

## **Exposé for a block seminar**

### **The role of humanitarian assistance in armed conflict – dilemmas and opportunities**

**Dr. Bernward auf dem Kampe**

#### **Introduction to the topic and intended audience**

The study of humanitarian assistance in armed conflict is not only highly relevant for students of political science or peace and conflict studies who are planning a career in a humanitarian organization. It is equally important from an academic point of view. Ever since the end of the Cold War, it has become evident that humanitarian activities can have an immense impact on armed conflict. In recent years, influential donors and the military have shown an increasing tendency to instrumentalize humanitarian organizations for their strategic objectives. Therefore, humanitarian aid is an important factor, that must be taken into consideration when conducting a thorough conflict analysis. This can help understand the dynamics of armed conflict, and pave the way for constructive conflict resolution.

#### **Thematic blocks of the seminar**

##### **1. History, actors and principles of humanitarian assistance**

In this lesson, the participants will become familiar with the history, the main actors, and the principles of humanitarian assistance. The foundation of humanitarian assistance can be traced back to the moral-philosophical concepts of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. It is also deeply rooted in international law, although there is still considerable debate among international legal experts with regard to certain interpretations. The session will conclude by discussing the different roles and functions of the Red Cross movement, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), specialized agencies of the United Nations (UN) and the military as a humanitarian actor, and their respective positions towards humanitarian law.

#### **Required reading:**

European Commission, NOHA, Vol. 1, International Law in humanitarian assistance. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1998, p. 52-53, 70-72.

Gasser, H.P. (2007): Humanitäres Völkerrecht – Eine Einführung, Schulthess: Zürich, Basel, Genf, Schweiz, p. 58-64, S. 70-71.

Kübler, A., Henri Dunant, die Schlacht von Solferino und die Anfänge des Roten Kreuzes, in: Enzensberger, H.M. (2001): Krieger ohne Waffen, Eichborn Verlag, Frankfurt a.M., p. 53-64.

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<http://www.odi.org.uk/hpg/papers/hpgreport5.pdf>

[http://www.icrc.org/Web/eng/siteeng0.nsf/htmlall/humanitarian-lawfactsheet/\\$File/What\\_is\\_IHL.pdf](http://www.icrc.org/Web/eng/siteeng0.nsf/htmlall/humanitarian-lawfactsheet/$File/What_is_IHL.pdf)

<http://www.icrc.org/web/eng/siteeng0.nsf/htmlall/code-of-conduct-290296>

<http://www.icrc.org/web/eng/siteeng0.nsf/htmlall/64zahh?opendocument>

## **2. Dilemmas of humanitarian assistance**

Humanitarian relief workers are always confronted with an elemental dilemma: to offer impartial assistance to those in need, while knowing that this might fuel a conflict. A classic example is the provision of medical aid in war zones: combatants return to the battlefield once their injuries have been treated. Another dilemma is the provision of food aid. On the one hand, there is the humanitarian imperative to provide a starving civilian population with food aid. On the other hand, there is the possibility that food aid might be diverted by war lords to purchase weapons, which will perpetuate the conflict. These dilemmas cannot be avoided. Therefore, aid programs must be planned and implemented carefully, according to each specific situation. Based on examples such as Somalia and Sudan, the participants will not only become familiar with the possible side effects of humanitarian aid, but will also understand that a thorough analysis of an armed conflict can help limit the negative consequences.

Required reading:

Andersen, M. B. (1999): *Do no harm – How aid can support peace – or war*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., London, United Kingdom, p. 37-53

## **3. Political instrumentalization of humanitarian assistance**

This session will focus on the highly politicized arena that humanitarian actors work in today. In order for humanitarian aid to remain neutral and impartial, it is vital for humanitarian actors to understand how humanitarian assistance can be instrumentalized by donors and conflict parties. However, it is not always easy to identify the mechanisms that can lead to the political manipulation of humanitarian programs. This is often the case when aid programs are declared as "neutral" or are labeled as "peace building", when in reality they support a specific conflict party. The fact that such programs are usually implemented by humanitarian NGOs and specialized agencies of the UN helps to disguise the influence that powerful donor assert on the design and implementation of many humanitarian programs.

Required reading:

Brown, S. (2006): *Aid & Influence – Do donors help or hinder? Aid and Imperialism*, Earthscan, London, UK, p. 99-120.

Keen, D. (2008): *Complex Emergencies*, Polity Press, Cambridge, United Kingdom, p. 116-127.

Lund, M.S. (2001): *Preventing Violent Conflicts – A Strategy for Preventive Diplomacy*, United States Institute of Peace Press, Washington D.C., USA, p. 3-8.

#### **4. The role of the military in humanitarian assistance**

The political instrumentalization of humanitarian assistance can be observed in conflict regions when the military attempts to assert control over all humanitarian activities. Current examples of this are the US military strategy in Iraq, which co-opts humanitarian NGOs into the occupation strategy, and NATO's so called Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in Afghanistan, where the military conducts humanitarian assistance in its own right. The participants will learn to identify how humanitarian assistance is incorporated into military concepts. They will be made familiar with the problems that civilian aid workers encounter due to the encroachment of the military on the humanitarian sector. A question for debate will be whether military actions are even compatible with the principles of humanitarian assistance at all.

Required reading:

Aall, P., Miltenberger, D., Weiss, T.G. (2001): Guide to IGOs, NGOs and the Military, United States Institute of Peace Press, Washington D.C., USA, p. 228-230.

Miner, L, 2002: The Humanitarian Enterprise – Dilemmas and Discoveries, Kumarin Press Inc, Bloomfield, USA, p. 99-118.

Weiss, T.G., Collins, C. (2000): Humanitarian Challenges & Intervention, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Dilemmas in World Politics, p. Xi-xiii.

#### **Methodology and structure of the seminar**

Participants who want to hold an oral presentation will be briefed by the lecturer before the seminar on how to analyze a case study. This will ensure that specific questions related to humanitarian aid in armed conflict are addressed. The participants can suggest a case study or select a topic assigned by the lecturer. Each seminar block will start with a 20-30 minute introduction by the lecturer. The participants will then have the opportunity to present their findings in a 20 minute presentation. Each presentation will be followed by 25 minutes for questions, an open discussion and feedback.

#### **Timetable**

The seminar consists of the above mentioned four thematic blocks. Depending on the number of presentations, each block will take approximately six hours. The seminar can be held *en bloc* (over the course of two days) or be divided into two or four parts, according to particular requirements.

#### **Academic qualifications and expertise of the lecturer**

Dr. Bernward auf dem Kampe has been an assistant lecturer at the University of Marburg since the summer semester of 2009. He is a medical practitioner with working experience in Norway and Germany. He holds a Master of Arts in Humanitarian Assistance from the University of Bochum and a Master of Arts in Peace and Conflict Studies from the University of Marburg. His practical experience in humanitarian assistance includes providing medical aid to the victims of the earthquake in Port au Prince, Haiti in 2010. He is also a member of the disaster response unit of the German Red Cross (GRC) and has worked as an intern at the GRC Secretariat. He conducted research on the conflict resolution program "Health as a Bridge for Peace" at the World Health Organisation (WHO) in New York. During the internship he compiled reports for the WHO

Secretariat in Geneva on meetings and conferences of the United Nations concerning Darfur, Lebanon and Sri Lanka. Further responsibilities included reporting on conferences from the *Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs* (OCHA), as well as on meetings of the UN Security Council and the General Assembly.

## **Bibliography**

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Becker, J.M. (1997): *Militär und Legitimation – Eine vergleichende Studie zur Sicherheitspolitik Frankreichs und Deutschland*. Schriftenreihe des Arbeitskreises Marburger Wissenschaftler für Friedens- und Abrüstungsforschung an der Philipps-Universität Marburg, Band 20, Eigenverlag IAFA, Marburg, Deutschland.

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De Waal, A. (2002): *Famine Crimes – Politics & the disaster relief industry in Africa*. African Rights, London, UK, p. 159-191.

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Hippler, J. (2006): *Counterinsurgency and Political Control – US Military Strategies Regarding Regional Conflict*. INEF Report 81/2006, Institut für Entwicklung und Frieden, Duisburg, Deutschland.

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Lange, M., Quinn, M.(2003): Conflict, Humanitarian Assistance and Peace Building.

[http://conflictsensitivity.org/files/publib/Conflict\\_Humanitarian\\_Assisatance.pdf](http://conflictsensitivity.org/files/publib/Conflict_Humanitarian_Assisatance.pdf) (04.02.2008).

Lund, M.S. (2001): Preventing Violent Conflicts – A Strategy for Preventive Diplomacy. United States Institute of Peace Press, Washington D.C., USA, p. 3-8.

MacFarlane, N. (2001): Humanitarian Action: The Conflict Connection. Occasional Paper #43, THOMAS J. WATSON JR. INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDIES, Brown University, Providence, USA, <http://hwproject.tufts.edu/pdf/op43.pdf> (25.11.2007).

MacFarlane, N. (2000): Politics and Humanitarian Action. Occasional Paper #41, THOMAS J. WATSON JR. INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDIES, Brown University, Providence, USA, <http://hwproject.tufts.edu/pdf/op41.pdf>

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Runge, P. (2006): Helfer in Uniform? – Militäreinsätze in der humanitären Hilfe. In: Wissenschaft und Frieden, 4/2006, Marburg, Deutschland.

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Weiss, T.G., Collins, C. (2000): Humanitarian Challenges & Intervention. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Dilemmas

in World Politics, Westview, Boulder, Colorado, USA, p. 13-38.

**Online documents (24.11.2008):**

<http://www.odi.org.uk/hpg/papers/hpgreport5.pdf>

<http://www.odi.org.uk/hpg/papers/hpgreport2.pdf>

<http://www.odi.org.uk/hpg/papers/hpgreport3.pdf>

<http://www.odi.org.uk/hpg/papers/hpgreport4.pdf>