Auditors Report, 168/18.

- *Commonwealth of Independent States* or CIS (Russia and the former Russian satellite states, Armenia, Ukraine etc.)
- *Eastern Europe* (Romania, Bulgaria, Albania etc.)

In 1999, ECHO used slightly modified categories:

- *Ex-Yugoslavia*
- *Albania*
- *Former Soviet Union* (Armenia, Ukraine etc.)
- *Eastern Europe* (Romania)

By 2000 these categories were joined under a single heading titled *Eastern Europe/NIS*.<sup>250</sup> To further complicate matters, the Western Balkan states are listed as a group and not as individual states. For these reasons, it is difficult to compare regional totals, let alone country totals with complete accuracy. It is therefore unclear how much funding went specifically to Kosovo in 2000.

Finally, it should also be mentioned that there were areas that received increased funding in 1999, in some cases substantially more than they had received in 1998. Examples of significant increases include Indonesia (€2.5 to €19 million), India (€1.7 to €7.2 million), Congo (0 to €20 million)<sup>251</sup> and Turkey (€500 000 to € 30 million). What is interesting about the final example is that in 1999 at the Helsinki Summit, Turkey finally received candidacy status as a potential new member of the EU. This is one example of the EU using aid for political purposes or to achieve political objectives; it is peculiar that the same year Turkey becomes a candidate country to join the EU, its humanitarian aid funding increased by 3000 percent. It should be stated that Turkey experienced two major earthquakes in 1999, affecting 80 000 people. However, by

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<sup>250</sup> Newly Independent States

<sup>251</sup> The Congo is not listed on ECHO's financial decisions for 1998 even though the Second Congo War began in August of 1998.

comparison, India, which received only €7.2 million in ECHO funding in 1999 suffered a deadly cyclone, which affected 15 million people.<sup>252</sup>

This example is in line with what seems to be an overall picture that suggests many developing countries lost funding as the Balkans funding burgeoned unless other political factors were at stake. Those most negatively affected are listed in Table 2 below, with their 1998 and 1999 funding levels and the percentage decrease.

**Table 2 - Countries Most Affected by Funding Decreases Between 1998 and 1999**

Country	1998 Funding in Euro	1999 Funding in Euro	Decrease in Funding (%)
Afghanistan	19 800 000	5 800 000	71
Algeria	17 200 000	8 000 000	53
Bangladesh	8 500 000	3 000 000	65
Bolivia	2 000 000	1 000 000	50
Cambodia	10 000 000	6 500 000	35
China	4 700 000	1 100 000	77
Iraq	14 000 000	2 000 000	86
Peru	4 000 000	600 000	85

Several other countries that received funding in 1998 were not listed as having received any aid in 1999.<sup>253</sup> These include: Chad, French Polynesia, Guinea, Guyana, Liberia, Mali, Papa New Guinea, Senegal, Kyrgyzstan, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Laos, Nepal, Philippians, Vietnam, Egypt, Jordan Lebanon, Palestine/Israel, Syria, Argentina, Brazil, Honduras and Uruguay. When looking at the overall levels of aid, entire regions also received lower allocations of funding in 1999. These are listed below in Table 3:

**Table 3 - Regions Affected by Funding Decreases Between 1998 and 1999**

	Africa/Caribbean/Pacific	North Africa/ Middle East	Asia
1998	€143 000 000	€32 000 000	€63 000 000
1999	€129 000 000	€20 000 000	€60 000 000
Decease	€14 million (10%)	€12 million (37%)	€3 million (5%)

<sup>252</sup> *ECHO Annual Review 1999*, (November 19, 2006) 14.

<sup>253</sup> As noted above, these countries may have received funding under regional allocation.

Conversely, in addition to the increase Eastern Europe/Balkans received, the Latin America region also received substantially more than the previous year, €49 million in 1999, an increase of €17 million from 1998 aid levels. It should also be stated that some countries, which did not receive funding in 1998, were beneficiaries in 1999 including Angola, Bahamas, Congo, Madagascar, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia, Pakistan, Taiwan and Venezuela.

To gain a complete understanding of whether ECHO's funding was needs-based one would need to investigate the domestic situation in each country listed above. However, even without this information, two conclusions can be made: First, some of the world's poorest and most vulnerable countries received far less funding than in prior years, not because of a funding shortage but rather because Europe had other priorities. Even in cases where aid flows were sustained or where aid was increased, the staggering amount of aid sent to assist people affected by the Kosovo crisis is nowhere near the levels of aid other regions were receiving. For a situation which created around one million refugees<sup>254</sup> to receive almost €400 million is clearly not proportionate when compared with similar and more serious emergencies elsewhere.

A telling example of this is the situation in Afghanistan. ECHO's 2005 Annual Report states "Since the fall of the Taliban at the end of 2001, more than 3.5 million refugees as well as some 120 000 internally displaced people (IDPs) have returned to their homes in Afghanistan. Millions, however, remained in Pakistan and Iran."<sup>255</sup> Yet,

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<sup>254</sup> UNHCR Website The Balkans: Kosovo. <<http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/balkans-country?country=kosovo>> (December 10, 2006).

<sup>255</sup> *ECHO Annual Review 1999*, 7.

the total funding provided to Afghans in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran in 2005 was €20 million. The principle of proportionality, which states that aid should be proportionate to the degree of suffering, regardless of where or to whom the suffering occurs was not upheld when the Afghan example is compared with the size of the crisis and aid package awarded during the Kosovo crisis. While the degree of suffering was clearly severe during the Kosovo crisis, the scale and size of the crisis was not in proportion with the massive influx of aid ECHO sent to the region.

Another indication of politicization is the manner in which the influx of aid was allocated. As mentioned in chapter two, access to the emergency reserve requires the approval of both the European Parliament and the Council, both of which have been known to initiate access to reserve funding as well. A Commission press release dated June 11, 1999 announced that €50 million of a €150 million aid package earmarked in the emergency reserve fund in a Commission decision was made available to the Kosovo crisis and explains how the €50 million would be spent. The final paragraph of the press release states that “Preparations are underway for the mobilisation of €196 million remaining in the Emergency Aid Reserve of the European Commission budget for further aid for Kosovo, as requested by the [European] Council in Cologne earlier this month.”<sup>256</sup> This indicates that in this case, ECHO was acting in response to a request for additional funding initiated directly by the European Council, made up of heads of state from the EU member states.

The same procedure used to access emergency reserve funding is currently still in place. Furthermore, while ECHO has improved its internal processes of determining need through the introduction of two needs assessment indicators, the Council, made up

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<sup>256</sup> European Commission Press Release IP/99/386, June 11, 1999.

of senior politicians from each member state does not. The Council is made up of national politicians from member states who act on behalf of their domestic governments and make decisions based primarily on domestic political concerns.

The implication here is that if there is no political will to release extra funds, ECHO's funding request to use money in the emergency reserve will not be approved. This is particularly concerning given the tendency of the budgetary authorities (the Parliament and Council) to give ECHO a larger reserve fund as opposed to a larger budget.<sup>257</sup> While the rationale in doing so is understandable, since most humanitarian emergencies are by their very nature unforeseeable, it should be understood that this is in fact a means by which the political powers of the EU maintain a certain degree of control over where and how much humanitarian assistance is spent, all the while maintaining that the humanitarian aid budget is allocated on the basis of need in accordance with the assessment indicators.

### **Challenges in the Field**

The Kosovo crisis saw close to 300 NGOs<sup>258</sup> and other humanitarian organizations rush to the region, creating at times a chaotic scene.<sup>259</sup> A number of the issues raised in chapter two and three such as institutionalization, visibility, funding markets and the CNN effect all emerged in a curious and sometimes perilous interplay.

With the amount of money being committed to the Kosovo crisis and the media attention it generated, NGOs could not afford to sit this one out. This created an intense

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<sup>257</sup> Randel, 41.

<sup>258</sup> Guest, Iain. *Misplaced Charity Undermines Kosovo's Self-Reliance* Overseas Development Council February, 2000. <[www.odc.org](http://www.odc.org)> (December 4, 2006).

<sup>259</sup> Randel, 49.

competition among agencies all attempting to obtain funding for what was at times the same or similar projects. One interviewee revealed that an ECHO funded NGO had approached a local village about rebuilding their school house which had been severely damaged in the conflict. To the agency's surprise, it received a hostile response from the people in the village. After further inquiries, the NGO learnt that several agencies had already approached the village leaders about renovating the school but each time the project had never gone forward. The result was a feeling of disillusion and despair as hopes were dashed time and time again to the point where village people were responding with frustration and mistrust to offers of assistance from NGOs. The interviewee was pleased to tell me that eventually the school did get rebuilt with ECHO funds, but the situation is resonant of the fact that the NGO funding market can be treacherous and that better coordination and cooperation should be sought.

The massive influx of funding created not only a frenzy among aid agencies wanting to get a piece of the enormous "aid pie", but it also led to internal problems for some organizations that had not dealt with such enormous budgets before. A report published by the European Agency for Reconstruction (EAR)<sup>260</sup> stated: "Civil society organizations have received, since 1999, significant support from international donors. On some occasions this in fact proved detrimental (for example, the Kosovo Women's Initiative was unable to cope with the magnitude of the funds at its disposal) and this generated mass confusion."<sup>261</sup>

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<sup>260</sup> The EAR manages the EU's main assistance programmes in the Republic of Serbia (including Kosovo), the Republic of Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (EAR Website, <<http://www.ear.europa.eu/agency/agency.htm>>, December 23, 2006).

<sup>261</sup> Baker and Haug, 22.

ECHO had similar problems in this regard as well. The Court of Auditor's Report found that ECHO was faced with the problem of finding appropriate partners to accept deliver the enormous increase of aid funding released to ECHO. The report indicates ECHO was looking to fund aid agencies to work in delivering humanitarian relief when most NGOs were submitting proposals to provide infrastructure support.<sup>262</sup> While it is unclear why NGOs were not submitting proposals in line with where ECHO funding was, what this demonstrates is that ECHO's dependency on operating partners, first outlined in chapter two, can create real difficulties in delivering aid on the ground – particularly because the nature of humanitarian aid requires immediate action.

The controversial and adversarial nature of the air strikes in Kosovo meant that NATO governments were particularly interested in maintaining domestic support for their military actions in the Balkans. One of the ways this was done, was by involving soldiers in humanitarian aid operations on the ground. Many NGOs also had some degree of difficulty with the blurring of civil-military relations during the Kosovo crisis. In what became a truly "humanitarian intervention," NATO officers worked in humanitarian aid activities, including a role in coordinating assistance to refugees and building refugee camps.<sup>263</sup> Although MSF refused to work in refugee camps where military personnel were involved, and refused funding from NATO members for MSF programs in the region as a whole,<sup>264</sup> other aid organizations found it difficult to separate themselves from their national NATO counterparts. For example, NGOs were selected to

<sup>262</sup> Court of Auditors Report, 168/21.

<sup>263</sup> Dumait-Harper, Catherine. About MSF: Presentation to Stony Brook University. Based on a speech given on April 14, 1999 in Stony Brook, New York. [http://www.msf.org/msfinternational/invoke.cfm?component=article&objectid=F3370D24-2AB5-4C62-A371E1A5DA6DD4A1&method=full\\_html](http://www.msf.org/msfinternational/invoke.cfm?component=article&objectid=F3370D24-2AB5-4C62-A371E1A5DA6DD4A1&method=full_html) (December 5, 2006).

<sup>264</sup> Kosovo People Must End Violence Themselves: UN, KFOR. Global Policy Forum, August 8, 2000. <<http://www.globalpolicy.org/security/issues/kosovo1/000808.htm>> (December 5, 2006).

work at a refugee camp “first and foremost on the basis of shared nationality with the country whose military forces had prepared the site. Funding from the aid department of the same government invariably formed part of the package.”<sup>265</sup>

MSF withdrew from Kosovo in March of 1999, one week after the beginning of NATO air strikes, but provided assistance to the refugees in neighbouring countries.<sup>266</sup> In a speech in 2002, MSF’s delegate to the UN emphasized the problematic nature of aid agencies collaborating with military or political parties to a conflict, saying “independent and impartial humanitarian organizations cannot associate themselves with any of the parties, even if the intervention is carried out for human protection purposes.”<sup>267</sup> It is also noteworthy that in 2000 MSF again pulled out of Kosovo after accusing the international forces of failing to prevent ethnic cleansing after violence against minorities went unrestrained.<sup>268</sup> The organization did later return, however this is indicative of MSF’s position as Wilsonian humanitarianism, in that the organization will speak out on behalf of those the organization seeks to help and indeed if nothing is done to address these concerns the organization will withdraw in an attempt to force change.

The ICRC which practices pure humanitarianism took a different approach to the situation in Kosovo. The ICRC for whom humanitarian space is of primary importance told two stories, the first intended for the general public was neutral and avoided attributing political responsibility for the Kosovo crisis. However, a second, private

<sup>265</sup> Porter, Tony. The partiality of humanitarian assistance - Kosovo in comparative perspective. <<http://www.jha.ac/articles/a057.htm>> (December 2, 2006).

<sup>266</sup> Aid group quits Kosovo as violence continues. CNN.com, August 8, 2000 <<http://archives.cnn.com/2000/WORLD/europe/08/08/kosovo.quit/index.html>> (December 5, 2006).

<sup>267</sup> Dumait-Harper, Catherine. The Responsibility to Protect. Speech to the International Peace Academy Symposium, February 15 2002. <[http://www.msf.org/msfinternational/invoke.cfm?component=article&objectid=388662F3-FB8F-4F12-B6D4ECB69A1A3D64&method=full\\_html](http://www.msf.org/msfinternational/invoke.cfm?component=article&objectid=388662F3-FB8F-4F12-B6D4ECB69A1A3D64&method=full_html)> (December 5, 2006).

<sup>268</sup> Aid group quits Kosovo as violence continues. <<http://archives.cnn.com/2000/WORLD/europe/08/08/kosovo.quit/index.html>> (December 5, 2006).

message intended for governments, donors, and sympathetic journalists was far from neutral. The ICRC's public story offered "emotionally charged but ethnically neutral descriptions of humanitarian tragedy, whereas the private back-channel story, told by its delegates and high officials, did not hesitate to attribute blame and responsibility and recommend political action."<sup>269</sup>

This is one indication that staff of even a pure humanitarian organization can act politically behind closed doors. However, the organization's official policy towards neutrality was maintained. Perhaps this instance highlights the importance of perception over reality. It is important that aid organizations are perceived as neutral, regardless of whether they actually are. Of course perception is informed by reality and an aid organization's reputation is largely based on how organizations act in their daily activities. Indeed for an organization to be totally neutral is probably impossible, after all the ICRC is staffed by people with their own bias and interpretations. Thus, perhaps this example demonstrates the importance of ensuring the outside face and official actions of the ICRC are in line with pure humanitarian principles, even if the behind-the-scenes narrative is quite different.

The associated problem of visibility and donors wanting to receive credit for aid donation was also a problem during the Kosovo crisis. As discussed in chapter two, ECHO's policy on visibility could be improved, and as with the Kosovo example, the excessive amount of visibility or branding required of operating partners is testament to the political interest in the area. Ian Smillie and Larry Minear point out that

flag-waving, for example, is not stated by any government as a principle, a policy or even a minor goal, but it is near the top of the agenda for many. Badging and national identification are, in fact, among a plethora of often

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<sup>269</sup> Michael Ignatieff, in *Hard Choices*, Jonathan Moore ed. 296.

unstated domestic policy considerations affecting the delivery of humanitarian assistance.<sup>270</sup>

An interview with a senior UN official in Kosovo revealed there were numerous visibility elements in Kosovo including billboards, signage, stickers and placards.<sup>271</sup> As mentioned above, these visibility efforts usually benefit the donor more than the recipients. A UNHCR report confirms the extreme importance placed on visibility during the conflict,

to an intensely competitive bilateral environment, dominated in resource and numerical terms by independent actors who sought to carve out a role in what became, at times, an unseemly race for visibility, rather than a desire for a rational allocation of responsibilities.<sup>272</sup>

Moreover the report goes so far as to say the focus on visibility actually negatively affected the overall coordination of aid. In response to widespread criticism about its lack of leadership and coordination during the Kosovo crisis, a UNHCR report states “Levels of waste may have been greater in this case than elsewhere... With the resources pouring into the country, gaps in assistance and services below minimum standards should not have arisen in many cases.”<sup>273</sup> While it is not clear now significant the visibility factor was in contributing to these gaps in assistance, it is clear a significant amount of resources was spent on visibility that would arguably have been better spent elsewhere to benefit the victims. Even seven years after the crisis began, signs and placards continue to be seen in front of parks, utilities, on buildings and SUVs. All are testament to the massive influx of assistance that poured into Kosovo and to some extent lives on.

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<sup>270</sup> Smillie and Minear, 165.

<sup>271</sup> Confidential interview with representative of UN, Prishtina, June 2006.

<sup>272</sup> Suhrke, Astri et al. The Kosovo refugee crisis An independent evaluation of UNHCR's emergency preparedness and response. (UNHCR Publication EPAU/2000/001, February 2000.) 82

<sup>273</sup> Suhrke, 82.

The massive influx of aid to Kosovo also created additional problems including skewing the labour market and creating a situation of dependency that continues to this day. The Kosovars, particularly those living in Prishtina face massive unemployment and widespread poverty. Moreover, a kind of dual-economy has emerged. Certain hotels, stores and restaurants cater specifically to international development personnel, while others are priced to serve locals. The discrepancies are quite remarkable. As one might expect, there has emerged a widespread resentment towards international aid workers. Many NGOs continue to have a visible presence in Prishtina. However, the visibility emblems that were intended to communicate solidarity have now become mostly unwanted reminders of the tragic ethnic conflict of the past and continued international quasi-occupation.

### **Looking Ahead**

ECHO has made many changes since the Kosovo crisis, the most important being the introduction of GNA and FCA indicators to rank countries according to need. ECHO also currently has on the strongest policy frameworks of any other donor.<sup>274</sup> Moreover, there is a continued recognition in EU and ECHO policy that the principles of humanitarian aid must be respected and that for aid to be effective it must be kept at arms length from political interests and objectives. The European Union's aid program is also multilateral in nature which affords it additional protection from political interests of the individual member states.

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<sup>274</sup> Macrae Joanna, and Adele Harmer. Good Humanitarian Donorship and the European Union: Issues and Options. Background paper < <http://www.odi.org.uk/HPG/papers/HAC%20Background%20paper.pdf>> (March, 2004) 7.

However, despite these safeguards, ECHO has in theory and in practice politicized its humanitarian assistance in ways characteristic of self interested humanitarian aid outlined in chapter one. Self interested humanitarian assistance is most often distributed through the emergency reserve. Aid distributions that do not rely on the emergency reserve – i.e., regular non-emergency and regular emergency allocations - are less susceptible to politicization, though even these are not entirely aligned with needs despite the better procedures associated with their distribution. These procedures only provide a *better* process through which political interference is mitigated, but not entirely eliminated.

Nonetheless, the fundamental issues that led to the politicization of aid during the Kosovo crisis, including the procedure to access emergency reserve funding, remain. Equally worrisome, is the fact that ECHO's assessments tend to focus on criteria around performance based operational strategies – leaving larger issues surrounding politicization unaddressed. For example, the European Commission's *Annual Report on Humanitarian Aid 2000* states that ECHO undertook a self assessment in the aftermath of the Kosovo crisis. The Report identifies two main challenges established by the self-assessment. The first was “to meet the humanitarian needs of the most affected populations throughout [the year] especially during the winter months”, and the second was “to support transition to reconstruction and longer-term development.”<sup>275</sup> However, while both are important to best practices standards, by focusing completely on operational difficulties, ECHO entirely ignores the larger and more fundamental

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<sup>275</sup> Commission of the European Communities. Report from the Commission - Annual Report on Humanitarian Aid 2000. (Brussels, 8.6.2001 COM(2001) 307 final) 8.  
<[http://eurlex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/com/2001/com2001\\_0307en01.pdf](http://eurlex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/com/2001/com2001_0307en01.pdf)> (December 23, 2006) 8.

questions associated with the violations of impartiality, independence and proportionality that occurred during the Kosovo crisis.

One positive change that did occur following the Kosovo crisis was the introduction of different decision-making processes that varied according to the degree of the crisis outlined in chapter two. The Court of Auditor's Report following the Kosovo crisis stated that "ECHO's administrative procedures should be tailored according to the degree of urgency."<sup>276</sup> This allowed the director general of ECHO to make decisions in some circumstances that enables ECHO to provide FPA signatories with funding within 24-72 hours.<sup>277</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The Kosovo crisis was significant in Europe's history but also in the operational history of ECHO. Never before had the DG allocated so much funding to a single crisis in such a short period of time. The principles of aid that were violated as a result were subsumed beneath greater political objectives as the EU's aid program crossed into self-interest humanitarianism. However, despite some significant changes to ECHO following the crisis, it is likely that if a similar crisis occurred so close to Europe again today, the response would be comparable because the fundamental workings of political influence on ECHO aid decisions, including access to the emergency reserve, remain the same. The reserve is accessed in the case of a sudden emergency where there is political will to respond to a crisis, just as it was during the Kosovo crisis.

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<sup>276</sup> Court of Auditors Report, 168/5.

<sup>277</sup> Report from the Commission - Annual Report on Humanitarian Aid 2000, 4.

Aside from the introduction of expatiated decision-making processes, the main changes that ECHO did undergo affect only best practices. For example, policy work in the area of linking relief, rehabilitation and development (LRRD) and the introduction of assessment indicators. However, neither creates an aid program that is more immune to political influences. If anything the former leads to challenges for ECHO in terms of working in areas beyond short-term need or introduces a threat of the EU's humanitarian responsibilities being transferred to other bodies within the EU. The latter – the assessment indicators – are not governed by a policy on implementation and so are not systematically used to guide aid allocations. If anything they provide a smoke-screen under which, in reality political interests continue to influence aid allocations. Furthermore, excessive visibility requirements, requiring political will to access the emergency reserve and opaque decision-making procedures still remain.

## V Conclusion

Humanitarian aid is intrinsically political, but not necessarily politicized. This depends on whether the principles of aid are upheld and the nature of the relationship between humanitarian aid and the political motives and goals of government donors and aid agencies. Chapter one set out a framework of degrees of politicization that explains how aid is generally becoming increasingly politicized as agencies look toward new humanitarianism to address past shortcomings. It identifies pure humanitarianism as a baseline of unpoliticized aid. It emphasized that while politicization in and of itself is not negative, in practice it tends to lead to less effective or counterintuitive results in aid allocation and delivery. It is this type of politicization that is at issue. Finally, it argues that the intended results of humanitarian aid should not be overstated; aid should not be used to address larger political or economic failures. In cases of complex humanitarian emergencies, humanitarian aid should be accompanied by political and military responses as well.

Chapter two looked at the European Union's aid program which is generally understood to be multilateral and unpoliticized according to its needs-based, principled mandate and institutional autonomy within the greater EU. However, this thesis presents evidence that indeed the EU's aid program administered through ECHO is politicized. The explanation for this seeming contradiction is, at least in part, the existence of a certain amount of flexibility in ECHO's procedures. This can produce funding allocations which in some cases are contrary to GNA priorities and are susceptible to political influence. Decision-making procedures are opaque and in some cases (such as reserve funding) decisions are taken by the political bodies of the EU. Policy can protect

from undue political influence, but in the case of ECHO's needs assessment indicators there is no policy to guide how these assessment indicators are used to determine funding decisions. Furthermore, ECHO falls short in a variety of areas such as its visibility requirements, operational dependency and projectification, all of which negatively affect ECHO's ability to deliver unpoliticized aid.

Chapter three examined NGOs and other aid agencies to determine their role in the politicization aid and how they can respond to politicized donors. It concludes that the power dynamics between aid organizations and ECHO, will always favour the donor. Thus to avoid the pitfalls of politicized aid resulting from donor self-interest, aid organizations are wise to diversity funding sources. This chapter argues for a balance between the institutional needs of NGOs arising from the pressures of institutionalization and the needs of the recipients. It also highlights the media's role as being one key attributing factor in aid politicization.

In chapter four, the Kosovo crisis provides practical, field based evidence that ECHO's aid program was not only in violation of the main principles of aid, but that its aid programs were subsumed beneath a wider political agenda, related specifically to ensuring regional stability and expanding the EU's sphere of influence. In the aftermath some changes were made, however ECHO focused primarily on establishing lessons learning in terms of best practices. Therefore, this chapter concludes that the same politicization could result if a similar crisis occurred today because many of the underlying features, which lead to politicization remain unaddressed.

Perhaps the most striking feature of the EU's aid program is that there is an institutional-wide denial that in some cases ECHO is providing self-interested

humanitarian aid, in clear violation of the pure humanitarian mandate it so admirably attempts to uphold. In some instances ECHO does not uphold the major principles of aid, as seen in the Kosovo example, and delivers aid on the basis of EU self-interest. However, instead of acknowledging this, ECHO continues to maintain that its aid program is unpoliticized through its needs-based mandate, use of assessment indicators and relative isolation from the political bodies of the EU. While the US may be brazen in its use of self-interested humanitarian aid, one NGO staff member commented that at least the US is upfront about this self interest and that with this acknowledgement comes a level of clarity for stakeholders about the US's intention.<sup>278</sup> ECHO on the other hand operates in an environment of naiveté, in which political processes are at play, but where these just simply are not acknowledged or addressed in any significant way. European political elites have an inherent interest in how humanitarian aid is allocated, and a system that hides where those actual interests are articulated does nothing to ward off politicization. Full transparency and the accountability it brings is lacking in the European model, most evident in reserve funding allocations. This is evident in the Kosovo crisis and continues to affect aid allocations to date.

That is not to say that the needs and responsibilities of governments and the humanitarian imperative are not irreconcilable. Within the state structure, and, in the case of the EU, the supranational state structure, humanitarian aid actually enjoys a position of funding stability and security. ECHO's growing budget and continued expansion as a DG seem to indicate that it receives widespread support from within the greater EU in the area of humanitarian aid. It is also well-suited to provide coordination in the field of humanitarian aid for EU member states.

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<sup>278</sup> Confidential interview with representative of NGO, Brussels, June, 2006.

Moreover, the two assessment indicators should continue to be improved and used. A briefing paper published by the Humanitarian Policy Group, entitled *Humanitarian Needs Assessment and Decision-Making* suggests that “the ECHO’s system for gauging countries against a basket of indicators might be more widely adopted.”<sup>279</sup> However, on the basis of evidence provided, there are clear areas of improvement the EU political leadership would be wise to adopt. They include:

1. implement a policy for translating the needs assessment indicators (GNA and FCA) into funding allocations;
2. protect ECHO from encroaching agencies also working in the area of humanitarian assistance;
3. provide sufficient funding for ECHO, instead of allocating funding to the DG in the form of a modest budget and a sizeable emergency reserve;
4. ensure transparency, particularly in the area of interest articulation and decision making.

By adhering to these four points, the EU’s aid program will function in practice as it was intended according to regulation and mandate and within the realm of pure humanitarianism. More than simply a lender, ECHO has invested considerable resources to promote and support activities with a proven track record of success and best practices in humanitarian projects, and it could be the world leader in the provision of humanitarian aid if it would move to couple this expertise with a pure humanitarian approach to aid allocations.

As humanitarian practitioners in the field gain increased expertise and confidence in navigating the complexities and interplay of issues that accommodate humanitarian emergencies, aid agencies seem to no longer be satisfied with providing short-term aid to relieve the most egregious cases of human suffering in crisis situations. There appears to

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<sup>279</sup> Darcy, James and Charles-Antoine Hofmann. *Humanitarian Needs Assessment and Decision-Making*. (HPG Briefing Number 13, September 2003) 6.

be a growing desire among aid agencies (also exhibited by ECHO) to mediate the *causes* that have created or compounded factors that result in humanitarian emergencies. This trend has created a discernable move towards increased politicization of aid delivered by aid agencies. While, the ICRC continues to provide pure humanitarian aid, most major NGOs however, have moved into Wilsonian or new humanitarians, primarily because of the inadequacies they see in providing humanitarian assistance while ignoring the larger issues that created a crisis to begin with.

As mentioned, aid agencies like Oxfam, Care or MSF will likely never entirely become self-interest humanitarians as their *raison d'être* is to serve the victims of humanitarian emergencies. While it is admirable that NGOs continue to reassess their work and attempt to evolve with the changing international climate, this thesis has provided evidence that in a humanitarian emergency (particularly a complex humanitarian emergency), compromising the principles of aid ultimately leads to a loss of perceived or actual neutrality and by extension a loss of humanitarian space. As a result, the lives of aid personnel are put at risk because NGO staff members are no longer viewed by parties of a conflict as neutral and impartial actors. Even in situations that are not characterized by open violence, NGOs which advocate for political change, inherent in new humanitarianism and to a lesser degree in Wilsonian humanitarianism, also risk losing their ability to work in regions where they oppose the state or governing political authorities.

Aid agencies who work in the field will best serve their mandates by remaining neutral and acting in accordance with the principles of humanitarian aid. Agencies that feel they must become involved in political advocacy will probably be best positioned to

do so as an advocacy group – not as an organization that supplies humanitarian aid in acute emergencies. The trend towards self-interest humanitarianism will – if unabated – significantly reduce the humanitarian space within which aid agencies can operate and create a myriad of competing actors in the political arena whose legitimate authority is questionable at best.

This thesis has provided evidence that operating partners working with ECHO, specifically NGOs, are also key players in the politicization of humanitarian aid. While some retain institutional autonomy, others are donor driven organizations bound to specific terms in their delivery of aid. It is therefore important that aid agencies look to diversify their funding to establish and maintain a degree of independence from governments. This dependency is compounded by institutional pressures that leave aid agencies with little choice but to work where there is funding available. NGOs rely on the media in particular because the news media have a direct – though not exclusive – influence on where and how much aid is allocated and in what form it is allocated. The determination of how successful an aid program has been is also often based on media reports. Conversely, NGOs use the media to garner support both for their campaigns and financially. As NGOs become more and more like corporations, there will likely be a need for some kind of regulatory framework, to ensure these agencies work in accordance with their mandate and in the areas and activities they profess to be active. However, a key point here is ensuring that this framework does not become another means of political control. One model might be a type of independent and international coordination body that serves to regulate or coordinate aid agencies – particularly in areas of intense media interest and funding.

The world will probably continue to see humanitarian disasters of unimaginable proportions. And consequently, humanitarian aid allocations will continue to grow to meet the needs of those affected. As the world's second biggest aid agency, the European Union's aid program represents a sizable portion of the humanitarian aid delivered worldwide. As such, ECHO, has a responsibility to continue to make every effort to keep in line with its mandate to deliver aid on the basis of need alone and in support of the principles of humanitarian aid. The DG itself and wider EU would also do well to acknowledge that there is currently a degree of politicization which impedes ECHO from delivering pure humanitarian aid. Until this recognition informs fundamental changes, politicized aid packages, like the one that was allocated to the Kosovo crisis, will continue. As a result, aid organizations that partner with ECHO will also be politicized in their work, and ultimately those in need of humanitarian assistance will pay the price, in some cases with their lives.

## Appendix 1 - Principles of Good Humanitarian Donorship.

### Objectives and definition of humanitarian action

1. The objectives of humanitarian action are to save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain human dignity during and in the aftermath of man-made crises and natural disasters, as well as to prevent and strengthen preparedness for the occurrence of such situations.
2. Humanitarian action should be guided by the humanitarian principles of *humanity*, meaning the centrality of saving human lives and alleviating suffering wherever it is found; *impartiality*, meaning the implementation of actions solely on the basis of need, without discrimination between or within affected populations; *neutrality*, meaning that humanitarian action must not favour any side in an armed conflict or other dispute where such action is carried out; and *independence*, meaning the autonomy of humanitarian objectives from the political, economic, military or other objectives that any actor may hold with regard to areas where humanitarian action is being implemented.
3. Humanitarian action includes the protection of civilians and those no longer taking part in hostilities, and the provision of food, water and sanitation, shelter, health services and other items of assistance, undertaken for the benefit of affected people and to facilitate the return to normal lives and livelihoods.

### General principles

4. Respect and promote the implementation of international humanitarian law, refugee law and human rights.
5. While reaffirming the primary responsibility of states for the victims of humanitarian emergencies within their own borders, strive to ensure flexible and timely funding, on the basis of the collective obligation of striving to meet humanitarian needs.
6. Allocate humanitarian funding in proportion to needs and on the basis of needs assessments.
7. Request implementing humanitarian organisations to ensure, to the greatest possible extent, adequate involvement of beneficiaries in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of humanitarian response.
8. Strengthen the capacity of affected countries and local communities to prevent, prepare for, mitigate and respond to humanitarian crises, with the goal of ensuring that governments and local communities are better able to meet their responsibilities and co-ordinate effectively with humanitarian partners.
9. Provide humanitarian assistance in ways that are supportive of recovery and long-term development, striving to ensure support, where appropriate, to the maintenance and return of sustainable livelihoods and transitions from humanitarian relief to recovery and development activities.
10. Support and promote the central and unique role of the United Nations in providing leadership and co-ordination of international humanitarian action, the special role of the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the vital role of the United Nations, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and non-governmental organisations in implementing humanitarian action.

### Good practices in donor financing, management and accountability

#### (a) Funding

11. Strive to ensure that funding of humanitarian action in new crises does not adversely affect the meeting of needs in ongoing crises.
12. Recognising the necessity of dynamic and flexible response to changing needs in humanitarian crises, strive to ensure predictability and flexibility in funding to United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and to other key humanitarian organisations
13. While stressing the importance of transparent and strategic priority-setting and financial planning by implementing organisations, explore the possibility of reducing, or enhancing the flexibility of, earmarking, and of introducing longer-term funding arrangements.

14. Contribute responsibly, and on the basis of burden-sharing, to United Nations Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeals and to International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement appeals, and actively support the formulation of Common Humanitarian Action Plans (CHAP) as the primary instrument for strategic planning, prioritisation and co-ordination in complex emergencies.

***(b) Promoting standards and enhancing implementation***

15. Request that implementing humanitarian organisations fully adhere to good practice and are committed to promoting accountability, efficiency and effectiveness in implementing humanitarian action.
16. Promote the use of Inter-Agency Standing Committee guidelines and principles on humanitarian activities, the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and the 1994 Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in Disaster Relief.
17. Maintain readiness to offer support to the implementation of humanitarian action, including the facilitation of safe humanitarian access.
18. Support mechanisms for contingency planning by humanitarian organisations, including, as appropriate, allocation of funding, to strengthen capacities for response.
19. Affirm the primary position of civilian organisations in implementing humanitarian action, particularly in areas affected by armed conflict. In situations where military capacity and assets are used to support the implementation of humanitarian action, ensure that such use is in conformity with international humanitarian law and humanitarian principles, and recognises the leading role of humanitarian organisations.
20. Support the implementation of the 1994 Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets in Disaster Relief and the 2003 Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets to Support United Nations Humanitarian Activities in Complex Emergencies.

***(c) Learning and accountability***

21. Support learning and accountability initiatives for the effective and efficient implementation of humanitarian action.
22. Encourage regular evaluations of international responses to humanitarian crises, including assessments of donor performance.
23. Ensure a high degree of accuracy, timeliness, and transparency in donor reporting on official humanitarian assistance spending, and encourage the development of standardised formats for such reporting.

## Appendix 2 - 2005 and 2006 GNA "High Need" Countries

(without ODA)

2006	Score	Annual Funding Amount in Million Euros	2005	Score	Annual Funding Amount Million Euros
Ranked "High Need" (descending)			Ranked "High Need" (descending)		
Afghanistan	2.71	22.5*	Burundi	2.8	17
Burundi	2.63	17	Congo, Democratic Republic of	2.7	40
Congo, Democratic Republic of	2.63	43	Rwanda	2.5	0
Somalia	2.57	10	Afghanistan	2.5	20~
Chad	2.5	14.5	Somalia	2.5	9
Cote d'Ivoire	2.5	5.2	Eritrea	2.44	4.6
Ethiopia	2.5	2	Nigeria	2.4	0
Angola	2.38	3	Pakistan	2.38	10
Central African Republic	2.38	0	Sudan	2.38	45
Eritrea	2.38	6	Uganda	2.3	14
Nigeria	2.38	0	Sierra Leone	2.3	0
Rwanda	2.38	0	Angola	2.3	2
Sudan	2.38	100**	Cote d'Ivoire	2.25	0
Zambia	2.38	2.2	India	2.25	100 (Tsunami)
Iraq	2.29	0	Mali	2.22	2
Liberia	2.29	17.8	Nepal	2.2	6
Djibouti	2.25	0	Niger	2.2	6
Guinea	2.25	1.5	Zambia	2.2	3.5
Guinea Bissau	2.25	1***	Liberia	2.2	2.7
Russian Federation (Chechnya)	2.25	22	Guinea	2.2	0
Sierra Leone	2.25	0	Burkina Faso	2.2	0
Uganda	2.25	4	Cambodia	2.2	2
Bangladesh	2.13	0	Central African Republic	2.14	0
India	2.13	2	Chad	2.13	14
Indonesia	2.13	9.4	Zimbabwe	2.11	15
Mali	2.13	0			
Myanmar	2.13	0			
Nepal	2.13	2.8			
Senegal	2.13	1****			
Tanzania	2.13	11.5			
Zimbabwe	2.13	12			

\*of which 20M for Afghanistan/Pakistan/Iran  
 \*\*of which 60M was Sudan/Chad  
 \*\*\*shared with Senegal  
 \*\*\*\*shared with Guinea Bissau  
 ~shared Afghanistan/Pakistan/Iran

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