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Introduction: Preventing Humanitarian Emergencies – Asking the Questions

E. Wayne Nafziger

A complex humanitarian emergency (CHE) is a man-made crisis, whereby large numbers of people die or suffer from war, physical violence (often by the state), or displacement (Väyrynen 2000a). This volume identifies mechanisms for preventing CHEs. The focus is on the less-developed countries (LDCs) of Africa, Asia, Latin America and Eastern and Central Europe, where virtually all CHEs take place (Nafziger *et al.* 2000).

The volume does not focus on the immediate delivery of food and medicine to refugee camps or the repatriation of displaced people. Rather the contributors concentrate on long-term or immediate policies linked to the research project's analysis of root causes (*ibid.*).

Preventing conflict by reducing its causes costs less than crisis management after the emergency begins. Stewart *et al.* (2000a: I) calculate that the economic cost of the cumulated lost income of wars since 1980 was nearly six times El Salvador's national income in 1995, four times that of Ethiopia, and perhaps thirteen times that of Nicaragua.

Nafziger (1983) estimates that federal Nigeria forfeited 27.4 per cent of real gross domestic product (GDP) (and an even larger share of *civilian* real GDP) during the three fiscal years of the war, 1967/68–1969/70; secessionist Biafra's *percentage* loss (some double counted among Nigeria's loss) was two to three times greater during the same period. GDP estimates understate Nigeria's losses, since a conservative estimate for capital destruction¹ from the war as a percentage of GDP was 5–10 per cent. Perhaps four million people died from hunger and other war-related causes and several million people were displaced.

I The roots of CHEs

Emergencies have numerous sources. Important economic elements are low average income, protracted economic stagnation and decline (especially in food output), high income inequality, and conflict over the control of mineral exports. Political elements include government exclusion of

particular ethnic or social communities, rule by entrenched minorities, weak state legitimacy, and a tradition of violent conflict. Only a portion of violence results from insurgent action. In fact, the majority of casualties from CHEs are from government sponsored or organized politicides. Amid war and scarcity, ruling elites may benefit from spearheading genocide or tolerating crime or mass murder by allies among militias, war profiteers and ethnic champions. Indeed, some interests derive economic advantage by war and state violence; stopping deadly political violence requires changing the balance between benefits and costs among belligerents (Nafziger *et al.* 2000).

The early stages of famines and other CHEs are not easily distinguishable from endemic poverty (Green 1986). War and emergency may merely entail a deepening of conflict and exploitation existing during 'peacetime' (Keen 2000). Thus the causes and prevention of poverty (Nafziger 1997) overlap substantially with the causes and prevention of CHEs.

II Africa as an example

The increase in intrastate political conflict and CHEs in the 1990s was linked to the disastrous growth record of LDCs (except Asia) in the 1970s and 1980s; moreover, sub-Saharan Africa's (SSA's) economy was virtually stagnant throughout the 1990s. In SSA, which is disproportionately represented both among countries with slow growth² and chronic external deficits, and major CHEs,³ falling average incomes and growing political consciousness added pressures to national leaders, whose response was usually not only anti-egalitarian but also anti-growth, hurting small farmers' incentives, appropriating peasant surplus for parastatal industry, building parastatal enterprises beyond management capacity, and using these inefficient firms to give benefits to clients. Regime survival in a politically fragile system required expanding patronage to marshal elite support, at the expense of economic growth (Nafziger 1988).⁴ Spurring peasant production through market prices and exchange rates would have interfered with state leaders' ability to build political support, especially in cities.

Africa's economic crisis originated from its inability to adjust to the 1973-74 oil shock, exacerbated by a credit cycle, in which states overborrowed at negative real interest rates in the mid- to late 1970s, but faced high positive rates during debt servicing or loan renewal in the 1980s. African leaders' statist economic policies during the 1970s and early 1980s (OAU 1980) emphasized detailed state planning, expansion of government-owned enterprises, heavy-industry development, and government intervention in exchange rates and agricultural price-setting. These policies contributed to economic regress and growing poverty (especially in rural areas) and inequality. The political elites used the state to pursue economic policies that supported their interests at the expense of Africa's poor and working classes (Nafziger 1993).

This stagnation and decline contributed to political decay in the 1980s and early 1990s in such African countries as Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Zaire and Liberia, where ethnic and regional competition for the bounties of the state gave way to a predatory state, in which the ruling elite and their clients 'use their positions and access to resources to plunder the national economy through graft, corruption, and extortion, and to participate in private business activities' (Holsti 2000: 251). Ake (1996: 42) contends that 'instead of being a public force, the state in Africa tends to be privatized, that is, appropriated to the service of private interests by the dominant faction of the elite'. People use state funds for systematized corruption, from petty survival venality at the lower echelons of government to kleptocracy at the top.

Väyrynen (2000b: 440) shows that CHEs are more likely to occur in societies where the state is weak and venal, and thus subject to extensive rent-seeking, 'an omnipresent policy to obtain private benefit from public action and resources'. Cause and effect between state failure and rent-seeking are not always clear. State failure need not necessarily result from the incapacity of public institutions. Instead, while 'state failure can harm a great number of people, it can also benefit others' (ibid.: 442), especially governing elites and their allies. These elites may not benefit from avoiding political decay through nurturing free entry and the rule of law and reducing corruption and exploitation. Instead, political leaders may gain more from extensive unproductive, profit-seeking activities in a political system they control than from long-term efforts to build a well functioning state in which economic progress and democratic institutions flourish (ibid; Keen 1998, 2000).⁵ These activities tend to be pervasive in countries that have abundant mineral exports (for example diamonds,⁶ columbite-tantalite and petroleum), such as Sierra Leone, Angola and Congo, but predatory economic behaviour is much less viable in mineral-export-poor economies such as Ghana and Tanzania (Väyrynen 2000b).

III The major questions of the study

What political and economic policies are most likely to reduce LDCs' vulnerability to emergencies and their reoccurrence? What political and economic levers can LDCs and their supporters in the international community pull to reduce the probability of CHEs?

Both initial emergencies and their reoccurrences are included, because research indicates that emergencies often persist. Populations adapt to a certain, acceptable level of violence through its cultural experience (Gurr 1970). A tradition of deadly political violence makes societies more susceptible to its return. Past violence, as in Colombia, is likely to lower the threshold for using violence to express dissent, making intensive forms of political conflict normatively justifiable. During 1980–2000, numerous

countries, such as Ethiopia and Uganda, moved in and out of CHEs and sometimes, as in Burundi, Somalia and Liberia, back again. Indeed, Auvinen and Nafziger's (1999: 286) econometrics indicate that, other things equal, a doubling 'in deaths from political violence [1963–77] would have increased an emergency's probability [in any given year, 1980–94] by 4.4%'.

The research question is set in probabilistic terms. Even the statement linking deaths from prior political violence to subsequent emergencies is tied to particular datasets (Singer and Small 1994 and update, and SIPRI's 1996 database on war deaths), time periods and concepts of CHEs (Auvinen and Nafziger 1999). As Holsti (2000: 239, 250, 264) points out,

If...there are certain conditions and/or processes that increase the likelihood of a humanitarian emergency, there is no certainty that such an emergency will in fact ensue. ...Why, for example, was there widespread bloodshed in 1965 Indonesia, or in Burma since 1962, but not in Malaysia or Singapore at the same time? ...For this reason I have avoided causal terminology and emphasized correlates, risks, and probabilities.

What long-term structural economic and political changes can reduce LDCs' risks of CHEs? What short-term operational measures can diminish countries' vulnerability to emergencies? What roles can national policymakers, DCs, international agencies and NGOs play in these preventive efforts?

The volume distinguishes between short-term and long-term prevention. The earlier chapters stress reducing structural vulnerabilities and inequalities, and strengthening the preconditions for stability, while the later chapters concentrate on short-term diplomatic or military operations or medium-term political or constitutional arrangements. The differences in perspectives are between longer-term economic approaches and shorter-term military or political actions.

Long-term efforts include undertaking structural and institutional change, building capacity and spurring economic and political development. Much of the longer-term focus of this volume is on economic approaches, for example in chapters 1 to 6. Long-run political changes include democratization, which is discussed in Chapter 8. Human-rights monitoring and intelligence (Chapter 12) not only have the potential to lead to preventive action but can also serve as an early-warning device.

Short-term measures are usually political and military, and include constitutional arrangements to share power, pressures by regional organizations (such as the Organization for African Unity (OAU) and the Organization of American States (OAS)), conflict transformation, partition, diplomatic mediation, arms bans, sanctions (Chapter 7), peacekeeping operations and military intervention (Chapter 11). Short-term development and humanitarian aid may also help ameliorate potential conflict.

The earlier chapters of this volume emphasize long-term economic policies and are more optimistic than later chapters. Väyrynen (Chapter 7) feels that short-term strategies are generally not promising, as third parties are unwilling to become involved, especially in military approaches, or their policies are ineffectual in preventing the outbreak of a crisis. Indeed, short-term actions in which options are limited are often too late to eliminate or modify the underlying causes.

IV The focus of the volume

This section summarizes the policy issues raised by contributors. In Chapter 1, I focus on a long-term politico-economic approach to prevention in which policies are linked to the research project's analysis of root causes. Domestic responses include accelerating economic growth through domestically planned macroeconomic stabilization and structural adjustment, designing appropriate economic and political institutions, improving the capability of the state to collect taxes and provide basic services, undergoing agrarian reform and land redistribution, and secure property and usufruct rights for traditional community or village land-rights systems. These responses need to examine the effect of policies on the weaker segments of the population – the poor, minorities, rural and working people, and women and children.

Enhancing growth and improving income distribution to reduce the risk of CHEs may require changes in the international economic order. This order encompasses economic relations and institutions linking people from different nations, including the World Bank (WB) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) that lend capital to LDCs; the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which provides credit to ease short-term international payments imbalances; the World Trade Organization (WTO), which administers international-trade rules; bilateral and multilateral trade, aid, banking services, currency rates, capital movements and technological transfers; aid consortiums; and international commodity stabilization agreements. The premise is that modifying international trade, foreign investment, aid (especially for agriculture and for cushioning external shocks), debt rescheduling and capital movements would be mutually advantageous, enhancing the economic development of LDCs and, through economic linkages, the prosperity of developed countries (DCs). However, even where the economic interests of DCs and LDCs conflict, DCs may benefit from cooperation in international economic institutions by facilitating democracy and development in poor countries, so that they can contribute to global peace and stability.

In Chapter 2, Cramer and Weeks evaluate how macroeconomic stabilization (monetary, fiscal and exchange-rate policies) and structural adjustment (privatization, deregulation, wage and price decontrol and trade and financial liberalization) programmes affect vulnerability to CHEs. These

programmes, almost universal among LDCs (1979–2000) were mostly introduced in response to chronic macroeconomic imbalances and external deficits, often associated with negative or slow growth. The primary emphasis is on programmes of the IMF and WB, which set conditions and provide financing for stabilization and adjustment, and whether changes in these programmes can reduce the risk of CHEs.

The research by Cramer and Weeks examines the suitability of orthodox macroeconomic policies, often required by the IMF, WB and the US Treasury as conditions for loans to countries in international economic crises. What are the goals of the policies prescribed by international financial institutions (IFIs): returns to lenders and other creditors, inflation reduction, economic growth or widespread improvement of economic welfare? In highly vulnerable states, do IMF and WB policies counter or reinforce tendencies towards tensions and social conflict?

In Chapter 3, FitzGerald examines the effects of globalization on the risk of conflict, especially among least developed countries (LLDCs), the poorest countries of the world. For these vulnerable countries, globalization has entailed growing trade liberalization, increased capital mobility, rising debt, falling export commodity prices and purchasing power, declining foreign aid, small shares of foreign direct investment (FDI), and more stringent policy conditions set by international economic institutions. FitzGerald asks whether these international economic factors have exacerbated the likelihood of emergencies among vulnerable countries and, if so, what resulting changes should be made in the international economic system. To what extent do external influences exacerbate wealth inequality, economic disintegration, economic insecurity and state failure that are the roots of conflict? Can we use information about external linkages and vulnerability to predict where CHEs are most likely to occur?

In Chapter 4, Toye asks whether a lack of basic services reduces the legitimacy of the state and increases the risk of CHEs. Providing more services requires an increase in tax revenues, a difficult concern given the administrative and political constraints in LDCs. Toye assumes that fiscal strength, together with corresponding expenditures on health, education, infrastructure and defence, promotes economic growth and state legitimacy and cohesion. These outcomes reduce the likelihood of rebellion and increase loyalty to the state.

Toye assumes a poor and vulnerable economy, similar to Ethiopia, with a history of rampant corruption, development failure and political instability. His central question is: How can government increase tax revenues and enhance state legitimacy? The author proposes value-added tax (VAT), a tax on the difference between the sales of a firm and its purchases from other firms, as a solution.

Berry (Chapter 5) argues that a major economic source of CHEs is conflict over agricultural land. For Berry, famines result from production shortfalls combined with conflict over the distribution of goods. Rural political vio-

lence often originates from land disputes or restiveness from the landless. Moreover, unequal land distribution contributes to poverty and inequality, which correlate with poor infrastructure, poor health and educational services and other variables that increase the probabilities of emergencies. Accordingly, one potential preventive measure is equitable land distribution together with policies supporting small-scale agriculture. Where land distribution is highly unequal, reducing vulnerability to CHEs may require agrarian reform. Berry discusses agrarian reform, land distribution and what pitfalls to avoid, indicating also the political prerequisites for successful reform and conflict reduction. He draws on a wide array of cases, including Korea, Taiwan, Japan, China, India (Kerala and West Bengal), Bangladesh, Vietnam, Cambodia, Egypt, Iran, Rwanda, Burundi, Kenya, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Central America, Cuba, Colombia, Bolivia, Peru and Mexico.

After an extensive discussion of degradation, sustainability and vulnerability, Kibreab (Chapter 6) asks whether protecting environmental resources reduces the vulnerability of low-income countries (LICs) to potential CHEs. He argues that the welfare of rural people is inextricably linked with the well-being of the environment. The myriad consequences of land degradation, such as decline in crop yields, forest produce and pasture resulting from overcultivation, overgrazing, deforestation, siltation and waterlogging, constitute vulnerability that threatens those living on the edge of disaster. These people are stripped of their safety net, the buffer against the slow onset of CHEs triggered by natural or man-made misfortunes. Protected environmental resources constitute bulwarks against stress. Indeed, these resources do not prevent man-made or natural crises. Nevertheless, protected resources reinforce the ecological resilience of users, enabling them to withstand, cope with and recuperate from crises.

Kibreab also identifies specific environmental protection or regeneration programmes that can reduce the vulnerability to emergencies of individuals, households and communities. In his last section he examines whether policy-makers can reduce vulnerability to deadly conflict by protecting the productive capability of the environment.

In Chapter 7, Väyrynen distinguishes between short-term and long-term strategies to prevent the outbreak and escalation of CHEs. While both types of strategies need to be based on adequate early warning of deadly political violence, the effective implementation of preventive action is the requirement for success. He also distinguishes between 'remote' and 'hands-on' strategies. Remote approaches, such as military deterrence and economic sanctions, are imposed from the outside, while hands-on strategies require engagement in the zone of conflict.

For Väyrynen, short-term measures usually rely on political and military means (for example diplomatic mediation and preventive deployment of military forces). Long-term strategies of prevention call for a systematic involvement in the economic and institutional peace-building of the

country vulnerable to war and political violence. Important elements of long-term strategies include the strengthening of democratic institutions and power-sharing, control of the spread of weapons, redistribution of land and its ownership, and stabilization of the external economic position of the target country. However, none of these strategies will be successful unless local civil society resists authoritarian government, becomes strong and pluralistic, and takes responsibility for putting the country back on track.

Sandbrook, in Chapter 8, probes the efficacy of democratization in forestalling CHEs in poor and deeply divided societies. He analyses the pathology of a particular syndrome of a CHE with four mutually reinforcing processes: rising communal tensions, an increasingly predatory and incapacitated state, a stagnating economy with growing levels of absolute poverty, and environmental degradation. This syndrome suggests institutional challenges that democratization may help threatened societies to overcome. In principle, democratization promotes institutional reforms through constitutionally prescribing procedural norms and organization and empowering civil society to defend its cherished formal institutions. Whether new democracies survive and foster institutional reform depends heavily on astute statesmanship, as well as a country's structural conditions and historical legacy. Nonetheless, Sandbrook's discussion of failures, such as Sudan, and relative successes, such as Ghana, yields a few guidelines on the conditions under which democratization, as one element of a larger preventive programme, may mitigate a downward spiral into a CHE.

Hveem's contribution in Chapter 9 focuses on the policy-making processes and institutions of the major donors: the European Union (EU) (with emphasis on France), the US, Japan and Norway. Hveem investigates and compares which factors and actors shape the policies of those that experience CHEs. He argues that policies need to be evaluated according to their response to demands for efficacy, justice and legitimacy. The chapter pays particular attention to how actors handle issues such as multilateral and national coordination of policy-making and implementation, early warning and preparedness, and setting priorities for assistance among crisis theatres. Furthermore, Hveem examines whether humanitarian aid is a supplement or substitute for development assistance, and vice versa.

Hveem finds that donor willingness to provide resources for emergency aid has levelled off or receded after its peak in the early 1990s. This trend can be attributed to donors' negative experiences with past emergency operations (the 'Somalia syndrome' in the US), a general aid fatigue caused by tighter finances, and the failure of NGOs or the media to raise awareness. Donor plans have little meaning without a willingness to intervene. The chapter ends with policy recommendations.

Chapter 10, by DeMars, asks whether international NGOs promote early warning and conflict prevention. The answer varies, depending on the ability of NGOs to analyse information, the unintended effects of actions by NGOs with objectives other than conflict prevention, whether the Third

World state is collapsing, and the inadvertent power of NGOs relative to combatants in collapsing states. The first section argues that NGO roles are essential to the new conflict prevention agenda in the foreign policy of major powers and the UN. Their bureaucracies rely on NGO alliances to control downsizing, maintain global scope and innovate techniques for confronting new problems. The second section identifies structural limitations on NGO effectiveness, suggesting that the inadvertent side-effect of NGO action in collapsing states may be more important than the intended effects. The third section summarizes the challenge for achieving effective conflict prevention. Despite their limitations, promoting NGO involvement in emerging crises allows policy-makers to limit cost and risk, maintain engagement, gather information and generate future policy options. As a consequence, DeMars contends that some variant of 'throwing NGOs at the problem' is often the best available policy option for conflict prevention.

Weiss, in Chapter 11, develops a theoretical framework of costs and benefits of outside military interventions after massive human tragedies. According to Weiss, most discussions of 'military-civilian humanitarianism' (the coming together of military forces and civilian aid agencies to deal with the human suffering from emergencies) consist more of exchanging invectives than arguments. Weiss addresses the following question: Is it possible and worthwhile to use the military in conjunction with humanitarian action to thwart violence and mitigate civilian suffering? Evidence from the first half-decade after the Cold War indicates that, despite the lack of political will, the level of multilateral military operations could change to the benefit of war victims. The author examines success in northern Iraq and Haiti, and valuable contributions in Rwanda and (arguably) Somalia and Bosnia. These five cases of multilateral military operations and humanitarian action in war zones after the Cold War lay the groundwork for an inductive framework to assess outside military involvement and its accompanying costs for intervening countries; in this assessment, Weiss considers the magnitude of a country's humanitarian tragedy and the impact on civilians after the intervention.

In Chapter 12, Clapham defines a role for human rights and human-rights workers in preventing CHEs. Human-rights law, monitoring and information can be useful in two ways: first to warn of an impending emergency, and second as part of resolving the crisis. Too often scholars and policy-makers assume that human-rights issues should drop out of the picture. Clapham shows *why* human rights are downgraded as imperatives at certain stages of the discussion, and *how* using human-rights principles and reports can assist in tackling emergencies effectively. While human-rights violations are clearly important indicators of a potential CHE, the human-rights and humanitarian aid communities remain worlds apart. The chapter examines problems faced by human-rights personnel in Rwanda, Liberia, Mozambique and the former Yugoslavia. The author looks at how to enhance rapid response at the beginning of a crisis, report on human

rights and tackle impunity and the legacy of the past. He indicates that the human-rights movement is a crucial resource in analysing CHEs. UN reform opens up the possibilities for integrating human-rights work into global efforts to prevent CHEs.

The rise and fall of humanitarianism as a paradigm in international relations is examined by Donini in Chapter 13. Donini looks at humanitarianism as an imperative, as a 'mobilizing myth', and as a contemporary form of containment. He shows how these three dimensions have altered our conceptualization of North–South relations. Using concrete examples from Afghanistan, Liberia, Sierra Leone and elsewhere, he reviews the evolution of humanitarian practice in the post-Cold War years, attempts to define the function of humanitarian assistance in the context of globalization of the economy and the failure of development models, and proposes paths for policy-makers and practitioners. The chapter analyses the role of humanitarian aid in peace operations and discusses the advantages and disadvantages of mixing politics and relief, particularly during delicate peace consolidation. Furthermore, Donini argues that short-term strategies in countries of crisis are recipes for failure and that the new paradigm, which is waiting to emerge, must be based on a strategic vision integrating politics, relief and development for the long haul.

Finally, in Chapter 14, Väyrynen summarizes major strategies for preventing emergencies. According to Väyrynen, the most effective approach to prevention is to address the domestic causes of CHEs through socioeconomic development, environmental protection, low income and land inequality, secure usufruct and property rights, tax reform to finance social services, inclusive and participatory political systems, and accountable public administration and political institutions. A major obstacle to socioeconomic progress is a root cause of humanitarian emergencies, undemocratic and predatory rule.

International preventive strategies, although secondary to domestic policies, may still be indispensable for providing financial and political support to internal reforms or intervening where those controlling the state are the source of deadly political violence. For Väyrynen, the toolbox for DCs, the UN and other international agencies includes human-rights monitoring, well targeted economic sanctions, development aid to reduce export instability, IMF and WB policies oriented towards growth and equity, debt reduction for heavily indebted LDCs, and the opening of DC markets to LDCs.

Väyrynen reiterates Chapter 7's emphasis on long-term strategies, arguing that too often governments and multilateral agencies do not focus on a conflict until after it is already too late for effective prevention. DCs and international agencies need to tackle the root causes of emergencies early. Both domestic governments and the international community need to create a 'culture of prevention' in national and international decision-making.

Notes

1. GDP is output before subtracting either capital consumption or destruction. Net domestic product figures, by convention, include capital consumption but *not* capital destruction.
2. SSA's real GDP per capita was lower in the late 1990s than it was at the end of the 1960s. Moreover, since 1990, the sub-Saharan life expectancy has stagnated, primarily due to the high adult prevalence of HIV/AIDS (World Bank 2000).
3. Stewart *et al.* (2000b) indicate that Africa had by far the greatest number of deaths (direct and indirect) from conflict, from 1960 to 1995, as a proportion of the 1995 population, 1.5 per cent, compared to 0.5 per cent in the Middle East, 0.3 per cent in Asia and 0.1 per cent in Latin America.
4. Ake (1996: 1, 18) reinforces this contention when he states that for Africa, 'the problem is not so much that development has failed as that it was never really on the agenda in the first place. ...[W]ith independence African leaders were in no position to pursue development; they were too engrossed in the struggle for survival'.
5. Felipe (2000) indicates that parts of East and Southeast Asia experienced a 'lost decade' centred on the Asian financial crisis (1997–99), similar to Latin America's lost decade of the 1980s and that of SSA in the 1980s (perhaps extending to the 1990s). The question is whether the most vulnerable Asian economies – Indonesia, Lao PDR, Vietnam, Cambodia, Myanmar and the Philippines – will face the downward spiral of negative growth, political decay and further negative growth that parts of SSA have faced.
6. The new international system, created in 2000, to certify all diamonds sold on international markets is an example of cooperative action intended to reduce the access of warlords to money financing their military operations. However, as of early 2001, international sanctions are weak and legislation by major consuming nations, such as the United States, is riddled with loopholes. Vested interests opposed to or ambivalent about an effective global agreement include Ukraine and African countries that launder diamonds smuggled from war zones, producing nations that fear damage to legitimate producers, and an industry concerned about controlling supply.

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