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Research for Action 25

# **The Age of Humanitarian Emergencies**

Raimo Väyrynen

Research for Action

UNU World Institute for  
Development Economics Research  
(UNU/WIDER)

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**Raimo Väyrynen**

This study has been prepared within the UNU/WIDER project on the Wave of Emergencies of the Last Decade: Causes, Extent, Predictability and Response, being co-directed by Professor Wayne Nafziger, Senior Research Fellow, and Professor Raimo Väyrynen, University of Notre Dame, Indiana, USA.

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## FOREWORD

Over the last ten years, the number of humanitarian crises has escalated from an average of 20-25 a year to about 65-70, while the number of people affected has risen more than proportionately. The International Red Cross estimates that the number of persons involved is increasing by about ten million a year. As a result, scores of people have been left dead, maimed, starving, displaced, homeless and hopeless. Afghanistan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Burundi, Cambodia, Central America, Haiti, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Rwanda and Transcaucasia are the countries or regions where the most acute crises have occurred during the last two decades. In turn, Guyana, Kenya, Surinam and Zaire are nations where negative trends in the factors under analysis make many fear that social explosions may take place in the not too distant future, unless corrective measures are introduced urgently.

Despite attempts at controlling this new scourge by national authorities and the international community, there are no signs that this dramatic trend is likely to be reversed any time soon. Even traditional responses now tend to lag behind, as crudely demonstrated by the lukewarm response of the international community to the recent crises of Rwanda and Burundi. From a narrow aid perspective, it is obvious that the current response to emergencies, centred on the notions of peace-making and peace-keeping, cannot be sustained indefinitely. This approach absorbs ever increasing volumes of aid money for military operations, but has produced so far limited results in terms of welfare and political stability. As the Somali experience has shown, military expenditures of about USD 2 billion were necessary to deliver about USD 100 million worth of food aid to the populations affected.

This study is a part of UNU/WIDER's effort to analyse the meaning and causes of these events. The paper is a part of a research project on the political economy of complex humanitarian emergencies, co-directed by E. Wayne Nafziger, UNU/WIDER Senior Researcher, and Raimo Väyrynen. The research project seeks to use economic and political analyses to explain factors contributing to humanitarian emergencies and to develop early-warning and preventive strategies. Väyrynen's paper is a pathbreaking effort to define complex humanitarian emergencies, indicate what they are, where they have occurred in recent years, and how to operationalize them. Future researchers will look to this paper as a major effort in conceptualizing humanitarian emergencies. I strongly recommend this study to researchers and policy-makers with an interest in complex humanitarian emergencies.

Giovanni Andrea Cornia  
Director, UNU/WIDER  
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## ABSTRACT

*The Age of Humanitarian Emergencies* makes an effort to define and operationalize a humanitarian emergency. After having discussed extensively definitions related to collective violence, especially genocide and civil war, the paper opts for a more comprehensive definition associated with the idea of a 'complex humanitarian emergency'. This idea stresses the multidimensionality and the political nature of humanitarian crises. Multidimensionality is reflected in the decision to define a humanitarian emergency by four factors: warfare, disease, hunger, and displacement. The human-rights dimension is considered relevant, but embedded in the four other factors than an independent defining characteristic. The political nature of emergencies is reflected, in turn, in the intra-crisis struggle for relative gains in the distribution of economic gains and political power in the crisis-ridden society. While natural disasters can have socio-economic consequences, the humanitarian crises are man-made in two senses of the word; they result from increasing vulnerability of marginalized populations to disasters or may have even been started to reap economic and political benefits for a particular group. On the basis of the four defining criteria of humanitarian crises, the paper develops an empirical classification of different types of emergencies. Throughout the paper these crises are seen as an important component of the dualist development of our time, as a downside of many positive economic and political developments. In the end, these two sides of the human development may be interlinked.



## I THE AGE OF DUALISM

The 20th century has been called the 'age of extremes', 'century of total wars', and a 'century of genocides'. These characterizations are primarily based on the unprecedented damage of warfare; decimation of civilian populations and atrocities on the battlefields, where atomic and chemical weapons have been used to reinforce the destruction brought about by the conventional means of warfare. The carnage of the 20th century has not been limited to the world wars and major regional conflicts. Violence also pervaded everyday politics during the Cold War and plagues the present transition to a new system of international relations. Whether bipolar or multipolar, violence has been entrenched in the structure and process of international relations.

However, the certainty of the era of bipolarity and nuclear deterrence has yielded to uncertainty and unpredictability or, as Eric Hobsbawm (1994:562) has remarked: 'The century ended in a global disorder whose nature was unclear, and without an obvious mechanism for either ending it or keeping it under control'. To express the matter otherwise, the bipolar world order rested on the simultaneous 'capacity to define purpose (to deliver a universalist message) and capacity to generate power (economic and military)' (Laïdi 1994:9). Now both positive purpose and power are in disarray and their coherence has gone. Partly for this reason the transition to a new international system is unstable, including recurrent resort to military force, deepening socio-economic gaps, and increasing mobility of people within and across borders.

This is not necessarily something new; during the entire postwar era, wars have been waged, the world economy has been exploitative and unequally organized, and famine and disease have frequently killed and displaced people. A main change is that these calamities are not caused by the states and their policies to the same degree as before. Rather wars, famines, and refugee flows are brought about by the dissolution of state structures. Therefore, their manifestations are often non-national rather than delineated by state boundaries. In fact, it can be suggested that the world is entering a new era of civil conflict which is both subnational and transnational in character. Fuelled by ethnic and religious motives, it rekindles the tension between state sovereignty and self-determination and creates entirely new types of security threats (Rondos 1994).

State is internationally in decline as can be seen primarily in its decreasing ability to dispense economic services, but also in the weakening of its monopoly over coercive power. The latter tendency has resulted in 'the democratization and privatization of the means of destruction, which transformed the prospect of violence and wreckage *anywhere* on the globe' (Hobsbawm 1994:560; emphasis in the original). Most wars occur in disintegrating political units; either states or multinational empires. The tenet of realism, i.e. that domestic systems are based on hierarchical public order, while interstate relations are anarchical and insecure, is challenged by recent experiences. In

particular peripheral states are becoming anarchical, failing to perform their basic political and economic tasks (Holsti 1995:329-30).

While governments continue to be key players in military conflicts, they also increasingly involve non-state actors, such as armed clans and ethnic movements. This exposes, in turn, civilian populations to greater suffering as battles are fought in their midst. As a result, war has in many places become more of a social and public health problem than an instrument of state politics. Thus, wars have been losing their ability to achieve collective political goals which has, in turn, brought about a crisis in the rationale of using military force.

The future prospect is not, however, inevitably negative. Rather the world seems to be entering a new phase of development under the influence of new and contradictory trends. During the Cold War the war proneness of a country to external intervention depended, in the first place, on its power status and the position in the spheres-of-influence arrangement (for a typology, see Nijman 1993:95-7). No wars were waged across the bloc divide, but they occurred either within an established sphere of influence or in regions where the sphere was contested. The Soviet interventions into East Germany (1953), Hungary (1956), and Czechoslovakia (1968) and the US interventions into the Dominican Republic (1965), Grenada (1983) and Panama (1989) are examples of the former tendency. Civil wars in Afghanistan, Angola, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Nicaragua, and Somalia were waged, with the participation of great powers, in countries where the sphere was contested.

A strong international status and internal stability have helped countries to remain outside violent conflicts, because nobody has wanted to intervene in them in the fear of military escalation and setback. Strong countries also tend to build pluralistic security communities in their mutual relations (Holsti 1995:334). However, these core countries have also frequently intervened, often for colonial and imperial motives, in peripheral states. French war-fighting in Algeria and Indochina, Portuguese colonial wars in Africa, US interventions into Vietnam and the Western hemisphere, and the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan are examples of such colonial or imperial involvements. In sum, the victims of warfare during the Cold War were mostly in the peripheral countries of contested influence zones.

Today, warfare in traditional interstate relations is a very rare event; these relations have been mostly pacified and the ride of the second horseman is coming to its end. This is the case both in the relations among the core and peripheral countries, and in the relations between them. The possibility of a major interstate war seems to exist only in the Korean Peninsula, South Asia, and the Middle East and the Persian Gulf. On the other hand, the likelihood of civil wars seems to be limited in these same areas.

Robert O'Connell (1995) traces the initial origins of war to the rise of agricultural societies and their struggles for the control of territory. In the second phase, war became increasingly associated with the rise of bureaucratic-industrial state which has accumulated capabilities for large-scale physical and human destruction (Porter 1994). With the decline of agriculture and mass industrialization and the rise of technology-

based information and service societies, war seems to be waning as a social institution, especially in industrialized countries. One can perhaps draw from this a conclusion that violence continues to devastate mostly those regions where agriculture and thus the control of increasingly scarce and overexploited land still matters.

Thus, the dualism of our age is reflected in the simultaneous decline of interstate war and its continuation as socially anchored internal violence in the unstable periphery where most of the warfare occurred also during the Cold War. The main difference is that today major powers are only rarely involved in peripheral wars, except perhaps as a participant in an international humanitarian intervention. Another sign of dualism is the fact that while the number of civil wars has increased, especially since the 1980s, unarmed insurrections to force the government to resign or change its policies have also become more frequent. This is so partly because peaceful people's movements allow a much broader popular participation and the establishment of alternative political institutions (Zunes 1994).

In the last decade and a half, famine and disease have been under better control than perhaps ever before in human history. Life expectancy has been increasing in most parts of the world and many contagious diseases have been tamed by the spread of more effective and fairer health care systems. Increases in food production and improvements in distribution systems have made mass starvation in most countries an unlikely event. On the other hand new diseases or more resistant variants of the old ones have become more common again. Famines have occurred in some regions, especially in the Sahel, and in some others, ominous signs have appeared that the food production increasingly lags behind the population increase. Thus, the dualism of our age is manifested also in these setbacks amidst major improvements in the control of disease and hunger. Progress in providing food security has been accompanied with an increase in the absolute number of undernourished people in the world (Parikh 1990).

Although most people are still firmly attached to their home territories, there is an unmistakable global trend towards the increasing mobility of people both within and between societies. Much of that mobility is voluntary in nature and is motivated primarily by hopes for more gainful employment in other countries. In mid-1990s the global stock of immigrants was about 125 million. The net gains in immigration have been strongest in North America and Western Europe, while Asia and Latin America have been the main losers. Intra-regional differences are significant, however. For instance, South, Central, and North Africa have gained from migration, while East and West Africa have lost (Martin and Widgren 1996:5-6). While Russians are firmly attached to their home territory, more than 9 million people in the former Soviet Union, 3 per cent of its population, have left their homes because of ethnic tensions and ecological disasters.

Even the non-political movements of people can be unsettling. Mass migrations can lead in destinations to cultural and ethnic tensions and material conflicts between the local population and immigrants who may be perceived both as an economic burden and a security threat. They may be even used as hostages in bargaining with their home countries. In addition to the non-political mobility of people across borders, the number

of refugees has significantly grown over the last few years because of the political and military instabilities and even the collapse of social order within states.

The existence of dualist patterns in warfare, famines and disease, and the displacement of people reflect the bifurcated nature of the present era. This dualism is embedded in the development of the world system in which a key pattern is the rapid accumulation of economic assets in some regions and deprivation in others. In a word, the world is becoming more polarized not only along the North-South cleavage, but also within the regions and societies of the South. Polarization is, in turn, accompanied with an increasing social and economic vulnerability to disasters.

It can be postulated that major humanitarian emergencies are largely absent in the core of the international system, whether we speak of traditional leading powers (e.g. Great Britain and the United States) or those rising towards this status (e.g. Japan and the Republic of Korea). Solid economic growth at home and integration with the world market seem to be effective antidotes to man-made disasters. The main reasons for this are the reduced exposure of the population to natural disasters and the enhanced capacity of the society to deal with emergencies should they wreak havoc.

On the other hand, humanitarian crises have been amply present in the regions belonging to world's periphery and even the semiperiphery. While democracy and interdependence prevail in the North, chaos and fragmentation reign in the South. Benign economic and political conditions in the North prevent, as a rule, the outbreak of major interstate wars or internal crises, but the periphery remains most vulnerable in both respects; contrasts between the core and periphery are stark, indeed (for an elaborated analysis, see Goldgeier and Vescera 1992). In the global perspective, core is a 'zone of peace', while much of the periphery is located in a 'zone of turmoil' (Singer and Wildavsky 1993). Thus, humanitarian welfare is vested with a top position in the world system, while humanitarian emergencies grow out of poverty and marginalization.

Interacting with the change of the world economic order is the transformation of the international political order from a territorial, state-based structure to a more multilayered and fragmented system. In the North advances in communication technology, financial interpenetration, and cultural integration have all eroded territorial political control by the state. Yet, it can be argued that states in the North control more effectively their national territories and societies than those in the South where states regularly fail to perform their basic functions. In many parts of the South, especially in Africa, external economic discipline shrinks public spending, economic development fails to take off, ethnic differentiation leads to hostilities, and new centres of power arise to contest the government monopoly to use violence. Instead of operating as a coherent unit, the economy becomes a network of connections between the mercantile cities and the hinterland locations controlling some saleable assets (Ayoob 1995; Ellis 1996).

Humanitarian emergencies are a strong manifestation of the dualist pattern of the current international development. Concurrent with the progress in peace, interdependence, and development, the world has in recent years experienced some of its worst economic, social, and human catastrophes. Deep crises in Afghanistan, Bosnia, Mozambique,

Rwanda, Somalia, and elsewhere have not been individual aberrations, but in all likelihood signs of a deeper, unsettling trend which portends continuing death and suffering of people, especially in developing countries.

Emergencies can be induced by a number of factors which interact with each other. Often a distinction is made between natural and human sources of risks of which the latter can be either intentionally targeted or indiscriminate due to ignorance and negligence (Fischer 1993:14-8). Another way of considering disasters is to assess whether they are caused by nature (e.g. hurricanes and earthquakes), technology (e.g. nuclear accidents and mining accidents), economy (e.g. crop failure and deforestation), or politics (e.g. war and human rights violations). Technological, economic, and political disasters are caused by different types of human interventions (Richmond 1994:79-83). The bottom line here is that in many cases the natural sources of dangers and human interventions interact in a complex manner.

The march of the world towards more numerous and severe humanitarian emergencies is not due to a more frequent occurrence of natural disasters, such as earthquakes, floods, draughts, and hurricanes (for a discussion on the types, phases, and consequences of natural disasters, see Cuny 1983:21-61). Despite that the number of human emergencies has been roughly doubling in every decade since the 1960s when an annual average of 53 disasters was reported (the figures for the 1970s and the 1980s were 113 and 223, respectively). In the 1980s the most common disasters were floods, earthquakes, and windstorms which all can victimize people in several ways; they can be killed, injured, and affected otherwise, for instance, by becoming homeless. Measured by the number of victims, the most devastating disasters have been due to drought and famines, floods, and windstorms (Blaikie, Cannon, Davis and Wisner 1994:31; for more statistics, see IFRC 1994:99-106).

The combination of a constant number of natural physical calamities and the increase in the human destruction engendered by them represents a puzzle. An unavoidable answer is that the growing number of humanitarian disasters is due to the increasing vulnerability of societies to such calamities. Vulnerability is, in turn, a result of the increasing polarization and marginalization of people, especially in developing countries. Marginalization means that poor people are pushed to live on land which is either physically dangerous (e.g. hillside slums) or unable to provide adequate living (e.g. so-called *bantustans* in South Africa). Marginalization is itself a potential source of a humanitarian emergency, but it also increases the vulnerability of people to extreme physical events (Susman, O'Keefe and Wisner 1983:263-4, 276-9).

An increase in the vulnerability of human societies to physical disasters can be traced to a chain of factors. A comprehensive study argues that the 'progression of vulnerability' starts from 'root causes', such as limited access to power and resources, which permit, in turn, 'dynamic pressures' to operate. These pressures can be both global (e.g. rapid population growth, urbanization, economic pressures, and environmental degradation) and local, such as the lack of institutions, resources and skills. Finally, should natural disasters occur, they can have increasingly adverse effects, because growing dynamic pressures translate stronger root causes into 'unsafe conditions' of the people. These

unsafe conditions are manifested in increasingly fragile environmental and economic conditions and the lack of local institutional and resource capabilities to respond to physical hazards (Blaikie, Cannon, Davis and Wisner 1994:22-45).

An important lesson of this model is that while global factors may catalyze the 'progression of vulnerability', the root causes of crises are located in the domestic political and economic systems. Thus, the causes of the recent wave of humanitarian crises can hardly be traced directly to increasing global 'dynamic pressures', although they can mould societies in which the root causes of emergencies are brewing. Moreover, the global pressures and their local consequences may also increase the possibility of some hazards, especially flooding and landslides which result, in part, from the overuse and erosion of soil.

This report makes an effort to define and operationalize a humanitarian emergency or crisis, describe their main common characteristics, and assess their consequences. A thorough analysis of the root causes of humanitarian emergencies is possible only if we have defined and specified the category of such events. I will explore first those approaches which stress the role of violence in leading to deaths and other forms of suffering. The focus on violence is due to its pivotal role in bringing about also other negative consequences, such as hunger and displacement of people. I will also discuss in some detail these other aspects of humanitarian emergencies.

## II GENOCIDE AND WAR

### 2.1 Genocide and politicide

In the effort to define a humanitarian emergency, an important issue concerns the choice between absolute and relative measures of suffering. Obviously, both criteria admit that an emergency means a massive loss of human life in a given context; the more fatalities there are, the worse the disaster. Rather, it is a question of whether the seriousness of the emergency should be measured by absolute or relative criteria. Both choices can be justified, but by different arguments. If the life of each and every individual is valued equally, then the seriousness of the crisis increases with the rise in the absolute death toll. On the other hand, if group rights are given more weight, then even a smaller numerical loss of people becomes more serious if a high proportion of community members perish in war, famine, or disease.

While the violation of individual human rights cannot be neglected, the respect for group rights, especially in divided multi-ethnic societies, is often a precondition for the realization of individual rights. A Nigerian case study concludes that 'at a minimum, the rights of the ethnic group to exist, to preserve, and protect its language and culture, and to participate equally with others in the affairs of state, including the sharing of power and resources, have to be recognized' (Osaghae 1996:186). Thus, the seriousness of a humanitarian crisis cannot be measured only by the absolute number of people killed or injured, but it has to be interpreted in its proper social and political context.

To explore this problem further, one can consider whether the genocide is a prototypical humanitarian emergency. Following the tradition of measuring human losses by state-centric, absolute criteria, Rudolph J. Rummel (1994) has listed and analysed 17 cases of mass murders in the 20th century in which a minimum of one million people have been killed. Rummel's list of 'democides' is topped, with 62 million victims, by the 'Soviet Gulag State' followed by the 'Communist Chinese Anthill' (35 million), and the 'Nazi Genocide State' (21 million). In all, according to Rummel, 169 million people have been killed during this century in large-scale collective violence (though any estimate is naturally uncertain).

People can be mass murdered only by an effective and repressive state machinery wreaking havoc either within or beyond its borders. In 'internal' mass murders the aim is to eliminate the 'enemy of the people' and, at a minimum, spread terror to prevent the emergence of the anti-government opposition. This requires that the victimized group is singled out and segregated by racial, ethnic, religious, or class criteria and then destroyed. While mass murder may be motivated by economic gain, it is more likely perpetrated to promote an undemocratic ideology and to strengthen the power of the state and of its supporters.

In a simple interpretation a genocidal state can be said to possess 'despotic power' which refers to the 'distributive power of state elites over civil society'. To be able to exercise despotic power, the state needs also 'infrastructural power', i.e. institutional capacity to penetrate the society. Together, these two forms of power provide a basis for an 'authoritarian state'. On the other hand, infrastructural power may also facilitate the control of the state by the civil society (on the concepts, see Mann 1993:59-60). Therefore, effective despotic power can be obtained by the state only if it uproots the civil society and its capacity to resist.

An cruel exercise of despotic power requires the dehumanization of opponents whose badness must be proved by constructing it historically or socially. The rise of despotism is made more likely if the national power elite holds a vengeful resentment caused by the memories of past wrongs which its opponents have inflicted. The sense of revenge, possibly motivated by the lust of power and fear, may lead to forceful efforts to eliminate 'alien' values and purify the society of elements representing them (Indonesian massacres in 1965 provide an example). In many cases, the military is the bulwark of one-sided nationalistic values providing support to a political class which has adopted a mission to destroy its enemies by the massive use of violence (Chirot 1994:410-2, 416-8).

Theories stressing an authoritarian state ideology as the source of genocides can be contrasted with structural theories focusing either on deep social divisions, structural repression, or empire-building (Fein 1990:32-50). Historically, colonial expansion has involved 'external genocides' and annihilated entire peoples, including aborigines in Tasmania and Canary Islands. Mass killings of Hereros in South West Africa (today's Namibia) by the Germans, native Americans in North America, and Siberian tribes by Russians provide further examples of genocidal policies pursued by expanding powers outside their original borders. States have also killed tribal people within their borders to clear the way for government and companies to exploit the natural resources on tribal lands. This has happened, for instance, in Bangladesh, Brazil, and Myanmar (Bodley 1992).

While structural theories have a measure of validity, genocides are difficult to comprehend without considering state-sponsored campaigns to promote the purity and dominance of a totalitarian ideology in society. The motives of these campaigns can be either revolutionary, when people are murdered to carry out and sustain a revolution, or anti-revolutionary when mass murders are used to defend the prevailing social order against its opponents.

The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, passed by the UN General Assembly in 1948 as Resolution 260A/III, defines in its Art. II genocide as 'the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group as such: (i) killing members of the group; (ii) causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (iii) deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; (iv) imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; (v) forcibly transferring children of the group to another group'.

This legal definition has two important aspects; to qualify as a genocide, murderous policy does not need to be total and not even physically violent by its nature if it is directed at a 'national, ethnic, racial, or religious group'. This has been observed by David Rieff (1996:33): 'A genocide could take place even when it was employed partially, as a method of weakening rather than murdering all the members of a people'. Somewhat stronger criteria are suggested by Helen Fein in her research definition: 'Genocide is sustained purposeful action by a perpetrator to physically destroy a collectivity directly or indirectly, through interdiction of the biological and social reproduction of group members, sustained regardless of the surrender or lack of threat offered by the victim' (Fein 1990:23-5; for a somewhat different formulation, see Fein 1993:818).

A common feature in these legal and research definitions is that the distinctiveness of genocides is attributed to the intentional and persistent nature of genocidal policies by the perpetrators whose actions are not accidental and haphazard (Chalk 1994:53-6). The ways of the legal UN definition and research definitions are, however, parted in one important respect; the former excludes the destruction of political and social classes from the definition of genocide, while Fein seems to include them. The stance for the inclusion of social classes in the definition is adopted even more explicitly by Frank Chalk who strongly argues that: 'Genocide is a form of one-sided mass killing in which a state or other authority intends to destroy a group, as that group and membership in it are defined by the perpetrator' (Chalk 1994:49-53).

The reasons for excluding political murders from the legal definition of genocide are, not surprisingly, political. In the aftermath of the World War II especially Russia was unwilling to accept political criteria in the definition because that would have criminalized Stalin's purges of the ideological 'enemies' of the Bolshevik regime. Strict adherence to the UN definition to genocide leads, however, to both empirically and ethically untenable conclusions as exemplified by the case of Cambodia.

In 1975-77 the Khmer Rouge regime, headed by Pol Pot, killed close to one-fifth of Cambodia's population of eight million people. Inhabitants of Phnom Penh and other urban centres were evacuated to the countryside where most killings took place. The victims of the government included ethnic minorities, such as the Chinese, Vietnamese and Islamic Chams, and religious groups, especially Buddhist monks, but most of them were fellow Khmers. To conclude that the Cambodian tragedy was not a genocide because of its primarily ideological nature would be either the worst kind of academic hair-splitting or political whitewash to justify a particular brand of Communism by the Pol Pot regime or the support of Western powers to it (Kiernan 1994 and 1996).

There appears to be a growing consensus that the systematic elimination of political opponents ('politicides' as opposed to 'ethnicides') must be included in the definition of genocide. However, as genocide refers to 'one-sided' destruction or weakening of the target group, it excludes interstate wars. This is not due to the less devastating nature of interstate wars, because by this criterion both the strategic bombings of Dresden and Tokyo and the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were certainly genocidal.

The main reason for excluding interstate war from the definition of a genocide is that war is not necessarily illegal unless it is an act of aggression or the laws of warfare are violated.

The literature on genocides contains extensive efforts to define and categorize genocides (e.g. Harff and Gurr 1987:360-3; Charny 1994:74-81). This is not the place to discuss these categories in any detail, but only to pay attention to two crucial interrelated issues; (i) should genocidal policies rely on the use of physical violence; and (ii) what is the relationship of internal war to genocide? Genocides do not necessarily need to result from the use of physical force, but individuals and communities may also perish, for example, owing to ecological destruction (Charny 1994:65-6) or their identities may be shattered by a cultural genocide.

To qualify as a genocide, the policies of perpetrators must be intentional, however. In 1958-61 perhaps 30 million rural Chinese perished in the Great Leap Famine which resulted from the introduction of agricultural production brigades as the basis of the rural economy. The failure of this ideological experiment was obvious from its very early stages, but the Communist leadership continued it in spite of the tragic consequences. Does the Great Leap Famine qualify as a genocide? It appears that, contrary to Stalin's policy in the interwar years, the primary intention of Mao Zedong and other Chinese leaders was not to kill rural people, but try an ideological solution to the problem of agricultural productivity despite its huge costs (Yang 1996). Thus, the Great Leap Famine was not a genocide, but a massive humanitarian emergency caused by misdirected, unresponsive, and authoritarian public policies of the Chinese Communist Party.

In other words, the number of people killed cannot be the sole defining criterion of a genocide, although it is an important measure of human destruction. In postwar years genocides (or politicides, ethnicides, and democides) claimed, according to some estimates, up to 2.6 times the number of lives lost in natural disasters and as many victims as all organized warfare in the world (Harff and Gurr 1987:370; Fein 1993:796-7). Fein identifies 19 cases of genocides from the end of World War II to the late 1980s. For our purposes, her list includes some relevant recent cases, such as Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, and Ethiopia (Fein 1990:87). A more extensive list of politicides, using the number of episodes rather than countries as the unit of analysis, contains as many as 44 cases. On this list Afghanistan, El Salvador, Sri Lanka, and Ethiopia are cases especially pertinent to the present study (Harff and Gurr 1987:364-5).

These examples suggest that genocides/politicides are almost always associated with civil wars. Such wars should, however, be kept separate from genocides. In wars killing is not necessarily the most central and certainly not the only objective. On the other hand, genocides intend systematically to annihilate an ethnic, religious, linguistic, and/or political group which is perceived as an obstacle to the policies of the perpetrator.

Military force is almost invariably used to achieve this goal, but it can also be pursued by destroying the target group's living environment, communal structure, and/or cultural identity. Often such actions are used to reinforce the impact of repressive military

policies. Thus, while the number of victims matters in the definition of a genocide, its intensity must also be assessed by its success in eliminating political, ethnic, and cultural diversity in the society.

According to the conventional wisdom, the 20th century has witnessed three true genocides; the massacre of the Armenians by the Turks in 1915, the Holocaust during World War II, and the extermination of Tutsis in Rwanda in 1994. On the other hand, this operational choice of genocides has been criticized as too formalistic and restrictive (Rieff 1996:35). Especially in the case of the Holocaust, the debate has persisted on whether it was a unique occurrence rather than just one of the several genocides (Fein 1990:51-5).

If absolute and relative criteria are combined, the Holocaust can be considered unique; after all it killed six million people and two-thirds of European Jewry. In comparison, one may observe that Stalin's politics of starvation in the interwar era killed 'only' 20 per cent of the Ukrainians. It may also be suggested that the intentional and systematic character of gassing Jews to death makes it different from other genocides. On the other hand, the Turkish destruction of Armenians, the mass murder of Khmers by Pol Pot's government, and the Hutu killings of Tutsis in Rwanda were also clearly intentional. Together with the Holocaust, they are also genocides, but they may belong to a different category. In the Holocaust the killing of Jews was 'industrialized' to the degree which no other genocide has been.

A less restrictive definition of genocide has been adopted by Barbara Harff and Ted Robert Gurr who add 'politicides' and 'group repression' to their list. In a recent contribution they list for the postwar period seven genocides and 45 politicides. The genocides include two episodes from the Soviet Union and Uganda each and one from Cambodia, China, and Rwanda. In addition, politicides have since the beginning of the 1980s occurred in Afghanistan, Bosnia, Burundi, Iraq, Iran, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Myanmar, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Zaire (Harff and Gurr 1995).

The conclusion from the above discussion appears to be that an intentional genocide, driven by ideology and state interests, is necessarily also a humanitarian emergency because of its huge death toll and other costs. A humanitarian emergency is, however, a broader concept as it also covers unintentional crises caused, for instance, by famines and epidemics (though they have, as argued below, economic and political aspects as well). In fact, the list of politicides by Harff and Gurr seems to cover most cases which are conventionally considered humanitarian crises. To illuminate this issue further, I will discuss below in a more detailed way the role of collective violence in humanitarian crises.

## **2.2 Wars**

The nature and extent of warfare in recent international relations have been mapped by a number of scholars. Peter Wallensteen and his associates have focused, in addition to wars, also on minor and intermediate armed conflicts. In their definition, to qualify as a

war, a conflict must have produced a minimum of one thousand battle-related deaths during a particular year. Minor conflicts result in less than 1000 battle-related deaths during the course of the conflict, while intermediate conflicts produce more than a total of 1000, but less than 1000 battle-related deaths in a particular year (a minimum of 25 deaths must be recorded, though).

According to Wallensteen, there were altogether 19 full-fledged wars in both 1989 and 1990, 20 wars both in 1991 and 1992, 14 wars in 1993, but only seven wars in 1994 and six in 1995. The following military confrontations in 1988-95 qualify as wars during at least two of the years: Afghanistan, Algeria, Azerbaijan, Angola, Bosnia, Colombia, El Salvador, Ethiopia (Eritrea and Tigray), India (Kashmir and Punjab), Lebanon, Liberia, Mozambique, Peru, the Philippines, Rwanda, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Turkey, and Uganda. In general, wars were most frequent in Africa and Asia, totalling, respectively, 13 and 15 in 1994 and 9 and 13 in 1995 (Wallensteen and Sollenberg 1995 and 1996).

In Wallensteen's statistics, the total annual number of conflicts, including also intermediate and minor wars, varied between 42 and 51 in 1989-94 and reached the lowest figure of 34 in 1995. Another data set, using rather liberal criteria of war, estimated that in 1993 there were altogether 60 wars and armed conflicts underway. Most of these wars were internal by their nature, propelled either by the struggle for governmental power, secession, or autonomy (Gantzel and Schlichte 1994). Wallensteen and Sollenberg (1996:354) observe that since the 1980s very few wars have been fought between states and also external interventions into internal conflicts have been rare.

Thus, today's predominant type of military encounter is a civil war. It has to be recognized, though, that civil wars can vary greatly by their nature and have, therefore, quite different humanitarian consequences. Civil wars are usually interpreted as expressions of ethnic hatred or secessionist projects, but they may also have historical baggage; for instance, when violence occurs between precolonial status groups or manifests the efforts of the central government to subjugate the remnants of precolonial empires. Especially in Africa these historical roots of internal conflicts have been often underestimated (Howard 1996).

The conclusion on the prevalence of civil wars may, however, underestimate the true extent of interstate elements in armed conflicts. In reality, India and Pakistan are clashing over Kashmir, India has played a role in the Sri Lankan conflict, Armenia and Azerbaijan are at war over Nagorno Karabakh, Iraq has been divided by external powers, Israel and Syria are heavily involved in Lebanon, and ECOMOG's peacekeepers, mostly Nigerians, are a party to the Liberian civil war. Moreover, and perhaps most importantly, wars in the former Yugoslavia have been waged between internationally recognized states.

These examples show that external powers have recently intervened in several armed conflicts. During the Cold War, interventions were mostly carried out by major powers, but with its abatement the pattern of intervention has changed. It reflects now more the international efforts to promote domestic stability by collective rather than unilateral

national interventions. Recent evidence also flies in the face of Nye's suggestion that regional balance-of-power conflicts, especially those initiated by Iraq, Iran, and North Korea, are the foremost threat to international stability (Nye 1995:14-6). Such assertions define selected 'rogue states' as the most serious security threat and overlook the risk emanating from the domestic economic and political failures. One reason for this misplaced emphasis is that 'outlaw states' are easier to deal with traditional policy means than chaotic internal conditions whose effective management requires new visions, coalitions, and tools.

In sum, wars may tell more about the humanitarian emergencies than the focus on genocides. It should be kept in mind, however, that in many armed conflicts the number of deaths is relatively small and dispersed over time. Thus, present wars manifest protracted low-level violence, with occasional peaks, rather than a sudden and decisive use of military force. This does not mean, though, that the humanitarian costs of wars are necessarily small. On the contrary, protracted warfare tends to subject civilian populations to continuing suffering and increase the risks of malnutrition, disease, and displacement. An empirical study of Africa shows that military conflicts distorted agricultural policies and had a negative effect on food security by destroying crops, decreasing the acreage harvested, and damaging distribution systems (Cheatham 1994).

An important definitional problem is whether the concept of a humanitarian emergency requires that the rate of its destruction must accelerate and pass a certain threshold before it qualifies as a crisis or should drawn-out disasters, whose negative consequences accumulate only over a period of time, be also included in the analysis. Rather than taking a stand in favour of one approach or another, I adopt them both by making a distinction between accelerated and protracted humanitarian crises. Emergencies seldom come as a bolt out of the blue, but require a long gestation period and escalate only after certain triggering conditions transform a latent conflict into an emergency. In a study exploring the root causes of emergencies, the analysis of their accumulation process is particularly pertinent as economic and other structural factors have critical effects only over a long term.

Another critical question is whether the number of deaths is an adequate criterion of a humanitarian emergency. Especially protracted, accumulating crises may result, in a given period, in relatively few deaths from warfare or starvation. Various coping strategies can also keep the manifest costs of an impending disaster in check, even though its risk keeps growing (on different strategies, see Blaikie, Cannon, Davis and Wisner 1994:61-9). This calls for efforts to develop a rather broad set of indicators to define a humanitarian emergency. In no case is the number of battle-related deaths alone an adequate measure of the seriousness of a humanitarian crisis. For instance, it may overlook civilian casualties whose number is usually many times higher than those dying in the battles.

In addition, the nation state is not always the most appropriate unit of analysis; instead, a territorial or dispersed minority group or a regional entity may be a more valid unit in gauging the extent and intensity of a crisis. The focus on a nation state also too easily overlooks endemic urban violence which is not organized as war, but can still be very

devastating. In this context one may refer to such unruly cities as Karachi, Lagos, and Sao Paulo, but also to the Greater Chicago area where each year more than a thousand people are killed; yet it is not formally defined as a war zone.

To take an example of urban violence; 'the Battle of Karachi', as it was called by *The Economist*, claimed in 1995 at least 2,100 lives. They were lost because of the widespread crime, political clashes, and tensions between urban dwellers and rural masses in Karachi. The strong concentration of landownership, the rapid population growth (4.3 per cent in 1985), and poverty in the countryside are all pushing rural masses to cities, especially Karachi, where they confront different ethnic and social groups, often by means of violence (*The Economist* 1996a; Gizewski and Homer-Dixon 1996:27-9).

The focus on battle casualties also neglects other significant dimensions of crises in assessing the extent of human suffering. Not every victim dies of physical violence, disease, or starvation associated with an emergency. There are also less drastic, but often prolonged forms of suffering as people end up becoming refugees, are internally displaced, and experience hunger, economic misery, and environmental degradation. In other words, humanitarian emergencies cannot be operationalized by any single criterion. Rather the criteria should consider the totality of suffering, in particular when it exceeds a certain threshold, by vulnerable people. Wars are an important but not the only element in human misery.

Warfare can be seen both as an aspect and a cause of humanitarian emergencies. Wars produce massive economic dislocation and social fragmentation which disrupt the living conditions of people and thus increase their suffering. The negative effects of protracted, low-level warfare, especially in the countryside, are often less visible, but no less real. Applying a comparative, counter-factual analysis of recent wars in East Timor, Iraq, Kashmir, Mozambique, Peru, Sudan, and the former Yugoslavia, a detailed study found that their avoidance would have saved considerable social and economic costs and permitted a quicker and more balanced development of countries concerned (Cranna 1994).

However, causality can also work the other way around; i.e., non-military crises can propel war and other violence. A deepening economic crisis may create volatile social situations in which new possibilities for acquiring political power by means of manipulation and coercion are opened up. This results, in turn, in a more skewed distribution of power which permits aggressive internal and external policies and deprives people of constructive means to defend their interests. Moreover, the economic slump contributes to unemployment and creates, as happened in the former Yugoslavia, a pool of idle men which can be recruited as soldiers (Woodward 1995:365).

Such a simple model can be elaborated by assuming that there is a third set of factors, especially power struggles, which can cause both socio-economic and military aspects of emergencies. Thus, the struggle for political and economic power can foster discrimination in the distribution of food supplies and the use of force to enforce the inequities (or to resist them). The control of resources becomes, then, pivotal and more

of a goal than an tool. Control can be pursued by military and other coercive means of influence which, in turn, increase starvation, disease, and displacement. Frequent are the cases, especially in Africa, in which governments have promoted their political interests by deliberately omitting to deliver food to those in need, destroying food and its production, or providing food only to politically obedient groups (Macrae and Zwi 1994:10-20; Keen 1994a:212-3; Cheatham 1994:234-9).

This line of argument has important implications for the study of humanitarian emergencies. They may not be caused by the spread of diseases or the lack of food as such, but by more fundamental struggles for the exercise of power and control of resources in society. The escalation of the social and political crisis into open violence erodes food security and health services, but also exacerbates political power struggles resulting in privileges for the few on the one hand and discrimination and marginalization of the many on the other. The depth of the crises in Nigeria and Zaire, for instance, cannot be comprehended fully without considering the misuse of public resources for private gain by the Abacha and Mobutu regimes, respectively.

A simple model of humanitarian emergencies suggests that the absolute or relative scarcity of resources defines the intensity of competition for them. This rivalry is, however, shaped by the distribution of political power and institutional arrangements within society. The theory of entitlements, as developed by Amartya Sen (1981), provides one approach to grasp the causes of humanitarian emergencies. It suggests that individuals have material assets and social claims which define their access to food and other basic needs. If the entitlement fails, people will start suffering from hunger, disease, violence, and other aspects of humanitarian crises.

As will be discussed below, Sen's theory has been criticized for its under-appreciation of the social nature of these crises. It does not expect the state to be repressive and deliberately marginalizing people, but considers famines and other ills to be results of institutional failures. Marginalization is not produced, however, by the forces of nature, but is a result of deliberate policies. Marginalized groups usually share two traits; they are disadvantaged and distinguished by some features from the rest of the society. In general, one can argue that an emergency first hits the marginalized groups either because they are intrinsically more vulnerable to disasters or specifically targeted to suffer.

The exposure of marginalized groups may be due to the absolute poverty in the society's margins where people enjoy very few entitlements to the means of survival. Marginalization has, however, several faces. It may be that while a group is stigmatized socially and politically, it still enjoys economic advantages which may be derived from the marginality itself. Marginalized groups are, as a rule, minorities in the society, including indigenous people and labour migrants, but they may also be the majority (as shown by the traditional marginalization of majority Hutus in Burundi and Rwanda). To work, marginalization usually requires that the groups in that position are not only economically discriminated and politically oppressed, but that their ethnic, religious, or linguistic distinctiveness is overemphasized by the powers-that-be (Nolutshungu 1996:17-23).

### III COMPLEX HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCIES

#### 3.1 Human security and politics

In exploring humanitarian crises one must make a clear distinction between their root causes, triggers, and manifestations. This section deals with the manifestations of emergencies (which may, however, occasionally trigger each other). Physical violence expressed in war and repression is only one, albeit an important manifestation of humanitarian crises. Therefore, it has to be complemented by other defining characteristics. The resulting multidimensionality of the concept leads us to speak of complex humanitarian emergencies. In addition to multidimensionality, complexity refers also to the political nature and persistence of the crisis. Economic, political, and military aspects of the emergency are entangled and coercive means are used to pursue private interests. The growing complexity of the crisis also makes its resolution more difficult.

This approach is taken further by those who stress that humanitarian crises are not accidental, but intentionally created to permit the transfer of assets from the weak to the strong. Different forms of low-level military violence is used to strengthen one's own power base and undermine that of the other side. The supply of and access to food, health services and humanitarian assistance becomes an instrument of local power politics rather than a right or an act of charity. Crises become highly politicized and protracted and develop their own structures of power. Therefore, complex emergencies usually occur in areas suffering from a drawn-out economic crisis, social vulnerability, non-conventional warfare, and contested governance (Macrae and Zwi 1994; Duffield 1994).

The focus on complex emergencies emphasizes the multiplicity of threats to human security. 'Human security' provides both a conceptual and normative point of departure for the present analysis; death and suffering produced also by factors other than weapons, such as malnourishment, epidemics, and environmental disasters. Indeed, we need a broad definition of human security as the exclusive reference to deaths and their causes leaves out several socially important forms of suffering. In the UNDP definition, human security can be threatened on several dimensions: economic well-being, availability of food and health services, quality of environment, personal and community identity, and political security (UNDP 1994:24-33).

The expansion of the scope of the security concept beyond survival and physical threats is rooted in the liberal tradition in which the freedom of individual from fear and want has been also regarded as a collective good serving the best interests of the community (Rothschild 1995:60-5). The liberal tradition may overlook, however, some important aspects of human security, such as social equity and cultural identity. It may also overemphasize political and military threats to individual security. In reality, security

threats can be also economic, environmental, and cultural by nature. People can also be defended against these risks by a variety of instruments (Chen 1995:137-40).

Emergencies are often caused by natural calamities, such as earthquakes, droughts, floods, and hurricanes which produce extensive damage. In 1967-91 such disasters caused three million deaths (60 per cent of them in Africa) of which 1.3 million were caused by droughts, 0.8 million by cyclones, and 0.6 million by earthquakes. As pointed out above, the number of natural disasters is rather constant. Therefore, the increasing number disasters and their victims must be due to the growing vulnerability of human communities, caused especially by the rapid population growth and land degradation in the sensitive areas (UNDP 1994:29; see also IFRC 1994; and Blaikie, Cannon, Davis and Wisner 1994:32-43).

In other words, natural causes of calamities can function as triggers which catalyze a socio-economic emergency which may have been silently in the making for quite some time. On the other hand social and economic mal-development can increase natural risks of disasters because of, for example, climate changes and soil erosion. Thus, man-made disasters are often mediated through environmental changes and result from the failure of either development strategies, of state structures, or deliberate policies of destruction. Economic and political failures can, in turn, be exacerbated by natural disasters revealing the lack of responsiveness of the power holders and their inability to take care of reconstruction and resettlement. They may even enrich themselves at the expense of the victims of disaster. This happened in Nicaragua in 1972 and Armenia in 1988 in which botched responses to devastating earthquakes and the needs of their victims revealed the failure of the Somoza regime and the Soviet perestroika, respectively.

It is symptomatic that a detailed inventory of problems in the planning and implementation of disaster relief programs does not even mention government incompetence and corruption (Cuny 1983:149-63). In general, the assessment of successes and failures in the post-disaster programs of reconstruction and resettlement has relied on project characteristics and local conditions (Oliver-Smith 1991). They should be complemented, however, by a broader approach which takes into account also the national political and economic power structures and interests embedded in them. A more realistic understanding is reflected in a list of twelve principles to guide the management of recovery from disaster in which at least three of them deal with the politics of money and power; i.e. 'beware commercial exploitation', 'recognize disasters as political events', and 'avoid rebuilding injustice' (Blaikie, Cannon, Davis and Wisner 1994:204-13).

In the previous discussion I have stressed two fundamental characteristics of a humanitarian emergency; marginalization and interdependence. Threats emanating from the interaction of nature and human action are made worse by the polarization of society and the marginalization of its members. Those pushed to the socio-economic and environmental margins of society are the first ones to suffer from the emergency. Marginalized groups are seldom isolated from the rest of the society.

On the contrary, these groups have been 'actually fully integrated into society as the reserve army of the unemployed and rural producers of cheap food. The condition of marginality results not from the action of the marginal group itself but from the interdependent relationship that the group has with other classes and interest groups in society' (Susman, O'Keefe and Wisner 1983:277-8). This observation is consistent with recent research on poverty in which the interdependence of the worlds of the poor and the non-poor is increasingly recognized. Poverty in society may create threats to the privileged, but it is also functional as poor people perform menial and itinerant jobs, purchase low-quality goods and services which the rich would not use, and inhabit environmentally degraded areas. At the same time these two worlds are kept socially, politically, and physically as far apart as possible (Øyen 1996:11-3). The marginalized groups also develop their own political relationship with the state.

It can be suggested that the social marginalization results both from cultural differences (e.g. the Roma people) and from the progress of global capitalism which both trigger uneven economic development and needs marginal people as cheap producers. The Great Potato Famine in Ireland in 1845-48 provides telling evidence of such forces producing a massive humanitarian emergency. Ireland, as a peripheral colony, was forced to develop a one-sided economy serving the British interests which lacked responsiveness to Irish needs. The development of capitalism in Ireland depended on the conservation of the subsistence sector to support the majority of the population. The matters were made worse by overpopulation and unfair land ownership. When the potato blight hit, the social conditions in Ireland were ripe for a major humanitarian disaster (Regan 1983).

In general, one has to stress the need to study in a humanitarian crisis how the relations between those suffering and those prospering are organized and how far apart their social and physical worlds are. This emphasis shifts the focus of research somewhat; the root causes of emergencies are not seen only in the internal and external economic, political, and environmental conditions, but also in the relationships between different actors in a crisis-ridden community. The humanitarian crisis, its nature and seriousness, is structured by the strategies pursued by these actors and their mutual interactions in a context in which various vital assets become scarce and even unavailable.

In sum, the above discussion suggests that there is a real need to broaden the concept of humanitarian emergency. In addition to the casualties of direct physical violence, i.e. people killed in wars and other collective acts of violence, one has to consider as aspects of humanitarian crises the victimology of famine and disease as well as the number of externally and internally displaced people. This line of thinking leads to a revised Four Horsemen Theory of humanitarian emergencies (this imagery has been also used by Green 1994). According to the original concept, the Apocalypse results from the riding of Death, War, Pestilence, and Famine (Rev 6:2-8). In the revised concept, War, Pestilence, and Famine are complemented by Displacement as a source of death and suffering.

In addition, one may suggest that the violation of human rights is an important aspect of humanitarian emergencies. This concerns the violation of both political and socio-

economic rights of the people in disaster zones. Human-rights criteria can be even used to operationalize an emergency by defining country-specific minimum thresholds for the realization of social and economic rights (Eide 1989). If these minimum standards are not met, a humanitarian crisis can be said to exist. This approach may not work in practice, however. Economic and social rights and obligations concerning them are quite vague and do not necessarily yield any clear criteria. In fact, they are even more difficult to specify than political rights. Moreover, human rights are almost inevitably violated in an emergency in which people lose their homes, livelihood, and even lives. Therefore, it would be more appropriate to think that human rights are embedded in the each of the four specific aspects of humanitarian emergencies rather than constitute an independent dimension of suffering.

The four specific aspects of humanitarian crises (viz. warfare, disease, hunger, and refugeeism) obviously interact with each other. For example, both wars and hunger displace people giving, in turn, rise to new waves of violence. Furthermore, displacement easily fuels discontentment and violence and results in undernourishment, especially if international responses are inadequate. Hunger and disease are probably more closely linked than any other two aspects of a humanitarian crisis.

Deaths provide only a partial measure of the intensity of the humanitarian crises. At a minimum, one has to consider also those physically and psychically wounded by violence, paralysed by disease, and undernourished by the inadequate supply of food, i.e. those suffering without dying. Against this backdrop, a humanitarian emergency can be defined as *a profound social crisis in which a large number of people die and suffer from war, disease, hunger, and displacement owing to man-made and natural disasters, while some others may benefit from it.*

The emphasis on the aspects or manifestations of humanitarian emergencies leads to specify indicators by which they can be operationalized. These measures tap primarily the consequences of emergencies, not their causes, although their mutual interaction can mean that the an effect may trigger others and thus deteriorate the crisis further. Especially violence may worsen the situation as it adds to social disruption and political instability, undermines economic activities, spreads hunger and disease, and fuels refugee flows.

In other words, violence has a more instrumental and catalytic role in humanitarian crises than its other aspects. It also tends to amplify the cyclical and uneven nature of emergencies. This is so partly because violence is a means of political struggles for social control and material gain; goals which social groups do not give up even in an emergency. Violence also weakens the foundations of successful strategies to cope with and eliminate the adverse humanitarian consequences of emergencies, thus making the road from poverty to destitution much shorter (de Waal 1990:487-8).

## 3.2 War casualties

To tally the number of casualties in civil wars is an extremely difficult task. Figures have been inflated, and deflated, by the propaganda machines of the warring parties and their external supporters. Thus, for instance, the estimates of the lives lost in Bosnia vary anywhere between 25,000 and 250,000. George Kenney, who estimates 25,000 to 60,000 deaths for military and civilians on all sides, argues that the high figure came directly from the Bosnian government and was uncritically accepted by the international media (Kenney 1996). Another relevant example concerns the casualty estimates in the Chechyan war. According to standard estimates, 30-40,000 people have died in 21 months of war. On the other hand, Aleksandr Lebed has suggested that as many as 80,000 people have been killed and 240,000 wounded; an estimate which various independent agencies tend to confirm (Gordon 1996).

Of course, not all disagreements in casualty estimates are due to propaganda, but there are also genuine differences due to the use of contested criteria. A major question is whether only battle deaths should be counted or whether victims should also include people, civilians and military alike, killed by concentration camps, hunger, and disease in which the cause of death is always somewhat difficult to determine.

The construction of any precise statistics is further complicated by the time frame adopted. Some humanitarian emergencies have been sudden, brief eruptions of violence and hunger. More often the crises are, however, protracted and phases of different intensity have followed each other. One solution is to provide the casualty figures for the entire postwar period (this has been done by *State of World Conflict Report...* 1995). This approach is not applicable in the present project, however, as we are primarily interested in recent humanitarian crises, especially those which have erupted or peaked after 1985, and their future prospects.

The figures of the war casualties given above indicate the total number of people dying in the peak year during the period 1992-94. The Table contains twenty-two most murderous countries in that period which, at the same time, establishes the minimum threshold of 2000 deaths.

As can be seen from the following table, the extent of the human toll caused by the warfare varies immensely, from a few thousand to half a million deaths. The validity of this list seems to be acceptable. If it is compared with the definition of wars in 1992-94 by Wallenstein and Sollenberg (1996), we find that all other cases except for Burundi, Liberia, Croatia, Tajikistan, and Iraq are listed also by them as wars (moreover, their casualty figures for at least Burundi and Croatia are definitely too low). On the other hand, Wallenstein and Sollenberg disagree with the Red Cross also on the Philippines which they classify as a war in 1992 but the Red Cross does not.

TABLE 1  
NUMBER OF WAR CASUALTIES IN 1992-94

	Number	The worst year
Rwanda	200-500,000	1994
Angola	100,000	1994
Burundi	100,000	1993
Mozambique	100,000	1992
Liberia	20- 50,000	1993
Bosnia	10- 30,000	1992
Croatia	10,000	1992
Afghanistan	6,000	1992
Sudan	6,000	1993
Somalia	6,000	1993
India (*)	5,500	1992
Tajikistan	4- 30,000	1992
Sri Lanka	4,000	1993
Turkey	4,000	1993
Columbia	3,500	1992
Peru	3,100	1992
South Africa	3-4,500	1993
Georgia	2,000	1992
Azerbaijan/Armenia	2-7,000	1993
Algeria	2-3,000	1993
Iraq	2,000	1993
Guatemala	2,000	1993

Source: IFRC (1994:111, Table 16)

Note: \* The figures for India include only Kashmir and Punjab.

Some of the wars have accelerated quickly and resulted in mass killings in relatively short periods of time. If the tripling of the casualties from the previous year is used as the criterion of accelerated wars, the following countries qualify in the 1992-94 period: Angola (1994), Azerbaijan/Armenia (1993), Bosnia (1992), Burundi (1993), Croatia (1992), Liberia (1993), Mozambique (1992), Rwanda (1994), and Tajikistan (1992). Other wars have been protracted military crises either at a higher (Afghanistan, Algeria, Somalia, Sudan, and Turkey) or lower level of casualties (Colombia, Georgia, Guatemala, Iraq, Peru, South Africa, Sri Lanka, and the local crises in India).

### 3.3 Diseases

Communicable diseases continue to afflict people of the world. In 1993 altogether 16.5 million people died of such diseases, officially accounting for 32 per cent of global mortality. The most deadly diseases are respiratory infections (4.1 million deaths), diarrhoea (3 million), tuberculosis (2.7 million), malaria (2.5 million), and measles (1.2 million). Respiratory infections and diarrhoea kill especially young children, usually those under five. In addition, Aids killed 0.7 million people in 1993 and its death toll is

expected to rise to 1.8 million by the end of this decade. Some 60 per cent of about 24 million HIV infected people live in Africa (especially Zimbabwe and Botswana) and many of the rest in Asia (especially Thailand and Myanmar).

The health situation is complicated by the fact that some of the diseases which were thought to have been eradicated or significantly decreased have either returned (smallpox), spread to new areas (cholera and yellow fever), or developed drug-resistant varieties (pneumonia, malaria, and gonorrhoea). Entirely new diseases have emerged (hepatitis C and D, and ebola and other haemorrhagic fevers). In addition to the people dying from these and other diseases each year, many others are sick, having either no chance to recover (e.g. malaria) or being terminally ill (e.g. tuberculosis and Aids). Infectious diseases are caused, facilitated, and disseminated by degrading environment (e.g. lack of clean water), the growth of population and its density, increased contacts between people across distances as well as warfare within and between countries (Platt 1996a and 1996b; WHO 1996).

WHO makes available detailed statistics on the number of cases for various infectious diseases; Aids, tuberculosis, malaria, polio, measles, and neonatal tetanus (WHO 1995: 109-12; and WHO 1996:127-30). These figures are, however, difficult to use in the operationalization of a humanitarian emergency. For instance, one cannot know whether and when a disease leads to death. Of course, it is possible to argue that the number of disease cases is a better measure of the seriousness of an emergency than the number of deaths. In both cases, however, problems of measurement remain; the numbers of people suffering and dying from various diseases cannot be meaningfully added up to provide a combined indicator of the disease component of humanitarian crises. A potential solution to this dilemma is to use disability-adjusted life years (DALYs), which weighs disabilities by their severity, as the indicator (World Bank 1993:213-5).

These problems can be partly circumvented by finding one or more surrogate indicators that measure the deadliness of humanitarian emergencies. One possibility is to use life expectancy at birth, infant mortality (either at birth or under five years of age) as such indicators (Dasgupta 1993a:84-8). A more comprehensive measure is the death rate standardized by age and sex as it indicates in a simple and direct way the rate of death in a given year instead of more long-term measures of life expectancy. In the end, the choice between these indicators may not matter all that much as they usually correlate strongly with each other.

A major problem with all these measures is that they probably gauge more the general level of poverty than an acute humanitarian crisis. Thus, measured by death rate criteria, the real humanitarian emergency is the deep-seated poverty which kills sometimes early, sometimes slowly through malnourishment and disease (possibly exacerbated by warfare). This silent, continuing emergency is most serious and widespread in the Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, followed by the Middle East and North Africa (Dasgupta 1993b:78-81).

A pivotal feature of a humanitarian emergency is that the level and intensity of suffering by the people departs significantly and suddenly from the prevailing standard. Such a

departure alone is not, however, sufficient reason for calling the situation an emergency. If the crisis happens, for one reason or another, in a society where disease and malnutrition are rare, then the society may well be able to cope with it. Therefore, the disease and hunger components of the emergency must consider both the level of destitution and the rate of deterioration in the humanitarian conditions.

Humanitarian emergencies hit most strongly the youngest and the eldest. For example, of 52 million deaths in 1995, 11 million were children under five. In Africa, their share of deaths was 40 per cent. Globally, child mortality has been declining (from 134 per 1000 live births in 1970 to 80 in 1995), but the differences between developed and developing countries remain stark. In the North, the child mortality rate was 8.5 in 1995, but in the South 90.6 (WHO 1996:13-4). In the following analysis, data on child mortality under the age of five is used to indicate the health component of humanitarian crises. One of its advantages is that it is technically largely independent of the data on war casualties (Table 1).

Table 1 in Appendix 2 lists contains information for 1992 and 1995 for those countries with the highest under-five mortality rates in the world. The following Table considers the relative level of child mortality and its rate of change from 1992 to 1995. These data make it possible to construct a four-fold table to illustrate different dimensions of the health crisis as an element of humanitarian emergencies.

TABLE 2  
THE SEVERITY AND CHANGES IN CHILD MORTALITY IN THE TWENTY MOST SEVERELY  
AFFECTED COUNTRIES, 1992-95

Change	Severity	
	Extreme (174-251 per 1000)	High (145-171 per 1000)
Favourable	Niger, Angola, Mozambique, Chad, Ethiopia	Rwanda, Liberia, Eritrea, Bangladesh, Burundi, Mauritania
Unfavourable	Afghanistan, Sierra Leone, Malawi, Guinea-Bissau, Burkina Faso, Mali	Gabon, Benin, Senegal, Yemen, Central African Republic, Lao DPR

Source: WHO (1995:101-4) and (1996:123-6).

An important feature in this Table is that child mortality has decreased in many of the countries most severely plagued by it. The biggest decreases were recorded for Niger (-41.2 per cent), Mozambique (-37.6 per cent), Angola (-37.0 per cent), Liberia (-28.5 per cent), and Eritrea (-27.9 per cent). On the other hand, lowest decreases were observable in Sierra Leone (-1.2 per cent), Afghanistan (-2.3 per cent), and Malawi (-4.8 per cent). In some countries the situation became worse over the three year period; Burkina Faso (+26.0 per cent), Bangladesh (+16.5 per cent), Senegal (+10.3 per cent), Benin (+9.5 per cent), Gabon (+8.2 per cent), and Lao DPR (+2.1 per cent).

As the Table shows, the situation is particularly bad in Afghanistan, Sierra Leone, Malawi, Guinea-Bissau, Burkina Faso, and Mali. In these countries child mortality is among the highest in the world and shows no or very little signs of improvement. The situation continues to be bad also in Niger, Angola, Mozambique, Chad, and Ethiopia.

There seems to be a correlation here; except for Niger, all these countries are recovering from a devastating civil war which means, among other things, decrease in child mortality. On the other hand, civil war in Afghanistan continues, while peace in Sierra Leone is tenuous at best.

If the sudden deterioration in the health situation is considered a sign of a humanitarian emergency, Afghanistan and Sierra Leone, together with four other African countries, deserve special attention. If attention is also paid to somewhat less serious but deteriorating cases of child mortality, the situation seems to be worsening so quickly in Kenya and Zimbabwe that a humanitarian early-warning should be issued. In neither of these two nor in the four other African countries (Malawi, Guinea-Bissau, Burkina Faso, and Mali) is the primary cause of deteriorating high child mortality civil war.

In general, one can note that among the countries listed in Table 2, seven are listed in the war statistics of Table 1, while four others have recently, and three others in a more distant past experienced civil war. This leaves twelve countries in which child mortality is high in spite of the fact that they have not suffered from major outbreaks of violence. Clearly, warfare is not the only cause of the health crisis, as expressed by child mortality, in the developing world.

### **3.4 Hunger**

Hunger afflicts most parts of the world today; under- and malnutrition are everyday phenomena (Uvin 1994:63-73). This is, however, seldom due to the absolute scarcity of food. To the contrary, in the postwar years, food production has been growing in most developing countries more rapidly than their population and even more quickly than production in developed countries, either today or historically (Uvin 1994:41-5). The dualist pattern of development is again in evidence and poses a puzzle for the study of humanitarian emergencies in which starvation is a major curse.

To operationalize hunger, it can be misleading to tap its extent by using countries as units of analysis. Starvation as a socio-economic problem is anchored in the internal structure of societies. On the other hand, in comparative statistical descriptions there is often no other alternative than to utilize national averages of, say, calorie or protein intake. Analytically, one has constantly to keep in mind that food crises are, in the first place, distributional conflicts. It is a 'societal crisis induced by the dissolution of accustomed availability of, and access to, staple foods on a scale sufficient to cause starvation among a significant number of individuals' (Watts 1983:13).

In other words, famines are not primarily caused by natural conditions, such as drought, but rather they are a trigger in a sequence of events leading to a subsistence crisis. In this sequence, the gradual impoverishment and thus the increasing vulnerability of people are probably the most critical elements. When a food crisis comes, it tests critically the structural ability of the affected communities to cope with its consequences. The importance of social and political processes in famine for its evolution and outcomes

has been stressed in case studies on, for instance, Northern Nigeria and Southern Sudan (Watts 1983; Keen 1994a).

Human costs of famine depend on the prevailing social structures, the position of actors in them, and the strategies they are pursuing. As has been pointed out above, famines are not only due to economic and institutional failures, but they may also be deliberately imposed by the power holders on an opposed group of people. David Keen's analysis of the Sudanese famine in 1988 shows how various exploitative strategies, such as raiding of food and restrictions on coping activities, converged to produce a crisis which was further accentuated by the inadequacy of relief. Keen points out that the government's use of food as a weapon was 'a cheap counterinsurgency tactic' which also benefited economically Sudan's power elites and their supporters, such as merchants and other middlemen (Keen 1994b:112-4; Keen 1994a:6-7, 213-5).

Starvation often leads to death, but it does not necessarily have a one-to-one relationship with mortality. If famine is socially produced, it can be stopped before the death toll becomes massive. For political purposes it may be enough to weaken the economic basis and social structure of the community by limiting its access to food and coping strategies. If starvation leads to death, it does not need to do it directly. There are also indirect links as famine mortality can be due more to the 'disease environment' than to starvation itself (on the connections between hunger and mortality among children, see WHO 1995:6-8; World Bank 1993:75-82). The disease environment in effect defines the standard rate of mortality which can be exacerbated by disruptions in the health care systems and epidemics spreading among the physically weakening population (de Waal 1990:478-83).

Redefining the link between famine and mortality raises the question of whether deaths due to starvation are a proper measure of the intensity of a hunger crisis in a humanitarian emergency. Amrita Rangasami in particular has argued that mortality is only a biological culmination of the starvation process and, therefore, an inadequate measure of the intensity of the hunger crisis. He even concludes that 'mortality is not a necessary condition of famine' (Rangasami 1985:1748). He distinguishes between three phases of a famine process, i.e. 'dearth', 'famishment', and 'morbidity'. These phases tap the movement of the crisis from the scarcity of valued goods to starvation and, ultimately, to death. In Rangasami's view, 'famishment' rather than 'morbidity' reflects the real face of a starvation crisis in which the distribution of benefits and losses is skewed. For this reason, there are both winners and losers in a famine (Rangasami 1985:1749-50).

The conceptualization of a hunger crisis as a phased process in which intermediary stages are more important than finally the death of a victim is consistent with my earlier discussion on the role of violence in humanitarian emergencies. Thus, the disposal of productive assets, such as livestock and land, may be a better indicator of a humanitarian crisis than the distress and death of the people affected (Watts 1991:17-20). This perspective leads us back to the earlier assertion that the command of power and resources is the ultimate determinant of a humanitarian crisis as reflected in the distribution of hunger and disease, displacement, and the use of force.

If the thesis on the centrality of politics is accepted, then 'we need to re-define famine and identify the various factors, political, social, psychological and economic, that operate to keep large classes in the population under continuous pressure' (Rangasami 1985:1800). It also becomes necessary to discuss and assess the rules and institutions that regulate the access to and use of productive resources in a society (Curtis, Hubbard and Shepherd 1988:196-214). Famine is nothing less than an ultimate test, especially in rural areas, on how the society operates and who benefits from it. In this respect it makes sense to consider 'disaster as an extension of everyday life' (Susman, O'Keefe and Wisner 1983:263).

In the Philippines, 70 per cent of the rural inhabitants have an inadequate diet; two-thirds of them are landless or sharecroppers, while the landowning elite controls the economy and politics of the country (Cohen 1995:22-3). In Pakistan the situation is similar; the majority of people live in poverty and hunger whereas 500 families capture land, forests, and other resources at the expense of environmental deterioration – and dominate politics (Gizewski and Homer-Dixon 1996:12-9). These connections are too obvious to escape attention.

Since 1970 the amount of hunger has significantly decreased in the Asia-Pacific region and the Middle East, while it continues to plague Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. In Africa 23 million Southern and Eastern Africans depend on emergency food for their survival and 37 per cent of the continent's population is undernourished. In South Asia especially children suffer from chronic undernutrition; the growth of more than one-half of the children is stunted. In Latin America hunger and malnutrition are on the decline, but the positive trend was stopped in the 1980s as a result of the austerity policies (for a more detailed analysis, see Uvin *et al.* 1995). These facts reflect the situation in which improved methods to predict famine have not resulted in parallel improvements in its prevention. Early-warning information 'cannot slice through the web of conflicting interests which surround the allocation of famine relief' (Davies 1993).

Hunger is almost always caused by poverty and exacerbated by other adverse conditions such as warfare and ethnic discrimination. It has been severe in many war zones, such as Bosnia, Rwanda, and especially Somalia where the 1992 famine was a direct result of fighting in the south. The Somalian famine was made worse both by men (warlords) and nature (poor rainfall). Mohammed Farah Aideed and his militia, controlling the famine zone, benefited handsomely from this position of power. In effect, Aideed's turn against the international intervention in 1993 can be explained by its effort to reduce his political and military status and break warlordism in the country by fostering national reconciliation through tribal elders (for an account of the politics of the Somalian crisis, see Hirsch and Oakley 1995).

Today, Somalia continues to be politically divided and unpredictable, but the clan system and the carving of territorial spheres of influence between warlords create enough stability for a 'wild-frontier economy' to function. This has improved the living conditions of people, though many of them are still in desperate position. According to one observer, 'Somalia has made a remarkable, if uneven, economic comeback since

those desperate days. Harvests have been plentiful, hunger has been banished, and trade is brisk in the towns and cities (Finnegan 1995:64).

The need to supply food to Africa and elsewhere has prompted extensive international relief operations. They have been often protected by military means and have sometimes even become part and parcel of the conflict pattern. Humanitarian operations have no doubt helped suffering people, but they have also benefited state treasuries, food speculators, and those political groups who have been able to control the distribution of food and even levy taxes on the organizations delivering aid. It is clear that emergency assistance should be geared to benefit the weak, but in reality it has often failed in this task and has ended up serving the interests of the strong (Duffield 1994:60-4; Adams and Bradbury 1995).

It is well-known that humanitarian support to the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia and the Rwandan Hutu refugees in Zaire has helped to prolong rather than solve the local political and military crisis. More generally, it can be argued that in a famine crisis the intervention by states or international organizations often comes too late. Then it may become a part of the problem rather than a part of the solution leading to a 'relief failure' (Keen 1991; Rangasami 1985:1797-8). Lasting solutions to food crises, and to humanitarian emergencies in general, can be only achieved by empowering the likely victims and ensuring their right to food by practical reforms (Cohen 1995:30-4).

There are major difficulties in measuring the prevalence and distribution of hunger, and there is no single measure to meet different criteria. One possible indicator is the percentage of children under five suffering from underweight. Especially if related to a person's height, it measures in a rather direct way her/his nutritional status (Dasgupta 1993b:82-7). Underweight and stunted growth of children have, in turn, an impact on well-being and physical productivity in adult age, for example because deficient nutrition limits maximal oxygen intake (Dasgupta 1993a:94-5). Thus, hunger has major economic costs in society which are, however, difficult to estimate in any precise manner.

Table 2 in Appendix 2 contains information on the percentage of children under five who were underweight in 1975 and 1990. Data show how serious a problem hunger is in many developing countries, especially in South Asia and Africa, but also in selected countries of South West and South East Asia. A silent emergency reigns in these regions, keeping more than a hundred million children undernourished. Hunger is also a permanent phenomenon; only two countries out of the twenty-five would have been replaced in 1975 by others not listed in Appendix 2 for 1990. Those dropped from the list are Congo (from 43 to 28 per cent) and Botswana (37 to 27 per cent).

Some countries, for example, Indonesia, Central African Republic, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, still badly plagued by child hunger, have, however, made major progress during the fifteen years from 1975 to 1990. This concerns especially Indonesia, Central African Republic, Vietnam, and Sri Lanka. On the other hand in some other countries, the situation has grown much worse over the same period of time. An early warning should

be issued on worsening nutritional status of children especially in Afghanistan, Angola, Madagascar, and Myanmar.

Data on the nutritional status of children and its changes in the twenty-five most afflicted countries from 1975 to 1990 are summarized in the following Table (for the basic data, see Appendix 2):

TABLE 3  
HUNGER: SHARE OF UNDERWEIGHT CHILDREN OF ALL CHILDREN UNDER FIVE  
(PER CENT)

Change	Severity	
	Extreme (40-66)	High (32-39)
Favourable	Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Niger, Vietnam, Sri Lank, Somalia, Indonesia	Cambodia, Lao DPR, Philippines, Myanmar, Central African Republic, Rwanda
Unfavourable	Mozambique, Pakistan, Ethiopia, Afghanistan, Iran	Madagascar, Papua New Guinea, Nigeria, Angola, Sudan, Zaire

Source: UNDP (1994:134-5) and 1995 (162-3).

Hunger is no doubt an important aspect of underdevelopment. However, there necessarily is no one-to-one relationship between them. There are countries where per capita income is among the lowest in the world, but still hunger is not particularly prevalent; e.g., Benin, Gambia, Kenya, Senegal, Tanzania, and Togo. On the other hand, there are economically better-off countries, especially in Asia, where children suffer from a serious hunger problem. These countries include at least Iran, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka.

These two groups can be contrasted in different ways. First, it may be suggested that in African countries, development has been more egalitarian, while at least in some Asian countries, deep economic gaps account for the prevalence of hunger. Second, in the first group of countries, none have been recently involved in wars, while all three countries performing badly in relative terms have been involved in either internal or external wars. In general, one can note that seven countries among those most afflicted by child hunger have been also devastated by serious wars: Afghanistan, Angola, Mozambique, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan, and Rwanda (cf. Table 1). If the time span is extended back to 1975, also Cambodia, Ethiopia, Iran, and perhaps Myanmar should be added to the list of war-torn countries.

While there is a positive correlation between child mortality and underweight, these indicators appear to tap somewhat different aspects of underdevelopment. Ten countries appear in the 1990s on both lists indicating the prevalence of both disease and hunger; Afghanistan, Angola, Bangladesh, Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Lao DPR, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, and Somalia. Severe internal war appears to be one of their main common denominators. On the other hand, Central African Republic, Niger, and Lao DPR are humanitarian basket cases even if they have not in recent years suffered from major political instability.

In none of the South Asian countries plagued by child hunger is the child mortality nearly as bad as in many African countries. This creates a certain paradox; in South Asia children suffer from hunger but do not die as quickly as African children. One explanation for this difference may be a different disease environment on these two continents.

### **3.5 External and internal displacement**

Since the 1970s the number of external and internal refugees in the world has been almost constantly on the increase, suggesting the deterioration of human conditions. Refugee populations in excess of 10,000 people can be found in more than 70 countries, mostly in Africa and Asia, but increasingly also in Europe. The total number of refugees grew from 17 million in 1991 through 23 million in 1993 to 27 million in 1995 of whom 14.5 million have crossed an international border as a refugee. In addition, the UNHCR dealt in 1995 with 5.4 million internally displaced people (IDPs). The rest of the refugees have either returned to their home countries or are not formally recognized as refugees (UNHCR 1995:19-20).

The dualism of our age is reflected again in the fact that while the refugee problem is getting worse, there are also signs of improvement in many countries; Cambodia, Namibia, South Africa, Uganda, and Zimbabwe, to mention some examples (World Refugee Survey 1996:10-3). On the other hand, the refugee problem has spread to new areas, especially in the Balkans, the Transcaucasus, and Central Asia. It is clear that the pattern of refugee flows is associated with local wars uprooting people who cannot return before a modicum of stability has been restored in the country (Kane 1995:18-25).

The regionalization of crises in the South has had a less often noted effect; the leading countries of asylum are not the industrialized countries, but neighbouring developing countries. In 1995, the biggest refugee populations were in Iran (2.07 million), Zaire (1.33 million), Jordan (1.29 million), Pakistan (0.87 million), Tanzania (0.70 million), Gaza (0.69 million), and Guinea (0.64 million). Only after them came Germany with 0.44 million refugees and asylum seekers. All in all, in 1995 Africa had 5.22 million, Middle East 5.49, and Europe 2.52 million refugees (World Refugee Survey 1996:4-5). It is clear that large refugee populations, even if they are receiving international assistance, are straining the resources and societies of developing countries some of which, such as Zaire, are themselves suffering from deep humanitarian crises.

The increasing number of refugees is a part of the larger trend of greater human mobility in the world. Due to the population explosion in the South and the economic attractiveness of the industrial centres, immigration flows to North America, the European Union, and Japan have been rising, thus exposing them to new tensions and vulnerabilities (Kennedy 1993:41-4 et passim). In addition, there are pockets in the world economy, such as the oil producers in the Persian Gulf and Singapore, which are dependent on imported labour. Economic immigrants, whether permanent settlers or

temporary migrant labour, play often an important economic role in the target societies and remit significant amounts of money back to their home countries (for an overview, see UNFPA 1993:16-20).

In fact, it can be argued that both the growing flows of refugees and migrant labour reflect the restructuring of the world economy which is resulting in the globalization of migration. The push and pull of immigration derives, in part, from the changing dynamics of the global economy (Castles and Miller 1993; Pellerin 1993). On the other hand, refugees are victims of warfare and political repression in their home countries. It is not unheard of that political and economic motivations to emigrate are intermingled. In many developing countries, such as China, there is mass movement of people from the rural areas to cities. The ensuing rapid rate of urbanization may become, because of overcrowding and tensions between different social backgrounds and traditions, a source of future instability (on China, see Kane 1995:37-41).

As shown before, the number of major military conflicts has been rather stable throughout the 1990s and even decreased in 1995. Yet, the number of refugees is on the increase. What explains this discrepancy? One possible explanation is that present wars are almost invariably internal by their nature and therefore, affect practically every inhabitant of the country concerned. Therefore, when fighting spreads and intensifies, there may not be any other alternative than to leave the country; Afghanistan, Liberia, Rwanda, and Somalia are obvious examples of societies where pressures to flee have been conspicuous. The problem of internal war is compounded by the increasing number of state failures which lead, among other things, to the collapse of the public order that is supposed to protect the people.

People are displaced by fighting as they escape from the war zones, but increasingly displacement and its specific forms, such as ethnic cleansing, have also become an explicit strategic objective of parties waging war. People are pushed out from their homes to make a region more homogenous in ethnic or religious terms, and to consolidate the political and economic power of the wartime leaders. In addition to the former Yugoslavia, ethnic cleansing has been a strong feature of political and military operations in different parts of the Transcaucasus (UNHCR 1995:22-6).

In Abkhazia, ethnic Georgians have been effectively cleansed by the Abkhazians who have been militarily supported by Russia. In 1992-94, 350,000 of Abkhazia's original 540,000 inhabitants were displaced by the secessionist war. More than 80 per cent of the displaced were ethnic Georgians (Mooney 1996). With the progress in political talks between Georgia and Abkhazia, the return of refugees has started and by June 1995 anywhere between 40,000 and 100,000 refugees had returned. The return of refugees in Georgia seems to have been more successful than in Bosnia and Croatia where the resistance of the Croatian government and the Bosnian Serbs to the return continues to be a major obstacle to the consolidation of peace. In absolute terms, in 1995 the largest voluntary repatriations of refugees took place to Afghanistan (245,000 people), Rwanda (240,000 people), and Mozambique (106,000 people) (World Refugee Survey 1996:7, 129-38, 145-6).

International statistics on the number of refugees, both in terms of exiles and the internally displaced, are characterized by surprising paucity and unreliability. The number of refugees who have obtained legal asylum status in the host country are relatively well known owing to the national and international procedures to record the refugee flows. However, the number of refugees in key receiving developing countries, such as Iran and Zaire, is never known exactly. This remark applies both to the total number of refugees and their distribution by the countries of origin; the UNHRC even provides data on that distribution (UNHRC 1996 ).

TABLE 4  
REFUGEES AND INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE IN 1995

	Refugees	IDPs	Total	Share
Afghanistan	2,328,000	500,000	2,828,000	14.1
Bosnia	906,000	1,300,000	2,206,000	63.0
Sudan	448,000	1,700,000	2,148,000	7.6
Rwanda	1,545,000	500,000	2,045,000	25.7
Turkey	15,000	2,000,000	2,015,000	3.3
Angola	313,000	1,500,000	1,813,000	16.4
Liberia	725,000	1,000,000	1,725,000	56.7
Iraq	623,000	1,000,000	1,623,000	8.0
Sierra Leone	363,000	1,000,000	1,363,000	30.2
Sri Lanka	96,000	1,000,000	1,096,000	6.0
Azerbaijan	390,000	670,000	1,060,000	14.0
Myanmar	160,000	750,000	910,000	2.0
Somalia	480,000	300,000	780,000	8.4
Ethiopia	500,000	111,000	611,000	1.1
Colombia	-	600,000	600,000	1.7
Mozambique	97,000	500,000	597,000	3.7
Eritrea	325,000	200,000	525,000	14.9
South Africa	10,000	500,000	510,000	1.2
Burundi	290,000	216,000	506,000	7.9
Peru	-	480,000	480,000	2.0
Tajikistan	174,000	300,000	474,000	7.8
Croatia	200,000	225,000	425,000	9.6
Lebanon	-	400,000	400,000	13.2
Armenia	200,000	185,000	385,000	10.7
Georgia	105,000	280,000	385,000	7.1

Sources: World Refugee Survey 1996, Tables 3 and 4. These data have been supplemented by information from IFRC (1994: Tables 12 and 14) and UNHRC (1996). The population figures for 1995 have been obtained from WHO (1996, Table A1).

The discrepancies of data are even bigger in the case of internally displaced people. For instance, the UNHRC estimates that in 1995 there was a total of 320,000 IDPs in Liberia, 200,000 in Sri Lanka, and 185,000 in Afghanistan (UNHRC 1996:21). The corresponding figures given by the World Refugee Survey (1996:6) for 1995 are 1,000,000 IDPs in Liberia, 850,000 in Sri Lanka, and 500,000 in Afghanistan. In the

following statistical summary, I have used systematically the figures of the World Refugee Survey which cover the refugee situation in a more comprehensive way than any other source. In a few cases I have had to supplement its data by information from other sources.

Table 4 gives an idea which countries have had to send out most refugees and accommodate internally displaced people. It does not contain the Palestinian refugees in the West Bank, Gaza, and other places, even though it is by far the biggest and most persistent refugee problem in the world (3.3 million refugees in 1995). The reason is merely technical; we have not had data available for the Palestinians on other aspects of the humanitarian emergencies as they have been collected for states. In the table, the absolute number of refugees and internally displaced people is related to the size of the population in the countries of origin.

The Table shows vividly how big problems refugeeism and internal displacement are for the most affected countries.

In terms of these two forms of displacement, the profiles of countries differ somewhat. In relative terms, refugeeism as external displacement is a more serious problem for countries like Afghanistan, Rwanda, Somalia, and Ethiopia. This has, in turn, added pressures on their neighbouring countries, especially Iran and Zaire, receiving refugees. On the other hand, measured by sheer numbers, most countries suffer much more from internal displacement. This crisis is especially visible in several African countries, but also in Turkey, Bosnia, Iraq, and Sri Lanka. Internal displacement marginalizes people economically and politically and makes them dependent on humanitarian relief (for a detailed analysis, see Deng 1993).

The spread of internal displacement points to the centrality of domestic strife in today's conflict map. The spill-over potential of internal conflict and displacement creates several problems. The neighbouring countries may start taking stronger measures than hitherto to keep out unwanted refugees unless there are especially strong ethnic, religious, or political ties to justify a more liberal policy. One reason for the increasing caution is that a significant number of refugees can become a 'fifth column' and thus a destabilizing force in the host country. Recent efforts by the Zairean government to oust Hutu refugees back to Rwanda are an example of this problematique.

Often the predicament of internally displaced people can be alleviated only by an external humanitarian operation. Such an operation helps refugees to survive, but it seldom solves the problems that caused displacement in the first place. While the motives of a humanitarian operation may be benevolent, it raises difficult problems of sovereignty whose respect requires the consent of the target government, provided there is one (Griffiths, Levine and Weller 1995).

Table 4 shows that the absolute size and the relative impact of the twin crises of refugeeism, and internal displacement are not the same thing. In relative terms the most seriously affected countries are Bosnia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, Eritrea, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Lebanon, and Armenia. In Lebanon the situation is improving,

however; during the worst time of the civil war more than a third of its population had left the country. Of these relatively most affected countries, Bosnia, Rwanda, Liberia, and Sierra Leone have also produced a great absolute number of refugees.

By using the figures in Table 4 one can develop a typology based on the absolute number of displaced people on the one hand and their relative share of the population on the other. One has to keep in mind, of course, that concepts like 'low' and 'internal' are defined in reference to other cases in the sample and not to countries outside it. The countries are also classified on the basis of whether displacement is primarily an internal problem or due to the relative weight of external refugees.

TABLE 5  
DIMENSIONS OF THE DISPLACEMENT PROBLEM  
IN HUMANITARIAN CRISES

Relative burden		Overall displacement	
		High	Low
High	External	Afghanistan, Bosnia, Rwanda, Liberia, Azerbaijan	Somalia, Eritrea, Croatia, Armenia
	Internal	Angola, Sierra Leone	Lebanon
Low	External	---	Ethiopia, Burundi, Tajikistan
	Internal	Sudan, Turkey, Iraq, Sri Lanka, Myanmar	Colombia, Mozambique, South Africa, Peru, Georgia

A rather clear-cut statistical pattern emerges from the table. Countries which are burdened by a relatively strong displacement crisis tend to push their people abroad, while the countries with a relatively lower burden displace them internally. Only six countries out of the total 25 deviate from this pattern. One possible explanation of this tendency is based on the size of the total population and its density. As all countries in the Table suffer from a serious refugee crisis, it is obvious that the smaller the population, the heavier the relative burden imposed by the displacement problem on the society. On the other hand, the relative impact of displacement tends to be smaller in countries of larger population which can, then, handle the refugee problem internally, while smaller countries burdened by refugees have to push them abroad.

Another relevant factor appears to be that in more intense crises of displacement, also the fighting seems to be (or has been) more sustained (e.g. Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Somalia) or sudden and ferocious (Bosnia, Croatia, and Rwanda). In such sudden or sustained military crises, a relatively large share of the population can try to escape to safety abroad. Of the deviant cases, Burundi and Tajikistan are close to this pattern as the relative burden of their displacement crises was near the statistical average.

On the other hand, internal crises in more populous countries seem to be more connected with internal repression and guerrilla wars against the government (Colombia, Iraq, Myanmar, Peru, Sudan, Turkey, and South Africa), more likely leading to internal displacement than refugeeism. The deviant case of Georgia can be explained by the fact that most of the affected people were displaced from Abkhazia to Georgia proper when the movement happened technically within one country. In Mozambique, the end of the civil war had resulted in the return of a significant number of external refugees (106,000 in 1995 alone) who, in fact, added to internal displacement in a country in which internal reconstruction had not yet made much progress.

The number of refugees has in many countries been relatively constant or decreasing in the 1990s. The following countries have, however, experienced major upsurges in outward refugee flows, i.e. the number has at least tripled in comparison to the previous two years; Burundi (1993), Eritrea (1993), Iraq (1992), Myanmar (1992), Rwanda (1994), and Sierra Leone (1991). On the other hand, Azerbaijan (1992-93), Bosnia (1992), Croatia (1991), Myanmar (1991), Somalia (1991-92), and Tajikistan (1992) seem to have suffered from sudden and extensive problems of internal displacement (*World Disaster Report 1995*:107, 109).

## IV THE OPERATIONALIZATION OF HUMANITARIAN CRISES

### 4.1 The selection of cases

There is no simple way of selecting cases for the study of humanitarian emergencies. One of the basic choices concerns the unit of analysis. Most statistical data are available for states, while in many cases a subnational community or a regional crisis complex could be a more appropriate unit as the fault lines of crises do not often follow state boundaries. Thus, Ted Robert Gurr has in his studies used a minority rather than a state as the main unit of analysis (e.g. Gurr 1993; the emphasis on endangered minorities permeates also the report on 'State of the Peoples 1993').

The choice of unit has implications, among other things, for the preference to be accorded to absolute and relative measures of suffering. The choice of state as the primary unit of analysis tends to favour absolute measures, while relative measures would better tap the intensity of a humanitarian crisis among minorities and other subnational communities. This is not only due to the bigger demographic size of states, but also to politics; in a crisis minorities and other communities are often persecuted *in toto* while from the state perspective, only categories of people, such as members of a political party or of an ethnic community, are subject to repression.

Depending on the criteria for inclusion, the number of recent emergencies can vary from a few dozen to a few hundred. The number of victims of emergencies can be operationalized either by the number of killed, injured, displaced, or otherwise affected by the crisis. My effort to define and operationalize humanitarian emergencies continues to use the state as the main unit of analysis (without denying the relevance and even better validity of subnational communities and regional complexes as units of analysis). The reason for this choice is one of convenience; reliable data are more easily available for states than any other units.

While the extent and intensity of humanitarian crises can be depicted by a number of factors, I will continue to rely on a modernized 'four horsemen' theory of history. Following it, the humanitarian crises are operationalized by four present scourges of humankind; war, disease, hunger, and refugees. These elements of a crisis are operationalized by the number of casualties killed in violence, the mortality of children under five, the share of underweight children under five as well as the total number of external and internal refugees.

The emphasis on the state of children (their mortality and hunger) is justified by the fact that the depth of a crisis in society can be best revealed by looking at its weakest members. Their condition has, especially in the case of children, also a long-term impact on the development of society. In the operationalization of humanitarian crises, I will pay less attention to the absolute amounts of suffering than to its relative weight in society and, occasionally, the rate of sudden change.

It is prudent to recognize that the four variables used in the operationalization of a humanitarian emergency are not statistically independent of each other. Especially war and displacement are linked to each other by a variety of mechanisms, as are also hunger and mortality. Their relationships are not one-to-one, however. As the aim is not to carry out any sophisticated statistical analyses, these correlations are not a problem, but rather to provide building blocks for the operational effort. In fact, gaps in data do not justify the use of sophisticated techniques. Instead, the aim is to find patterns and categories of humanitarian emergencies that provide bases for case studies and generalizations.

Violence and poverty are interlinked in today's world in multitude of ways. Yet, poverty as such seldom leads to violence over a short term, but fosters instead misery and apathy. In other words, poverty is seldom a source of change. On the other hand, violence can break out even in relatively affluent societies if other factors, such as social fragmentation, identity conflicts, and economic decline, push them to the brink of war. Warfare contributes to poverty and, by redistributing power and property, also exacerbates it. However, war is not the main reason for poverty in the world.

From these vantage points one can expect that there are three main types of humanitarian crises in today's world:

- i) *violent humanitarian crises* in which suffering results from the large number of people killed in wars and the external and internal displacement of people;
- ii) *poverty crises* in which the extensive human suffering is due to hunger and disease; and
- iii) *complex humanitarian crises* in which violence, displacement, and poverty are combined to produce an entrenched social crisis.

In this effort at operationalization, I am most interested in complex humanitarian emergencies. Due to the limitations of data, a strict ranking order of these emergencies on the basis of their severity would be an artificial exercise. Instead, I will distinguish strong and weak cases of complex emergencies. The strong cases include those countries whose people have experienced deep suffering on all four dimensions of humanitarian crises. The weak cases of complex emergencies include those countries in which people have been severely plagued by war and refugeeism, which have a high mutual correlation, either by hunger or disease.

In assessing the seriousness of crises, I have used the data presented elsewhere in this paper to gauge warfare, disease, hunger, and displacement in humanitarian crises. The intensity of war and displacement are measured by absolute figures, while disease and hunger are tapped by relative measures. Table 6 provides a summary telling whether a country has ranked among the most suffering countries on a particular dimension. Thus, the Table does not say that there is no hunger in Burundi or no war in Myanmar. It simply states that there are several more severe cases of hunger and war in the world. This effort resulted in the following topology of complex humanitarian emergencies (they are ranked in the approximate order of seriousness):

TABLE 6  
A TYPOLOGY OF COMPLEX HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCIES IN 1993-95

	War	Disease	Hunger	Displacement	Type
Afghanistan	x	x	x	x	Strong
Mozambique	x	x	x	x	Strong
Angola	x	x	x	x	Strong
Somalia	x	x	x	x	Strong
Rwanda	x	x	x	x	Strong
Liberia	x	x		x	Partial
Burundi	x	x		x	Partial
Sri Lanka	x	x		x	Partial
Sierra Leone	x	x		x	Partial
Sudan	x		x	x	Partial
Ethiopia		x	x	x	Partial
Eritrea*		x	x	x	Partial
Myanmar		x	x	x	Partial

Source: Compiled by the author.

Note: \* The share of underweight children (hunger) was unavailable for Eritrea. It was estimated to be the same as in Ethiopia.

All these humanitarian crises have been serious as they have witnessed at least three of the four scourges, i.e. war, disease, hunger, and displacement. The difference between 'strong' and 'partial' humanitarian crises is that the former have witnessed all four crises simultaneously. The most common combinations of 'partial' cases involve either war, disease, and displacement, or disease, hunger, and displacement (with recent war experiences in Ethiopia and Eritrea, and a close-to-war situation in Myanmar).

In fact, the experience of famine seems to be only differentiating factor between the 'strong' and 'partial' cases of complex humanitarian emergencies placing Liberia, Burundi, Sri Lanka, and Sierra Leone in the 'partial' category. In effect, Ethiopia could equally well have labelled a 'strong' case of a complex emergency as extensive human suffering continues there (IFRCS 1994:85-91).

Complex humanitarian emergencies are characterized by the simultaneous appearance of war, displacement, and disease, and in the most serious cases also by hunger. In *simple humanitarian emergencies* only two of these problems have appeared as detailed in Table 7.

As has been pointed out below, hunger and disease have given rise to a silent crisis in many developing countries. By relaxing the criteria somewhat, several African countries, such as Burkina Faso, Guinea-Bissau, Malawi, and Zaire could have been added to the list of poverty crises. It seems to me, though, that although impoverishment and its devastating human costs are very serious, they should not be discussed primarily in terms of a humanitarian emergencies, which should refer to the acute deepest,

multidimensional, and politicized crises in society. Therefore, I am inclined to exclude poverty crises from the definition of humanitarian emergencies.

TABLE 7  
SIMPLE HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCIES IN 1993-95

	War	Disease	Hunger	Displacement	Type
Bosnia	x			x	Violence
Croatia	x			x	Violence
Tajikistan	x			x	Violence
Colombia	x			x	Violence
Azerbaijan	x			x	Violence
Armenia	x			x	Violence
Georgia	x			x	Violence
Iraq	x			x	Violence
Niger		x	x		Poverty
Nigeria		x	x		Poverty
Bangladesh		x	x		Poverty
Lao DPR		x	x		Poverty
Bangladesh		x	x		Poverty
Central African Republic		x	x		Poverty
India	x		x		Mixed

Source: Compiled by the author.

It seems that intense physical violence, although not a necessary condition for a humanitarian emergency, is present in almost all of them (or has devastated the country in a recent past like in Ethiopia and Eritrea). Violence comes, however, in different forms; therefore, a threshold has to be established to decide when it has been intense enough to spark off displacement and other adverse consequences. This threshold should rely more on relative than on absolute measures of casualties as large countries usually experience more absolute violence than small countries. On the basis of this reasoning, I am inclined to exclude Colombia, Peru, South Africa, and Turkey from the list of simple violent emergencies. This decision is further justified by the fact that in none of them have people suffered from such large-scale disease and hunger than in the most destitute countries of the world.

The statistical exercise and qualitative judgement carried out above leads to an operational definition of humanitarian crises which include five 'strong' cases of 'complex' emergencies (Afghanistan, Mozambique, Angola, Somalia, and Rwanda), eight 'partial' cases (Liberia, Rwanda, Sudan, Burundi, Sri Lanka, Sierra Leone, Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Myanmar), and seven 'simple' cases (Bosnia, Croatia, Tajikistan, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, and Iraq). In these crises of the 1990s, Afghanistan, Mozambique, Angola, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sierra Leone, Ethiopia, and Eritrea have been rather permanent, while in others there has been an upsurge in violence and suffering in 1991-92, and in the cases of Burundi and Rwanda in 1993-94.

As has been repeatedly pointed out above, any statistical exercise to identify the most serious humanitarian crises is plagued with problems of measurement and conceptual ambiguities. Therefore, one should make an effort to validate the list developed above. For this purpose, I will compare my own operationalization with a list of countries identified by the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) as the most serious humanitarian emergencies requiring urgent international attention (CIA 1996). This list can be summarized by focusing on two factors; the total number of persons and the share of the total population at risk:

TABLE 8  
COMPLEX HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCIES IN 1996

	Persons at risk (million)	Share of population at risk (per cent)
Afghanistan	4.0	19
Sudan	4.0	13
Iraq	< 4.0	<19
Ethiopia	< 4.0	< 7
Bosnia	3.7	90
Angola	2.5	25
Rwanda	2.5	29
Sierra Leone	1.8	38
Haiti	< 1.3	<20
Liberia	1.5	49
Eritrea	1.0	28
Georgia	1.0	17
Tajikistan	1.0	16
Somalia	1.0	14
Azerbaijan	1.0	12
Sri Lanka	0.9	5
Burundi	0.8	13
Croatia	0.5	10
Armenia	0.4	10
Mozambique	0.4	2
Chechnya (Russia)	0.3	27
Cambodia	0.3	3

Source: Complex Humanitarian Emergencies 1996.

The CIA considers Afghanistan, Burundi, and Sierra Leone to be the most intense emergency conflicts. Chechnya, Rwanda, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan, and Tajikistan are classified as simmering emergencies. Other cases are divided between the following categories of conflicts: government repression in rogue states, cease-fires, political settlement being implemented, and post-crisis mop-up. These concepts suggest that the identification of emergencies has been at least partly politically motivated. Moreover, the report does not provide much information on how the background information has been collected and evaluated.

The list strongly resembles my list of emergencies. In fact, every case of humanitarian crisis in my operationalization, except for Myanmar, is listed also by the CIA. It regards, however, also Haiti, Cambodia, Chechnya, and North Korea, for which it does not provide any data, as complex humanitarian emergencies. By my criteria, hunger and disease in Haiti are not nearly as bad as in many African and Asian countries, neither does it suffer from a civil war or major refugee problem. Cambodia would almost qualify as a poverty crisis and could be considered even a complex emergency had not the civil war been stopped by international efforts and its problems with displaced people largely solved. Chechnya qualifies as a local violent emergency in terms of the number of casualties and refugees, but it will be analysed in a larger regional, Transcaucasian context.

## **4.2 The regional dimension**

Both international cooperation and conflicts tend to become regionalized when intraregional linkages are stronger than connections with the external world. Thus, regionalism is founded on both common interests and common aversions. States are bound together both by gains derived from mutual exchange and threats due to the potential escalation of hostilities either between governments or because of their spread from an internal conflict to other countries and interstate relations.

Barry Buzan suggests that a regional security complex exists 'where a set of security relationships stands out from the general background by virtue of its relatively strong, inward-looking character, and the relative weakness of its outward security interactions with its neighbours' (Buzan 1991:193). In a similar way one may talk of regional humanitarian crises. This means that a given crisis cannot be analysed solely in a national context, but one must consider its linkages with the humanitarian conditions in neighbouring countries.

In fact, it can be argued that practically every humanitarian emergency has a strong regional outlook without which they are difficult to comprehend. Therefore, the emergencies have to be contextualized in space and time. The regional context can influence the actor's propensity to a humanitarian crisis in two principal ways; a specific region is exposed either to the same adverse ecological or economic conditions or destabilizing economic and political influences spill over the borders.

Obviously an ecological or economic crisis can also engender mass movements of people and political instabilities that have effects across the borders. Such effects can, in turn, be based either on vertical or horizontal dynamics. If there is a leading power in the region, its economic and political problems are likely to spill over vertically, top down, to its smaller neighbours. If the countries of a region are of relatively equal size, then the spill-over dynamics is more horizontal by its nature.

As mentioned, natural conditions, such as droughts and floods, have often a strong regional dimension. The Great Plains in the United States in the 1930s, the Sahel in the 1970s and Southern Africa in the early 1990s are examples of disaster zones due to

drought. The effects of floods and coastal storms are seldom restricted to one country, but tend to have adverse humanitarian consequences in a larger area. The looming crisis over water cannot be limited to individual countries, but conflicts over its supply and quality concern, for instance, aquifers and rivers stretching across national boundaries. Finally, worldwide environmental problems, such as the depletion of the ozone layer or global warming, affect individual regions quite differently (for a more detailed discussion, see Myers 1993).

Regional ecological risks can be studied systematically by identifying environmentally risky regions. Roger E. Kasperson and others have stated that 'criticality denotes a state of both environmental degradation and associated socio-economic deterioration... Critical region denotes an area that has reached such a state of interactive deterioration'. The *criticality* of a region is anchored in nature-society relationships which can be defined on the basis of how natural and social systems exposed to ecological pressures and their resilience can withstand these changes. Depending on the criticality of this relationship, the result may be either environmental endangerment (short-term crisis), impoverishment (long-term crisis), or, in the positive case, sustainability. Amazonia, the Basin of Mexico, and the Aral Sea provide examples of environmentally critical cross-border regions (Kasperson *et al.* 1995). Obviously, the more critical a given environmental region, the higher the risk of a humanitarian crisis there.

Another mechanism by which humanitarian emergencies tend to become regionalized is the dissemination of influences and the construction of policy linkages across borders. If there is a dominant economic power in the region, its negative or slow economic growth will have repercussions in neighbouring countries. The demand of their products may decline, the instability of currencies can be contagious, and unemployment may create pressures to emigrate. While development in the centres of the world economy is usually more crucial for the periphery, one should not underestimate the adverse consequences of a regional economic crisis. For instance, economic problems in Nigeria, South Africa, or India will have immediate negative consequences for the ECOWAS, the SADC, or the SARC region, respectively. The regional dissemination of economic woes will, in turn, increase the prospects for a deepening humanitarian crisis.

Ethnic, religious, and political ties create transborder identities and coalitions which defy the formal borders of states. These transnational coalitions can challenge governments in one or more countries, while they may, in turn, coalesce against the sub- and transnational communities demanding secession or greater autonomy. The nation of 24 million Kurds, though afflicted by internal political conflicts, especially between Kurdistan Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, form a transnational coalition which is integrated in a complex way with the politics of the region.

The Patriotic Union cooperates with Iran, while the Democratic Union seeks support from Iraq. In September 1996, Iraq intervened into the protected zone to drive out Iran and to strengthen the position of the Democratic Party. The United States, which has closer relations with the Patriotic Union, responded with cruise missile strikes against targets in southern Iraq. All governments in the region suppress their own Kurdish populations, but support them in other countries. Thus, Syria, for instance, denies its

Kurds any rights, but supports them in Turkey in operations against the Ankara government. The regional role of Kurds, shaped by their own factional conflicts, boils down to their manipulation by one regional capital against another (Bozarslan 1996:108-11).

Also the complex relations between the Hutu and Tutsi communities in Burundi and Rwanda, and now also in exile in Tanzania and Zaire, could be used to illustrate the regional complexities of humanitarian crises. In the province of North Kivu, eastern Zaire, the relations between the local Hutus and Tutsis were relatively peaceful until 1993. Since then, tensions in neighbouring Rwanda have spilled over and have been further aggravated by the exodus of one million Hutus to Goma and other refugee camps in Zaire. In North Kivu, 50,000 people, mostly Tutsi, have been killed and 300,000 made homeless during the last couple of years. The Hutu militias in Zaire are also helping their ethnic ilk in Burundi to fight against the local Tutsis and participated in July 1996 in the killing of 350 displaced Tutsis in central Burundi. In response, Burundi's army has started expelling Hutu refugees from northern Burundi back to Rwanda. The regionalization of warfare and expulsion of refugees is deteriorating the humanitarian crisis in the Great Lakes region and undermines efforts at Rwandan reconstruction (Braeckman 1996; Drumtra 1996; Purvis 1996; *The Economist* 1996c). Paradoxically, the spread of refugees and ethnic violence to relations between Zairean Hutus and Tutsis has increased again the relevance of Mobutu's regime to the West because it is the only force which can prevent the total collapse of Zaire (Gourevitch 1996).

Disease travels easily across the borders, leading to regional epidemics owing to geographical proximity and often common low standards of hygiene. Perhaps most importantly, refugee flows, due to wars, famines, and other reasons, have a direct impact on neighbouring countries. These flows are mostly and increasingly due to internal wars and the socio-economic crises associated with them. A major part of these refugee flows concentrate on particular regions, 'bad neighbourhoods', such as the Caucasus, the Horn of Africa, and West Africa. Refugees have also been fleeing across the borders from Afghanistan to Iran and Pakistan and from Haiti to the Dominican Republic and the United States (Weiner 1995; 146-9; Weiner 1996).

In West Africa, there is a dense web of refugee movements. In 1995 there were 125,000 Sierra Leonean refugees in Liberia and 190,000 in Guinea. On the other hand, there are close to 400,000 Liberian refugees both in Guinea and Ivory Coast, and 16,000 in Sierra Leone (UNHCR 1995:114-5). Together with the widespread poverty, rising crime rate, and social fragmentation, criss-crossing refugee flows create a volatile situation which leads to warnings that West Africa, and especially Sierra Leone, will be one of the hot-spots of the 'coming anarchy' (Kaplan 1996:45-51, 83-4).

The crossborder movement of refugees has direct impacts on regional conflicts. Algeria has supported Sahrawi struggle for its independence, Pakistan has been a springboard for military operations in Afghanistan, Kenya has offered a haven for southern Somalis, while Sudan has been hospitable to both Tigrayan and Eritrean resistance forces (Rondos 1994:492-3). Sudan is, in fact, a prime example of internally unstable country

becoming a regional hub of both interstate conflicts, especially with Egypt and Ethiopia, and crossborder alliances between different political forces in Uganda and Eritrea (Waller 1996).

Power can be accumulated and used in an emergency both by regional core actors, such as Sudan, and external powers. In most regional conflicts, there is a heart of crisis in which the signs of an emergency are most visible. In the Great Lakes region this heart has been in Rwanda and Burundi while in West Africa, the Liberian civil war has spilled over to Sierra Leone and Guinea. In Central Asia, the crisis in Tajikistan has radiated to the entire region, in Central America of the 1980s conflicts in Nicaragua and El Salvador were interlinked, and wars in the former Yugoslavia were centred in the rivalry between Croatia and Serbia.

In these and other cases, the humanitarian emergencies can be comprehended only in their regional contexts. Moreover in most, the role of external powers has been significant; the conflict dynamics in Central Asia and the Transcaucasus are shaped and shoved by Russia, while the United States has been a key force in Central America and France in Central Africa.

Central Asia provides a pertinent example of the regionality of humanitarian crises. Its landlocked countries are tied together by the legacy of the planned Soviet economy in which they were assigned the role of agricultural producers – cereals, vegetables, and especially cotton – based on large-scale irrigation. This monoculture has fostered a series of environmental crises of which the gradual disappearance of the Aral Sea and the salinization of land are the most devastating ones. The cotton monoculture has also resulted in major health risks due to the irresponsible use of herbicides and defoliants. In the most critical regions of the Aral Sea basin, the mortality rates have increased 15 times since the middle of the 1970s and infant mortality can be as high as 110 per 1000 new-born (Glazovsky 1995; Pomfret 1995:28-40).

Central Asian countries are thus tied together by a common environmental and economic crisis, but it also otherwise forms a political and economic region of its own in the world. Its economic interdependencies do not follow the boundaries of newly independent states, but cut across them in a multitude of ways. In many places the historical subregions are emerging and have increasing impact on economic development and ethnic relations. Governments in the region have tried to promote mutual cooperation, but it has been complicated by the internal national and religious divisions and the divisive impact of external powers, especially Russia, Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan, whose interests conflict with each other (Lounev and Shirokov 1995).

Central Asia also shows how political instability can cut across borders. The crisis hotbed is the Fergana valley which Stalin divided in 1921 between Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgystan. The valley has become a flashpoint of political tensions between groups whose conflicting ethnic, religious, and political identities manifested, among other things, in the efforts to unify the valley under Islamic control. The situation in the valley reflects also the Uzbek-Tajik divide which seems to be fundamental to the understanding of Central Asia's political future. Iran's alleged promotion of Greater

Tajikistan creates friction both with Afghanistan and Uzbekistan, the leading power in Central Asia (Kaplan 1996:264-7).

Problems are further compounded by the multiple internal divisions and lack of stateness in Tajikistan. Obstacles created to economic exchange and conflicts over water and other resources, together with the economic recession, have also exacerbated tensions between Uzbekistan and northern Tajikistan. In addition, drug trafficking has created a shadow economy in the valley which keeps the local clan structure alive.

## V CONCLUSION

A theme running through this exploratory report on the definition and meaning of humanitarian emergencies has been the emphasis on the inherently dualistic nature of the present era. This dualism rejects the notion that mankind is inexorably and continuously progressing towards a more perfect society. Instead, the development of national and international societies are characterized by discontinuities, shifts, and turning points. Humanitarian emergency is perhaps the most serious form of discontinuity as the established social, political, and economic structures collapse, and people suffer massively or die.

Humanitarian emergencies can be seen as the downside of modernity; as development, supposedly benign, that has gone awry. They are a sign that modernity has either not yet won or that we have moved to a postmodern era in which beauty and ugliness, white and black, coexist. Against this backdrop it is important to reflect upon the nature and functions of the recent wave of humanitarian emergencies which spread like prairie fire, especially in the early 1990s.

A fundamental question is whether this wave of emergencies is a temporary aberration or a permanent feature of international relations. I am inclined to vote for the permanency of these crises, for several reasons. Most importantly, the forces that foster different aspects of humanitarian crises are not disappearing. Hunger and disease, spread by poverty, continue to afflict a sizeable part of the population in developing countries. Economic dislocations, and the ensuing social vulnerability, continue to be essential traits of their development creating, in turn, a fertile breeding ground for political instabilities and humanitarian disasters. In several countries the situation is becoming worse rather than better.

Problems are compounded by the growing internal social polarization. This means that the distribution of benefits in society tends to become more unequal and especially so in countries ridden by deep humanitarian crises. Emergencies can be divided into acute and protracted crises. It seems that in protracted crises, new power structures and parallel economies are established. Those possessing power and resources in these structures are almost invariably opposed to the settlement of the crisis as it would erode their power basis.

The economic and social situation varies, however, from one country and region to another. For the sake of an argument, one can suggest that regions with slow and unstable economic development (as indicated by the growth in GDP per capita and median inflation), and isolation from the world market (the annual growth of export volume) are conducive to humanitarian crises. The World Bank figures (1996:56-65) suggest that East Asia is relatively well protected against humanitarian crises. While the income and export growth in Latin America is forecasted to be slower, its long history

of economic development, turn to democracy, and ethnic homogeneity provides antidotes against humanitarian crises.

In the Middle East, slow economic growth (0.4 per cent for GDP per capita and 3.8 per cent for exports annually in 1996-2005) and political volatility of the region provide a material basis for humanitarian crises. The fanning out of Egyptian and other immigrants in the region also creates transnational political and religious networks that can affect the developments in the region (Russell 1992). The slow economic growth in the region will probably put pressure on political elites, but they are known in most Arab countries for the resilience to withstand such pressures and to muddle through difficult social and economic conditions. Thus, one should not rush to the conclusion that humanitarian crises are imminent in the Middle East.

While the growth figures are forecasted to be higher for South Asia (3.7 and 7.3 per cent, respectively), the deep unevenness of its development both between and especially within the countries, can spell humanitarian disasters. In the Caucasus and Central Asia, present economic and political crises will probably continue. The World Bank anticipates continuing economic slippage of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan (World Bank 1996:61).

It has been stressed in this study that large-scale violence is a pivotal element in humanitarian crises as it easily triggers other adverse developments. In fact, the experience of such violence seems to be a necessary and almost a sufficient condition for the emergence of a humanitarian crisis. Serious political violence has contributed almost in all cases also to increasing humanitarian costs measured by hunger, disease, and displacement. Algeria is one of the few exceptions as its child mortality has continued to decrease quite significantly despite of domestic violence.

From this perspective, the recent decline in the number of serious civil wars is a welcome trend. If it continues, the present wave of humanitarian emergencies may subside, although not entirely. This option may be supported by the decent GDP per capita growth that the World Bank predicts for Sub-Saharan Africa in 1996-2005 (3.8 per cent annually). However, the economic and political situation in most countries with humanitarian disasters, such as Burundi, Liberia, Nigeria, Rwanda, and Sierra Leone, show very little evidence of any major improvements (World Bank 1996:64-5). Therefore, any turn to the better would be more of a lull than a lasting change. Most sources of political violence – such as ethnic and religious tensions, border disputes, and the lust for power and wealth – remain and can surface again in new circumstances.

It may well be that the present 'time-out' in humanitarian emergencies is, in part, due to the dramatic experiences of the international community owing to disasters especially in Bosnia, Rwanda, and Somalia. When their memories fade in the public consciousness, the cycle of emergencies may start again. It may be, though, that mankind has become more conscious of the most extreme humanitarian emergency, genocide, and may be able to detect its signs and act upon them earlier than what has been the case in the past. To forestall future humanitarian emergencies, this observation underlines also the need for more active policies of conflict early-warning and prevention.

The emphasis on the root causes of humanitarian crises means that their prevention would require structural reforms to remove the causes. These reforms would include the democratization of society, redistribution of land, relieving demographic pressures, and reintegration of the national economic internally and with the international market. Sometimes the root causes can be too remote, however, to permit effective early-warning and prevention. In addition, the presence of structural factors causing the emergency does not necessarily mean that it will break out and escalate. The threshold of crisis manifestation may be higher in some cases than in others. That is why it is important to know what kind of political factors can trigger a crisis and push it to a vicious cycle of deteriorating humanitarian conditions (Leatherman, DeMars, Gaffney and Väyrynen 1996).

In identifying potential humanitarian emergencies of the future, one should pay special attention to economic, political, and cultural faultlines and breaking points in society. One should be able to develop indicators to tap such lines and points. For instance, thinking about the Rwandan case in hindsight, it can be recalled that the country's economy deteriorated sharply in the early 1990s, the hierarchical Hutu social organization was mobilized into action, its ideology was defined in increasingly total terms, and the ethnic hate propaganda was disseminated without much constraints. Thus, several breaking points were visible in the Rwandan society as they are today also in Burundi (Prunier 1995).

In an early-warning mode, it has been also suggested that the environmental degradation, overtilling of the soil, overgrazing, and overpopulation in the Senegal River basin are leading to major economic and social crises which are exacerbated by ethnic strife in Mauritania and Senegal (both countries appear in our analysis among the worst cases on poverty indicators). In addition to these, several other African countries, such as Zaire, Malawi, Central African Republic, and Niger, deserve continuing information gathering and political attention. While information gathering is a necessary condition for a functioning early-warning system, only focusing attention and engaging the international community and its key actors can provide a sufficient condition for effective crisis prevention (Taylor 1995:92-9).

Future humanitarian crises are not necessarily new ones. Many of today's unresolved crises, such as Afghanistan, Iraq, and Sudan, may continue as protracted confrontations because their solution would require such profound internal compromises and external engagement that they cannot be realistically anticipated. It may also be that some of the emergencies which are now somehow under control may be only temporarily so and may erupt in the future into new cycles of violence and displacement (e.g. Angola, Bosnia, and Rwanda).

New humanitarian crises may also erupt. Egypt and Indonesia are examples of countries in which environmental and demographic pressures are growing quickly, the civil society is becoming more restless, and structures of political governance are too weak and compromised to be able to maintain stability. In Indonesia, rapid economic growth, widespread poverty, and the lack of democratic institutions have created a powder keg

with which the corrupt and clientelist ruling elite may not be able to cope (Engardio 1996; *The Economist* 1996d). Pakistan may be heading to the same slippery slope. In Nigeria and Zaire, the crisis has already reached major proportions and may have passed the point of no return. Kenya's economic progress and political stability seem to be deteriorating to a deeper social and political crisis.

These indications of coming political and humanitarian crises are based on conjectures rather than on systematic work. Later on, a more reliable early-warning model will, however, be developed, utilizing the results on the economic and political root causes of humanitarian crises which the thematic and case studies of the UNU/WIDER project on 'The Political Economy of Humanitarian Crises' will generate. Obviously, any such early-warning model must recognize that there are different types of humanitarian emergencies and they may demand different models to identify and prevent them.

## APPENDIX 1 – A NOTE ON METHODS

The study of humanitarian disasters can adopt either a global or an actor-oriented perspective. The consideration of the global context is relevant, because domestic crises are also fuelled by systemic economic and political changes. The erosion of the political and military bipolarity in international relations and the transition to a complex combination of unipolarity and multipolarity, together with the transnationalization and polarization of the world economy, have created a new and more hospitable global environment for humanitarian emergencies.

Thus, the spread of complex emergencies cannot be separated from international systemic changes. On the other hand, these changes are unable to provide adequate explanations for individual crises. Such explanations can be derived only from a careful study of local and, in many cases, regional factors. These factors include the local structures of economic and political power, the vulnerability of the social fabric, the prevailing cultures and ideologies as well as the ethnic, religious, and linguistic composition of societies. Regional factors refer to the distribution of power and resources in the region, its territorial constellation, history of conflict, and various transnational linkages between key actors.

The primacy of local and regional factors, placed in their global context, speaks for case studies as the dominant approach to the study of humanitarian crises. Such a focus requires their in-depth qualitative study to understand their causes, dynamics, and outcomes. The case approach, however, should be systematic, requiring organizing theoretical ideas and coordinating clusters of variables which permit comparisons across the cases. For this purpose a 'structured, focused comparison' can be utilized (George 1979; George and McKeown 1985).

To succeed, structured, focused comparisons require the specification of theoretically relevant general variables. In the present case fall in two main categories; descriptive aspects of humanitarian crises (war, disease, hunger, and displacement) and the main economic and political root causes of the emergencies. Descriptive variables are used to identify the objects of the study and develop more nuanced classifications of them (e.g. simple and complex humanitarian emergencies). A key advice from George is that the scholar must be selective and focused regarding the key dimensions of the inquiry. Ideally, this design would permit to keep some factors constant across some or all across the cases, while allowing others to vary. In the end, the results of the structured, focused comparisons should be utilized in the further development of the theory (of humanitarian emergencies).

Another possibility is to develop a standard statistical model which comprises a set of independent and perhaps intervening variables which are hypothesized to be causes of humanitarian emergencies. Such an approach is, however, methodologically difficult to apply in an area of research where quantitative data are incomplete and inexact and

some of the most relevant factors may not be quantifiable at all. Moreover, the number of cases is usually so small, at least in individual regions, that the use of standard statistical techniques can hardly be justified.

These problems should not lead, however, to the rejection of a systematic approach to the study of humanitarian emergencies. On the contrary, this is a field of inquiry which has been notoriously lacking an acceptable methodological approach. This situation can be remedied by calling for a careful selection of cases which, in turn, requires the specification of appropriate criteria of inclusion and exclusion. The study should also develop a theoretical framework from which variables accounting for the outbreak of humanitarian disasters can be derived. The operationalization of these variables requires, in turn, the development of appropriate indicators to tap the extent and intensity of emergencies and their economic, political, and other root causes. To make sure that the research design has an adequate construct, validity is an important requirement.

Ideally, the application of these methodological guidelines permits an approach in which the individual humanitarian crises are compared in a structured and focused way by the help of theoretically informed and empirically operationalized sets of variables. These variables pertain to the structural (economic, environmental, and political), institutional, and cultural causes of crises. A refined theoretical framework and structured collection of data permit systematic inferences on the causes of humanitarian crises and, in that way, the generation of valid knowledge (a useful exposition of various qualitative and case study approaches is provided by King, Keohane and Verba 1994).

## APPENDIX 2 – BASIC STATISTICS

APPENDIX TABLE 1  
MORTALITY RATE UNDER FIVE YEARS OF AGE PER 1000, 1992 AND 1995

	1995	1992	Change, %
Afghanistan	251	257	- 2.3
Sierra Leone	246	249	- 1.2
Malawi	215	226	- 4.8
Guinea-Bissau	207	239	- 13.4
Guinea	200	230	- 13.0
Gambia	193	n.a.	
Burkina Faso	189	150	+ 26.0
Mali	188	220	- 14.5
Niger	186	320	- 41.2
Angola	184	292	- 37.0
Somalia	180	211	- 14.7
Mozambique	179	281	- 37.6
Chad	175	209	- 16.3
Ethiopia	174	208	- 16.3
Uganda	174	185	- 5.9
Gabon	171	158	+ 8.2
Equatorial Guinea	171	n.a.	
Djibouti	166	n.a.	
Rwanda	162	222	- 27.0
Benin	161	147	+ 9.5
Senegal	160	145	+ 10.3
Yemen	159	177	- 10.2
Liberia	155	217	- 28.5
Central African Rep.	152	179	- 15.1
Eritrea	150	208	- 27.9
Bhutan	149	201	- 25.7
Nigeria	149	191	- 22.0
Lao DPR	148	145	+ 2.1
Bangladesh	148	127	+ 16.5
Burundi	146	179	- 18.4
Mauritania	145	206	- 29.6

Sources: WHO (1995:101-4) and (1996:123-6).

APPENDIX TABLE 2  
 UNDERWEIGHT CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF FIVE, 1975 AND 1990,  
 PER CENT OF ALL CHILDREN UNDER FIVE

	1992	1990	1975	Change, %
Bangladesh	11,480	66	84	- 21.4
India	69,345	63	71	-11.3
Nepal	1,665	51	63	- 19.0
Mozambique	1,195	47	44	+ 6.8
Niger	676	44	50	- 12.0
Vietnam	3,860	42	55	- 23.6
Sri Lanka	762	42	55	- 23.6
Pakistan	3,725	42	47	- 10.6
Ethiopia	3,810	40	45	- 11.1
Afghanistan	1,995	40	19	+110.5
Somalia	656	39	47	- 17.2
Iran	4,145	39	43	- 9.3
Indonesia	8,660	38	57	- 33.3
Madagascar	834	38	30	+ 26.6
Cambodia	522	38	43	- 11.6
Papua New Guinea	210	36	39	- 7.7
Nigeria	7,480	35	30	+ 16.7
Angola	641	35	24	+ 45.8
Sudan	1,525	34	36	- 5.5
Lao DPR	255	34	41	- 17.1
Philippines	3,045	34	39	- 12.8
Myanmar	1,985	33	41	- 19.5
Zaire	2,425	33	28	+ 15.2
Central African Rep	n.a.	32	53- 39.6	
Rwanda	457	32	37	- 13.5

Source: UNDP (1994:134-5) and (1995:162-3)

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