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THE ROLE OF ETHICS IN U.S. MILITARY HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTION

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ETHICAL DISCOURSE IN U.S. MILITARY HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTION

INTRODUCTION

Moral discourse and ethical debate in America’s “public square” are not lacking whenever U.S. statecraft and the potential of military force is contemplated. Whether the armed forces are to be sent into harm’s way in a conventional use of force, amidst unambiguous circumstances, and in an unequivocal (“politics by other means”) manner, or whether the armed forces are to be used in what has become known as “military operations other than war” (MOOTW),¹ usually a spirited moral/ethical debate ensues. All sides begin with moral presuppositions about the use of American instruments of power in general, and the prudence and efficacy of military force in particular. The moral debate is never quite distinct from the political debate—although one would be hard-pressed to conduct an effective exegesis of consistent moral tenets inherent in much of the political dialogue.

It is the contention of this essay that, although moral content is not lacking when MOOTW is considered as the primary political alternative in the face of crisis, there may be the absence of a systematically applied ethical construct. Because all moral discourse is essentially a social enterprise, it matters how moral judgments are arrived at and what moral/ethical criteria are consciously employed when contemplating the use of military force—and when evaluating whether the armed forces were dispatched appropriately, for what reasons, under what

¹ Joint Pub 3-07, “Joint Doctrine for Military Operations Other Than War,” (16 June 1995), pp. vii-I-3. MOOTW is defined as a “focus on deterring war and promoting peace ... sensitive to political considerations and often the military may not be the primary player.” Further, with more restrictive rules of engagement (ROE) in force, MOOTW seeks to resolve conflict, promote peace and support civil authorities in response to domestic crises, usually outside the Continental United States—involving a range of military capabilities across a range of military operations short of war.

circumstances and by whose authority, and to what ends/consequences. Similar to the moral component within interpersonal relationships, international relationships also are influenced by what can be summarized in the question, “how then shall we (collectively) live?” or—more to the point of intervention—“what *ought* we to do?” In an era of globalization, our *neighbor*—it can be argued—is no longer the nation(s) that shares a border with the United States. “Who is my neighbor?” therefore is no longer a question confined to an ancient biblical injunction.²

A compelling argument is that of George F. Kennan who contends that the conduct of diplomacy is the responsibility of governments, and those commitments and responsibilities are not the same as that of individuals. “Government is an agent,” asserts Kennan, “not a principal.”³ Kennan’s moral presupposition is based upon the belief that legitimate government requires no moral justification nor need suffer any moral reproach for pursuing its legitimate aims as outlined in his remarks (footnote 3). Rather than propounding a non-moral—realist—approach to the relations of nations, in actuality, Kennan’s thesis is intensely moral, based upon a reasoned approach to U.S. national security interests. What Kennan seems to be reacting to is what he calls the “histrionics of moralism at the expense of its substance. By that is meant the projection of attitudes, poses and rhetoric that cause us to appear noble and altruistic in the mirror of our own vanity but lack substance when related to the realities of international life.”⁴

² Luke 10:29 (New International Version): The question was asked in response to Jesus’ support of the biblical imperative: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and, love your neighbor as yourself.” Jesus’ reply to the *neighbor* question recounts the story that has been called, “The Parable of the Good Samaritan.”

³ George F. Kennan, “Morality and Foreign Policy,” *Foreign Affairs* 64, No. 2 (Winter 1985/86): pp. 205-206. Kennan contends: “Its (government) primary obligation is to the interests of the national society it represents, not to the moral impulses that individual elements of that society may experience ... the interests of the national society for which government has to concern itself are basically those of its military security, the integrity of its political life and the well-being of its people.”

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 212-213.

A subset of this essay's thesis is that the moral debate concerning U.S. military involvement in humanitarian emergencies in far-flung global reaches, that may not ostensibly appear to be in direct support of U.S. interests, usually occurs on a spectrum containing ethical dilemma polarities among a series of two or more competing "goods." U.S. moral decision-making is seldom between something inherently good, noble and charitable, as opposed to another course of action that is unquestionably bad, destructive and demeaning. That would be considered temptation, not a moral dilemma. Examples, that will be enlarged upon in the course of this brief exposition, are numerous and poignant such as: the dilemma between the good of *mission accomplishment* and the competing good of *force protection*; a desirable political *end-state* in contrast to an expedient military *exit strategy*; respect for the Westphalian concept of *national sovereignty* over against unilateral intervention to address *human need* on a grand scale; and, foremost on the minds of many military decision-makers is the competing good of *MOOTW* in the short-term, versus the long-term concern with a compromise to *operational readiness* (with its moral imperative to effectively fight and win hot wars—its primary mission and *raison d'être*).

Consider a "justice versus mercy"⁵ dilemma faced by then JCS Chairman, General John Shalikashvili, when he pondered humanitarian involvement in Rwanda. As quoted in *The Washington Post*, Shalikashvili framed the ethical pre-intervention debate this way: "We have a capacity like almost no one else to help with tragedies of a magnitude like we're witnessing now in Rwanda. But we also at the same time need to strengthen the United Nations so they can do

⁵ Rushworth M. Kidder, *How Good People Make Tough Choices: Resolving the Dilemmas of Ethical Living* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995) pp. 112-118. Kidder identifies four primary moral dilemmas: justice vs. mercy; short-term vs. long-term; individual vs. community; and, truth vs. loyalty. In the justice vs. mercy paradigm, Kidder postulates a conflict of fairness, equity and even-handed application of, let's say, international law/norms

more on their own without always having to call upon us or we don't have to play as large a part."⁶ Implicit in these remarks is the *teleological* approach to ethical thinking as well as Immanuel Kant's *categorical imperative* (to do one's duty because it is right to do—when one has the ability/resources to perform the right).⁷ However, Shalikhshvili's moral construct was articulated in the shadow of his immediate predecessor—General Colin Powell—who posited a very different moral point of view: "We must ... guard against (the armed forces) ever having to answer the call of an uncertain trumpet."⁸ No such reticence is detected—after the fact—in President Bill Clinton's public commiseration when he addressed many of Rwanda's genocide survivors in Kigali on March 25, 1998: "The international community, together with nations in Africa, must bear its share of responsibility for this tragedy, as well. We did not act quickly enough after the killing began. We should not have allowed the refugee camps to become safe haven for the killers. We did not immediately call these crimes by their rightful name: genocide."⁹ The President's circumspection endorsed yet another ethical construct: the Kantian

with the competing and often valid values of compassion, empathy and love. The American question: is it just to risk American blood and dissipate its treasure in areas of the world where there is no strategic value?

⁶ John E. Lange, "Civilian-Military Cooperation and Humanitarian Assistance: Lessons from Rwanda," *Parameters*: Summer 1998, p. 108.

⁷ William Frankena, *Ethics: (Second Edition): Foundations of Philosophy Series* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1973, pp. 14-16. Frankena defines the teleological approach as "an act is right ... will probably produce, or is intended to produce at least as great a balance of good over evil as any available alternative." The deontological approach posits that "the standard of right or wrong consists of one or more rules—either fairly concrete ones like 'we ought to tell the truth' ... "goodness lay in the motives/intentions behind the act, as well as adherence to moral rules and guidelines."

⁸ Colin Powell, "A Word From the Chairman," *Joint Forces Quarterly* (Autumn 1993): p. 5.

⁹ William J. Clinton, "Remarks by the President to Genocide Survivors, Assistance Workers, and U.S. and Rwanda Government Officials," White House Press Release, Office of the Press Secretary (Kampala, Uganda), 25 March 1998, p. 2.

concept of “reversibility.”¹⁰ This care-based paradigm requires one to turn *them* into *us*: dictating an ethic of treating everyone the way in which we would desire or deserve to be treated. One could also argue that perhaps a prevailing moral point of view, implied by the President’s remarks, in the new century will find the U.S. military more engaged in the kind of wars that defends values rather than interests.

It becomes abundantly manifest: there is no dearth of ethical dogma—implicit and explicit—in the public discourse on U.S. military involvement in humanitarian endeavors. The difficulty inheres to what extent ethics is consciously, systematically and consistently applied across the decision-making spectrum. Ethical discourse is necessarily the domain of both political and military decision-makers: framers of policy as well as the shapers of public support for those policies; and the responsibility of those who carry out the national will. And, persistent and consistent ethical constructs are required in both the formulation, operational (MOOTW) and post-intervention phases of U.S. military involvement.

BACKGROUND

Among the myriad ethical formulations and suppositions (with their numerous and growing variants and permutations)—dating back to the Socratic Dialogues—three major schools of thought emerge as deserving particular attention in this succinct treatment of humanitarian intervention. They are: (1) rules-based ethics; (2) ends-based ethics; and (3) virtues-based or care-based ethics. Each, in turn, will be defined and explicated in light of their major theories and contributions. Each ethical construct will be applied to or examined in light of this essay’s case study: the Rwanda genocide of 1994—and the

¹⁰ Rushworth M. Kidder, How Good People Make Tough Choices: Resolving the Dilemmas of Ethical Living, p. 25.

U.S./coalition response. One should hasten to acclaim that no decision to intervene takes place within a historical vacuum or upon a *tabula rasa*. More often than not, decisions of statecraft are made in the shadows of events—not necessarily linear in origin—that occurred prior to the crisis *de jour* demanding remedy. It can most assuredly be postulated that dilatory U.S. intervention in Rwanda was heavily influenced and conditioned by the U.S. military debacle in Mogadishu, Somalia. Similarly, remorse over inactivity in Bosnia—with its egregious outcomes—led to greater resolve in a U.S.-led NATO response in Kosovo, even when it meant the circumvention of U.N. participation and endorsement. U.S. incursions, it can be argued, into Haiti, Panama and Grenada—to include the Desert Shield/Storm phases of the Gulf War—all had their roots in our Nation’s post-Vietnam assessments. Ironically, much of the post-mortem commentary concerning Vietnam is deeply moral in nature, as much or more than it is politico-military focused.¹¹ It is perhaps axiomatic that moral discourse also seeks to learn from preceding applications of a moral point of view.

Like all other theories in science and art, ethical constructs are not static, rather, dynamic and evolving—greatly influenced by what has gone on before. To this day, for example, one can stand witness to the realist moral perspective that was articulated—and acted upon—over two millennia ago: “... the question of justice only enters where there is

¹¹ H.R. McMaster, “Dereliction of Duty” (New York: Harper Perennial, 1998), pp. 316-321. In McMaster’s chapter, “Five Silent Men,” he recounts numerous times the silent complicity of distorted policy regarding Vietnam: “... it had finally become clear to the JCS that the President’s domestic political priorities had overwhelmed the assumptions on which they had based Vietnam planning.” (316); “Harold Johnson also went along with the President’s decision, even though he knew that the failure to mobilize was a prescription for disaster ...” (317); “After honoring publicly the men who made possible his deceit and manipulation of Congress ...” (321).

equal power to enforce it, and that the powerful exact what they can, and the weak grant what they must.”¹²

A CASE STUDY: THE RWANDA GENOCIDE—1994

A synopsis of the historical conditions and precipitating events in Rwanda, and their horrific outcomes for at least 800,000 victims is necessary in order to properly understand and place into context the subsequent discussion of the three major ethical approaches to humanitarian intervention. Rwanda is a tiny nation of about eight million inhabitants in Central Africa, and is populated by two different peoples: the Hutus and the Tutsis. Differing in both physical appearance and in the vocations they pursue, Rwanda’s Hutu majority (85% of the population) had been historically ruled by the Tutsi minority. Even during colonial rule that began in the late nineteenth century, German and Belgium overlords governed through the Tutsi authorities—despite growing demands by the Hutu majority for a greater voice in self-determination.

When Rwanda gained its independence in 1959, Hutu leaders came to power and sought to redress historic political, social and economic inequalities, resulting in reverse discrimination of major proportions against the Tutsis. Hundreds of thousands of Tutsis fled Rwanda to neighboring states, especially Uganda and Burundi. In the 1980s, Tutsis established a guerilla force, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF)—which sought to end oppression against Tutsis. IN 1993, Hutu President Juvenal Habyarimana was able to halt the cycle of violence by forging a power-sharing peace agreement. To assist with this landmark accord, the U.N. Security Council established an observer force of 2,500 troops in Rwanda.

¹² Thucydides, “The Melian Dialogue,” The Peloponnesian Wars.

Regrettably, on April 6, 1994, President Habyarimana's jet, in which he was a passenger, was struck by two missiles. All passengers on board were killed. Within hours of Habyarimana's death, a Hutu militia, led by the Presidential Guard, began a systematic massacre of Tutsis and Hutu moderates, including the government's prime minister and ten Belgian members of the U.N. observer force assigned to protect her. One of the largest massacres occurred in mid-April in the western city of Kibuye, when more than 5,000 Tutsis were rounded up in a stadium and then mercilessly slaughtered. Although the government forces were equipped with modern weapons, the genocide was carried out by tens of thousands of Hutus at close quarters with primitive weapons—inciting a ghastly and macabre killing spree. The genocide did not end until the RPF took control of the major Rwandan centers by mid-June. By that time, however, the Hutus had killed at least 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus that “claimed more lives more quickly than any campaign of mass murder in recorded history.”¹³ Moreover, the RPF's rapid conquest of Rwanda led to one of the largest and fastest refugee movements in history, whereby upwards of two million displaced persons fled to neighboring states within the first two weeks of the Hutu exodus.

Initially, the United States opposed peacekeeping operations, citing the burden of costs and a lack of clarity about the operation's mission and organization. In a public address, President Bill Clinton (unlike his post-Rwandan reflections previously cited) said that it was important for the United Nations to learn “when to say no.”¹⁴ Sooner than most nations, France deployed troops to effectively limit further killing—minimizing further ethnic strife and the human *Diaspora*. Ultimately, the United States provided significant financial and humanitarian

¹³ David Rieff, “The Age of Genocide,” *The New Republic*, January 26, 1996, p. 31.

¹⁴ Milton Leitenberg, “Anatomy of a Massacre,” *New York Times*, July 31, 1994, Section 4, p. 15.

assistance—particularly when a cholera epidemic began to ravage over 1.2 million Hutu refugees primarily encamped in Goma, Zaire. Four thousand U.S. troops were deployed for solely humanitarian relief, not peacekeeping duties. Three years after the genocide, over 100,000 Hutus remained in Rwandan prisons awaiting trial for their alleged complicity in the 1994 atrocities—subject to the vagaries of a highly dubious domestic judicial system.

CONTEMPLATING RWANDA THROUGH THE LENS OF RULES-BASED ETHICS

Rules-based or *deontological* ethics assert that standards of right or wrong consist of one or more rules (as noted in footnote 7). Rules of “rightness” or “oughtness,” it follows, are those kinds of rules that can be universalized to all parties concerned. If it is right to do, it is right for everyone to do. Taken from the Greek word *deon*, meaning “obligation” or “duty,”¹⁵ this ethical formulation finds *oughtness* in principles that can be universally applied, as well as in what authoritative, legitimating entities and constituencies have agreed upon as normative behavior, expectations and ideals. For instance, the rule of law, codes of conduct, the Uniformed Code of Military Justice, rules of engagement, Geneva & Hague Conventions guidelines—and international treaties and agreements, all become salient standards by which behavior must be judged, and upon which action must be taken.

In the international arena, it is possible that rules may conflict, cultural norms, mores and customs may differ, if not in character, at least in degree. For example, international law has codified what has been titled a “Code of Peace,”¹⁶ in which both ethically normative and legally binding resolutions reinforce and support such concepts as: (1) Sovereign equality of states; (2)

¹⁵ Opcit., Rushworth M. Kidder, How Good People Make Tough Choices: Resolving the Dilemmas of Ethical Living, p. 24.

¹⁶ Mark R. Amstutz, International Ethics: Concepts, Theories, and Cases in Global Politics (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999), pp. 126-127.

Territorial integrity and political independence of states; (3) Equal rights and self-determination of peoples; (4) Nonintervention in the internal affairs of states; (5) Peaceful settlement of disputes between states; (6) Abstention from the threat or use of force; (7) Fulfillment in good faith of international obligations; (8) Cooperation with other states; and (9) Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. However, according to international norms and historical precedent, the ethics of *nonintervention* prevails over virtually every other rule. This ethic affirms the existing anarchic international system is morally legitimate—that peoples have a moral right to political self-determination, and the concomitant right not to be interfered with in the struggle toward self-determination. This norm of nonintervention is foundational to the contemporary international system that even the United Nations is prohibited by its charter (Article 2.7) from intervening in the domestic affairs of its member states; also, stated in the 1965 General Assembly-passed Resolution 2131: “No state has the right to intervene, directly or indirectly, for any reason whatever, in the internal or external affairs of any other state. Consequently, armed intervention and all other forms of interference or attempted threats against the personality of the State or against its political, economic, or cultural elements are condemned.”¹⁷ Such unequivocal rhetoric remains problematic when seeking to determine what constitutes a “failed state,” which implies no legitimate or practical control over its internal affairs; and, if morality is fundamentally about drawing lines, where on a sliding scale of actions does one determine that “ethnic cleansing” in Kosovo has now become “genocide” in Rwanda? Is it merely a matter of semantics?

¹⁷ Quoted in Kelly Kate Pease and David P. Forsythe, “Human Rights, Humanitarian Intervention, and World Politics,” *Human Rights Quarterly* 15 (1993): 292.

Despite such compelling international sanctions against intervention of any form, one can also cite, as moral justification for humanitarian intervention (invited by the host nation or not), the 1966 “International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights:”¹⁸ (1) The right to life and physical security of the person; (2) Freedom of thought, religion, and expression; (3) Freedom of association and peaceful assembly; (4) Due process of law and a humane penal system; (5) Freedom from torture, and (6) The right to legal equality and nondiscrimination. It is to state the obvious that, first, rules and well-established values may indeed conflict with one another; second, some rules may take precedence over others—requiring a case by case analysis, rather than blind adherence to a set of norms; and finally, ethical dilemmas may present themselves such as the good of political/territorial integrity (the moral right not to be interfered with) with the competing good of human rights (the rights of individuals over the rights of the state). When moral principles bump into one another, compromise and tough trade-offs are inevitable.

In the case of Rwanda, the initial deontological approach of the U.S. relied heavily on the reluctance to challenge or override the norm of sovereignty, and to risk war over interests not considered vital to the nation. The U.S. reluctance to protect human rights in this foreign country not considered vital to U.S. interests—no doubt conditioned and chastened by the Somalia episode—opted out of the use of force to pursue secondary interests. International norms and democratic principles were cited as justification for lack of U.S. engagement. Nevertheless, President Clinton’s remarks in Kigali (quoted previously) evaluated both the timing of U.S. intervention and the outcome of the Rwanda genocide, not in terms of a rules-

¹⁸ Other important international human rights agreements include the International Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948); the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965); the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1984); and the Convention on the Rights of the Children (1989).

based, deontological ethic. Rather, his moral judgment evoked *teleological* grammar to call attention to his assessment that weights the moral emphasis on a desired end-state and preferred consequences over established principles used to evaluate whether or not to intervene. This is a vivid illustration of how ethics—not used consistently and systematically—became a problem when seeking to ascertain the right thing to do in the international arena.

CONTEMPLATING RWANDA THROUGH THE LENS OF ENDS-BASED ETHICS

Ends-based, or *teleological* (from the Greek *teleos* meaning ‘end’) or *utilitarianism* is best known by the maxim, “Do whatever produces the greatest good for the greatest number. It demands of us a kind of cost-benefit analysis.”¹⁹ Most public legislation is based upon this sense of beneficence. Recent national debate over tax cuts, gun control, Social Security, Medicare, and campaign finance reform usually revolve around this ethical formulation, seeking to derive the best good for the greatest number in society. This ethic is clearly impatient with noble intentions alone. This ethical frame of reference explains the military concern for an “exit strategy.” The teleologists—particularly at the governmental level—are primarily concerned with results, not charitable motives. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as CARE, the American Red Cross, Catholic Relief Society, and World Vision—that clamor for intervention in a human tragedy—is typically tempered by the reluctance of the U.S. military. The ethical imperative of the military differs qualitatively from NGOs where opportunity costs must be weighed, means and risks must be balanced, and where short-term military engagement in a humanitarian endeavor must be measured in terms of long-term costs to operational viability in behalf of a

¹⁹ Rushworth M. Kidder, How Good People Make Tough Choices: Resolving The Dilemmas of Ethical Living, p. 24.

vital interest—not to mention the depletion of morale when Operational and Personnel Tempo create another unintended, but detrimental consequence to military readiness.

Rwanda, in a fashion similar to Somalia, but more rapid in its political and societal deterioration—accelerated by the suspiciously effective mobilization of the Presidential Guard—defied, arguably, a timely and responsive intervention based upon a teleological evaluation of the right thing to do. To be fair, almost eighty percent of the genocide against the Tutsis and moderate Hutus took place within the first 2-3 weeks of the Rwandan president's death. Unless U.S. forces were actually occupying major cities within Rwanda—and were within intimidating proximity of the Presidential Guard—it is difficult to realistically anticipate a peace-making effort that could have precluded most of the inevitable results. In many war zones, context is as important as principles because the latter often clash. In this instance, U.N. pro-active collaboration with other European and African nations—perhaps—could have forged a more positive intervention in the short-term. Nevertheless, ends-based thinking is necessarily more cautious, deliberate and painstakingly slow—often accused of insensitive lethargy in the face of the immediacy of the human moment.

CONTEMPLAING RWANDA THROUGH THE LENS OF VIRTUES-BASED ETHICS

The ethic of virtue (human goodness and character) can be traced back to Plato and Aristotle (with their emphasis on the virtues of reason and justice—with the admixture of Thomas Aquinas' virtues of faith, hope, and charity) and, in many respects, the most sublime and yet beguiling moral disposition for U.S. statecraft. From this ethical construct, Americans have crowned themselves to be “the shining city on the hill.” Conversely, U.S. policy makers and leaders have characterized other nations as “evil empires,” “rogue nations,” and “states of concern.”

From this moral frame of reference, the U.S. postulates as national policy the spread of democracy (value-laden term, loaded with moral pre-suppositions of self-determination, human rights and so forth), economic prosperity (western-styled capitalism), to name only a few. Virtue ethics compels good people to do good things. In the face of a humanitarian crisis, the public debate often includes a clarion call to action based on who Americans *are*. Therefore, inaction in the face of human calamity cannot be excused by the virtue-ethicist in lieu of cost-benefit analysis and prudent self-interest. In this ethic, the Good Samaritan does not pass by on the other side, rather expends one's wealth and energy in behalf of the smitten because the Samaritan is *good*. This internal quality is the key driver to the treatment of others as subjects—ends in themselves—not as objects, on which means must be expended.

Perhaps existential and collective guilt over the Jewish holocaust of World War Two explains the establishment of the Jewish state of Israel in 1948, and the United States' de facto recognition of Israel and its remarkable policy toward Israel for the past half-century. One could, through the filter of virtue ethics, explain the angst our nation feels when confronted with inaction in the face of regional perversity and privation. However, and paradoxically, when “good” people intervene for well-intentioned reasons in order to alleviate unquestionable hardship and injustice, if the intervention turns sour—as in Mogadishu, virtue ethics is almost always displaced by an ends-based logic. At day's end, the Idealist logic inevitably gives way to the dispassionate accounting of the Realist. Despite the possible catastrophic consequences of the well-intentioned virtues-based ethicists, their mandate remains: to refuse to engage is unthinkable; and this sentiment is eerily reminiscent of the cold warriors who believed that there was no part of the world in which Communism did not have to be confronted.

CONCLUSION

It is this essay's conclusion that no single ethical frame of reference can adequately grasp and/or compass all the necessary considerations when contemplating U.S. military intervention in humanitarian crises. It is the concluding purpose of this essay to suggest, however, that despite such lapses, ethical discourse is not only necessary but can be systematically consistent when formulating policy affecting the employment of U.S. armed forces. This premise is based upon the following moral assumptions. Deontological and teleological ethical constructs are telling half-truths. Teleology (end-oriented) is defined only by future value, disregarding of presently existing motives and actions. Deontology (source-oriented) pretends that the international community is totally static, that only what is thought, intended or done in the present has any value. When taken to their logical conclusions, both approaches reveal serious short-comings that have been painfully manifested in the morally wrenching fields of humanitarian endeavor. Also, a mature and responsible ethic has at least four irreducible components—all competing with one another, yet complementary to one another. These components conjoin the major elements of the three ethical constructs discussed in this paper. They are: goals (what values are to be achieved?); motives (why are they to be achieved?); means (how shall they be achieved?); and, consequences (will the actions destroy or achieve the stated values?).

Regarding Rwanda, the ultimate U.S./coalition commitment was to feed refugees, but never engaged in a larger commitment to helping Rwanda rebuild its political structure—possibly making the refugee crisis in Zaire inevitable. Edward Luttwak observes, in his meticulous documentation of the tragedy in Goma, in Eastern Zaire, “NGOs crowded in to help the Hutus fleeing Rwanda. Instead of dispersing in the immensity of the Congo as many previous

Rwandan emigrants had done for a century, the Hutus remained where they were being fed, necessarily under the control of their defeated genocidal leaders. Very soon, NGO-fed warriors started raiding Rwanda each night to kill more Tutsis.”²⁰ This well-intentioned yet clumsy relief effort of NGOs leads into the *how* question, as well as the question of likely outcomes and foreseeable effects.

After outlining three categories in which he believes military intervention could be used (vital, national and humanitarian), General Henry H. Shelton offered his appraisal of when to use military forces in humanitarian endeavors: “While the military generally is not the best one to solve a humanitarian crisis, under certain circumstances, the appropriate use of our armed forces can bring an interim solution to the immediate problems at hand and set the stage for international leaders to address the longer term, more systemic deficiencies.” He continued that efforts should be “limited in duration, have a clearly defined end state, and they should entail a minimal risk for our troops ... and to ensure these efforts should not jeopardize our ability to respond to direct threats to our national security in other regions of the world.”²¹ General Shelton’s remarks embrace several, but not all, of the necessary moral ingredients to MOOTW.

The moral problem with humanitarian intervention is that the dialogue assumes disinterest rather than national self-interest—creating the illusion that success can be achieved “on the cheap,” without strenuous effort, heroic self-giving, and perhaps real sacrifice. “Low intensity” should not be understood as no intensity. Euphemisms aside, humanitarian intervention may require loss of life. David Rieff tempers the moral exuberance of those who believe that one

²⁰ Edward Luttwak, “Picking a Good Fight (Round Three),” *Atlantic Unbound* (April 14, 2000).

²¹ General Henry H. Shelton, “Joint Chiefs Chairman Discusses Military’s Role with Harvard Students,” *Air Force News* (Released: January 21, 2000).

must intervene at any cost, in a critique similar to Luttwak's regarding NGOs: "... despite the best intentions of aid workers, and at times because of them, they become logisticians in the war efforts of warlords, fundamentalists, gangsters and ethnic cleansers."²² His remarks serve as a cautionary tale to include all factors in moral decision-making if one is to contribute to a responsible moral dialogue.

Ethics is more than an enterprise of adherence to a set of fixed principles or generalizations. Ethics understands there are good exceptions to good principles. And, in the final analysis, ethics requires reasoned judgment and a sense of humility to be worked out in civil-military dialogue. In that public arena, men and women who are equally intelligent, patriotic and moral will differ, for they will value some things less and other things more. The reality is that foreign policy can never be wholly consistent. Nevertheless, a disposition for moral dialogue may prove more beneficial for U.S. security interests and the perpetuation of its enduring values in a world of rapid change and profound uncertainty.

²² David Rieff, "The Humanitarian Illusion," *The New Republic* (March 16, 1998) p. 30.