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conference in Zimbabwe in 1989 of African and international aid agencies and UN peacekeepers on the subject of armed escort, I am aware of how difficult and sensitive these issues are.

This work is not unique, (there is a very helpful bibliography) but it is comprehensive, coherent and most practical; practical not only for the practitioner, but also for the donor and the general public who are moved to give, and should give; and also, I might add, to students of international relations who are all too often captivated by analyses of war and conflict resolution and know little of the global efforts to heal the wounds of war.

Few in academic study of international relations probe the nature of crises from the viewpoint of humanitarian assistance. Most deal with the characteristics of war and conflict resolution. This volume draws us closer to a regard for people in contrast to the analysis of events.

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Jean, Francois, ed. *Life, Death and Aid: The Médecins Sans Frontières Report on World Crisis Intervention*. London and New York: Routledge, 1993.

Based upon its overseas humanitarian operations in many of the world's regional crises, an international medical non-governmental organization (NGO) has produced – with detail and brevity – an incisive book surveying ten of the world's worst humanitarian failures in 1993. This book rises above the plethora of repeatedly heard but nevertheless accurate NGO complaints about international responses to humanitarian crises, such as the lack of governmental funding or political will or both, the need for more public support, and so on. The writers in this collected survey have provided original analyses of the emerging patterns which the transformation of world affairs – resulting from the collapse of the Cold War international system in 1989 – has had on dealing with regional humanitarian crises in the 1990s. In their perspective as a medical assistance NGO, the world community has failed the people who are in need and oppressed because of timid diplomatic initiatives, economic sanctions that hurt only the poor, peacekeeping operations that have turned partisan, and more concern for holding elections than human security survival. This is due to the “contradictions between the restoration of peace ... [with] a clearly defined political strategy and humanitarian aid which demands strict impartiality and independence.” (p. 10)

Founded by French doctors two decades ago, the Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF – Doctors without Borders) currently has an international membership of over 5,000 volunteer doctors, nurses and other professionals in 80 countries. The writers of the case studies and analyses in this book – either MSF members or

journalists – all have field experience in their crisis operational area. They begin, in Part One, with a survey of world crisis intervention by investigating the principal issues arising from ten current world crises and then, in Part Two, with a consideration of common themes and obstacles emerging from multilateral interventions in the post-Cold War international system.

Dealing with humanitarian crisis responses ranging from abstention (or non-intervention) to a variety of “active” interventions, the insightful sub-headings for each chapter in Part One provide a superb focus for each case study and crisis response under review. The case studies begin with two examples of non-intervention, where the response was “speak no evil, do no evil” in Sudan (Chap. 1) and “off the [international] agenda” in Afghanistan (Chap. 2). Next, there are three examples of intervention by regional powers, where the responses ranged from “free reign to the regional referees” in Tajikistan (Chap. 3) to “policing the old [Soviet] empire” in the Caucasus (Chap. 4) and to “leave it to the [West African] neighbors” in Liberia (Chap. 5). Third are three examples of United Nations peacemaking operations in former Cold War battlefields, including being “the guarantor of peace” in El Salvador (Chap. 6), “stewarding the ballot box, not the peace” in Angola (Chap. 7) and managing “elections in the killing fields” in Cambodia (Chap. 8). And fourth are two examples of ‘humanitarian’ military intervention that are investigated by looking at “the soft option” in Bosnia (Chap. 9) and how “humanitarian aid [is] outgunned” in Somalia (Chap. 10).

As evidence that their book is *more than* just a collection of first-hand observations and crisis reporting from a NGO viewpoint, the writers go on in Part Two to thematically analyze the emerging common issues concerning international responses in the post-Cold War era – with all their paradoxes and ambiguities. Among the emerging issues are the paradoxes of armed protection for relief operations (Chap. 11), the limitations of joint humanitarian and military action (Chap. 12), the human rights challenge to “absolute” state sovereignty (Chap. 13), the “politics” of reconstructing health-care systems in crisis areas (Chap. 14), and the “role” of human suffering for media coverage (Chap. 15).

While each of the book’s chapters has an author, this collection is a self-evident cooperative project – combining the input and field experience of a number of MSF members and supporters. Well-written, each case study is accompanied by a useful map and individual information boxes to compliment the chapter text. But, for academic readers, there is no discussion of “current literature” on crisis intervention nor even a bibliography of sources. Rather this book will become a complimentary “perspective cum resource” study for academic consideration of these crises and emerging crisis issues.

Nor is there an index at the end of the book – a serious editorial oversight in this age of computer publishing. But this oversight does raise the issue of who are this book’s target audience(s), beyond academic researchers. First, the discussion of emerging issues in multilateral humanitarian responses has particular value for national policy makers who would benefit from reading the excellent introductory

chapter – an Executive Summary in all but name – by the editor Francois Jean. Another audience is governmental response planners and NGO assistance organizers who plan and coordinate current and potential crisis responses. They would benefit from the issue analysis chapters in Part Two which help outline the “new playing field” in the post-Cold War era.

And finally, general readers on current affairs who are concerned about the explosive trends in world events will find a well-written discussion of some of them in this book, with an absolute minimum of bureaucratic, technical or academic jargon. For further information, there is at the back of the book a listing of the MSF operational section offices as well as its branch national offices. For Canadian readers, it should be noted that the MSF Toronto national office has moved to 51 Front Street East (Toronto M5E 1B3) since the book was published.

While highlighting some important new crisis issues and emerging trends, the book left this reviewer with several unanswered questions. Has there been a post-Cold War humanitarian operation which has been a success? Are there likely to be any in the future? And, with the book’s major recommendations spread throughout the issue chapters of Part Two, will readers really take note of them?

On the first question, many international affairs observers consider the UNTAG “law and order” operations in Namibia in 1989-90 to have been a success. But it was basically a “law and order” operation to guarantee “free and fair” elections in a transition to Namibian independence – not a humanitarian relief operation. It succeeded because the parties in conflict – the South African government and SWAPO – had agreed to a peace process and their armed forces were confined to barracks or in UN-monitored camps during the election period. And, indeed, this success was noted in an information box on “The Namibian Experience” in the chapter on Angola. (p. 75)

On the other hand, the Médecins Sans Frontières’s assistance operations deal with – and the book’s focus is on – “people under threat of death by killing or starvation.” As a result, this book has more to say about obstacles to humanitarian assistance in the current era of “peacemaking” and “human security” when conflicting parties have *not* agreed to outside intervention. And less relevance for “peacekeeping” activities where the parties have agreed – and often even requested – outside involvement, as in the case of the April 1994 South African electoral process. So the answer to the second question as to future successes appears to be: *not* if the groups in conflict remain actively fighting. And, regarding my final question dealing with the book’s recommendations, *few* national policy makers, government planners or NGO coordinators have the reading time to “dig” them out for consideration.

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