Imperial Abduction Lore and Humanitarian Seduction

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> "I am serious about making sure we have the best relationship with the NGOs who are such a force multiplier for us, such an important part of our combat team". — US Secretary of State Colin L. Powell (2001)

> "The countries that cooperate with us get at least a free pass. Whereas other countries that don't cooperate, we ream them as best we can". — A senior US official specializing on Africa (quoted in Whitlock 2013/4/13)

Two of the most enduring beliefs, among at least the political elites and a substantial portion of the wider population in North America, are that military intervention abroad and all sorts of other less forceful interventions, are: (a) for the good of other societies, whose lives and whose very nature as human beings will experience progress as a result of our intervention; and, (b) that the security of the intervening society will thus be enhanced, while its global leadership will also be secured. These constitute *beliefs* akin to any other beliefs that anthropologists and sociologists have studied in the value systems of other, discrete populations: as beliefs they maintain contradictions without resolving them, and as beliefs they can thrive in the absence of serious questioning, and in the absence of empirical support. One main difference about these beliefs, however, is that situated as we are

in North America, we do not require the minimalistic year-long ritual of "fieldwork" abroad in order to discover them: we are all already immersed in this value system, and have been all of our lives. So let us proceed to extricate ourselves and question what we have received.

We proceed not only by "studying up," but also studying horizontally in social terms (the society as we experience it directly), and introspectively (reflecting on the meanings of various codes we have been taught by parents, schools, the media, and what we then hold as if they had always been our very own). We can become aware of our own very deeply planted *faith* in the value and necessity of our interventions abroad when we find ourselves in situations where such beliefs are openly questioned, contested, or refuted. This is especially the case when we are faced with seemingly hard-line rejections of western interventionism: then, we invariably always ask, and we feel impelled to ask, "But aren't there times when we *should* intervene?" This is always the immediate default question, and one that not coincidentally also preserves our belief in our own special role in history, as the special people with the right answers, as special forces who have either the right or the duty to impose our solutions from the top down. We will even rewrite history to mandate the only allowed "positive" answers, so we tell each other that we intervened in World War II to put a stop to the Holocaust, and that our alleged "non-intervention" allowed Rwanda's "genocide" to happen (instead, see Philpot, 2014).

We believe that our right to safety or security is an absolute imperative. The ultimate default question/belief, behind or beyond this one, concerns our very nature as human beings—is it not an essential part of human nature to engage in war? Deconstructing such an ostensibly straightforward question takes time (and many others have done so), especially since the question elides violence with war, and war with empire, and renders both war and empire as "natural" and thus normal. At the same this position assumes a single human nature that is everywhere the same, and always has been. It is interesting to witness

that when our "culture" of interventionism suffers set-backs, we always beat a hasty retreat back to "nature".

Much of the same pattern of elision and naturalization occurs when it is assumed that either war and/or empire are essential to the maintenance of our ultimate security, and all human beings, we believe, assert their security through violence—never through cooperation, collaboration, solidarity or reciprocity. Under the constraints of what is ideologically amiable to the power elites, we thus toil at reimagining our most distant human ancestors as prototypical warrior capitalists. What makes all of this possible is *belief*—not that beliefs unilaterally determine the imperial system.

The Humanitarian Syndrome of Western Interventionism

The dominant ideology of US-led globalization since September 11, 2001, is one that configures society as existing in a state of emergency—one that constructs exceptional circumstances, where exceptional rules and exceptional self-representations prevail. A defining feature of this post-9/11 orientation is therefore one that frames perceptions or constructions of global disorder in terms of emergency and threats to security. As in the case of the pre-9/11 "neocon" classic, Robert Kaplan's "The Coming Anarchy" (1994/2), the ideological expressions of the state of exception as a normative framework for constructing practical action, gained not just currency but authority. In this framework, other people—especially in Africa—are problems. They are an immediate "threat" to themselves, and an eventual threat to "us". As Kaplan (1994/2) put it:

> "West Africa is becoming the symbol of worldwide demographic, environmental, and societal stress, in which criminal anarchy emerges as the real 'strategic' danger....West Africa provides an appropriate introduction to the issues, often extremely unpleasant to discuss, that will soon confront our civilization".

The "crisis" in West Africa, the causes of which Kaplan essentially sees as inherent to West Africa itself, is not just a mortal threat to West Africans, it is a security threat. Repeatedly Kaplan frames these issues in his essay in terms of "national security," the "core foreign-policy challenge" and the "strategic impact" of these African problems for the US. Here again we see the power of belief in holding at bay any acknowledgment of self-contradiction: if problems for the US can come from abroad, why is the same not true for West Africa? How is Kaplan's West African crisis *sui generis*, while any eventual crisis for the US is always of exogenous provenance? It is a very *useful* belief if anything: it preserves American exceptionalism by positing the innate inferiority of other societies. Moreover, it casts Americans as innocent and self-sufficient, and foreigners as menacing and dependent.

It follows logically that if these others are the problem—and a problem for us ultimately—*then we must be the solution*. Constructing other people's situations as problems, and the West as the source of solutions, has meant (a) the fusion of the military and humanitarian into a single form of governance (Fassin & Pandolfi, 2010, p. 10), and (b) a situation where we in the West renew our former colonial right to intervene against militarily and economically weaker states, now dubbed "failed states" (Helman & Ratner, 1992–1993; Gordon, 1997). In this process, both the sovereignty and self-determination of the formerly colonized, limited as they have been by the persistent realities of neocolonialism, have been challenged, eroded and deliberately undermined. The ideal way to justify this new wave of western interventions since the end of the Cold War has been "humanitarianism". Ideal, because this mode of justification can, (a) simultaneously pay some respect to international law (by revitalizing international law's colonial roots and making renewed use of the trusteeship model); (b) immobilize potential critics at home, lest they be accused of not wanting to "help" others and "save lives"; and, (c) using the language of salvation and freedom out of necessary recognition that the residue of

the world's anti-colonial struggles of the 1960s would not tolerate an outright return to blunt statements of the West's "civilizing mission" (Mooers, 2006, p. 2).

Consequently, the narrative and practice of "humanitarianism" can serve as a new (possibly preemptive) counterinsurgency, on both the domestic and global levels, that seek to neutralize critiques, limit the range of acceptable options, build new civilian-military coalitions, overthrow noncompliant governments, and thus delay the decline of western hegemony. Humanitarianism may thus be very much a sign of a *late imperialism*.

While humanitarian notions of some sort have been expressed by almost every modern empire, off and on throughout the course of a given empire's existence, one should note however that the last two global hegemons, the UK and the US, both heightened the "humanitarian" ethos in the final decades of their imperial dominance. *Why?* There are a number of possible reasons. One is to shift the cost burden to a wider array of partners recruited by the politics of humanitarianism, partners both local and international, whether sovereign or among the collaborator class of the colonized, in order to preserve the expanse of empire while trying to manage its increasingly unaffordable costs. Also trying to ward off rising challengers is common to both the UK and US examples. "Everyone to the frontlines" might be the rallying call at this stage of increasing desperation—and one way to rope in everyone is to appeal to intimate values and emtions. Another is the attempt to minimize the costs of resistance by attempting to "win hearts and minds"—"we," after all, are undertaking all this trouble and expense just for "your" welfare. Such a narrative is possibly more successful at home than anywhere else: witness the countless right-wing media pundits in the US who speak as if they sincerely believe that US military forces launch expeditions primarily to help others—invasion as a form of charity. Another reason for the humanitarian turn may be the legacy factor, a last-ditch effort to rewrite history to preserve at least the symbolic capital of exceptionalism, to be converted into politi-

cal capital as post-imperial leadership entitlements (as with the UK, sitting on the UN Security Council, and Queen Elizabeth II formally leading the Commonwealth of Nations).

Of great assistance in spreading the burden of "humanitarian intervention," while simultaneously working to roll back the state, is the ever-expanding complex of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), whose number worldwide is perhaps several million. Western NGOs, and especially those in receipt of government funding and whose work abroad meets with the approval of the US and/or the EU, have been instrumental in promoting top-down solutions that strengthen "civil society" at the expense of states in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean.

Outsourcing Empire, Privatizing State Functions: NGOs

First, we need to get a sense of the size and scope of the spread of just those NGOs that work on an international plane, or INGOs, many of which are officially associated with, though not part of, the UN. Estimates of the number of INGOs (such as Care, Oxfam, Médecins Sans Frontières) vary greatly depending on the source, the definition of INGOs used, and the methods used to locate and count them. In broad terms, INGOs numbered roughly 28,000 by the mid-1990s, which represented a 500% increase from the 1970s; other estimates suggest that by the early years of this century they numbered 40,000, while some put the number at around 30,000, which is still nearly double the number of INGOs in 1990, and some figures are lower at 20,000 by 2005 (Anheier & Themudo, 2005, p. 106; Bloodgood & Schmitz, 2012, p. 10; Boli, 2006, p. 334; Makoba, 2002, p. 54). While the sources differ in their estimates, all of them agree that there has been a substantial rise in the number of INGOs over the past two decades.

Second, there is also evidence that INGOs and local NGOs are taking on a much larger role in international development assistance than ever before. The UK's Overseas Development Institute reported in 1996 that, by then, between 10% and 15% of all aid to developing countries was channeled through NGOs, accounting for a total amount of $6 billion US. Other sources report that "about a fifth of all reported official and private aid to developing countries has been provided or managed by NGOs and public-private partnerships" (International Development Association [IDA], 2007, p. 31). It has also been reported that, "from 1970 to 1985 total development aid disbursed by international NGOs increased ten-fold," while in 1992 INGOs, "channeled over $7.6 billion of aid to developing countries".[1] In 2004, INGOs "employed the full time equivalent of 140,000 staff—probably larger than the total staff of all bilateral and multilateral donors combined—and generated revenues for US$13 billion from philanthropy (36%), government contributions (35%) and fees (29%)" (IDA, 2007, p. 31). The budgets of the larger INGOs "have surpassed those of some Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) donor countries" (Morton, n.d., p. 325). For its part, the US government "gave more than twice the amount of aid assistance in 2000 ($4 billion) through nongovernmental organizations than was given directly to foreign governments (est. $1.9 billion)" (Kinney, 2006, p. 3).

The military is one arm of the imperialist order, and the other arm is made up of NGOs (though often these two arms are interlocked, as even Colin Powell says in the introductory quote in this chapter). The political-economic program of neoliberalism is, as Hanieh (2006, p. 168) argues, the economic logic of the current imperialist drive. This agenda involves, among other policies, cutbacks to state services and social spending by governments in order to open up local economies to private and nongovernmental interests. Indeed, the meteoric rise of NGOs, and the great increase in their numbers, came at a particular time in history: "the conservative governments of

Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher made support for the voluntary sector a central part of their strategies to reduce government social spending" (Salamon, 1994). By more or less direct means, sometimes diffuse and other times well-coordinated, the interests of the US and its allies can thus be pursued under the cover of humanitarian "aid," "charity," and "development assistance".

In his extensive critique of neoliberalism, David Harvey (2005) credits the explosive growth of the NGO sector under neoliberalism with the rise of, "the belief that opposition mobilized outside the state apparatus and within some separate entity called 'civil society' is the powerhouse of oppositional politics and social transformation" (p. 78). Yet many of these NGOs are commanded by unelected and elite actors, who are accountable primarily to their chief sources of funds, which may include governments and usually includes corporate donors and private foundations. The broader point of importance is that this rise of NGOs under neoliberalism is also the period in which the concept of "civil society" has become central not just to the formulation of oppositional politics, as Harvey (2005, p. 78) argues, but also central to the modes of covert intervention and destabilization openly adopted by the US around the world. More on this just below, but first we need to pause and focus on this emergence of "civil society" as topic in the new imperialism.

The "Civil Society" of the New Imperialism: Neoliberal Solutions to Problems Created by Neoliberalism

There has been a growing popularization of "civil society," that James Ferguson, an anthropologist, even calls a "fad". Part of the growing popularity of this concept is tied to some social scientists' attraction to democratization, social movements and NGOs, and even some anthropologists have been inspired to recoup *the local* under the heading of "civil society" (Ferguson, 2007, p. 383). The very notion of

"civil society" comes from 18th-century European liberal thought of the Enlightenment, as something that stood between the state and the family. "Civil society" has been universalized, with "little regard for historical context or critical genealogy":

> "this new conception (of 'civil society' as the road to democracy) not only met the political needs of the Eastern European struggle against communist statism, it also found a ready export market—both in the First World (where it was appropriated by conservative Reagan/Thatcher projects for 'rolling back the state') and in the Third World…". (Ferguson, 2007, p. 384)

Today "civil society" has been reconceived as the road to democratization and freedom, and is explicitly promoted as such by the US State Department. Whether from the western left or right which have both appropriated the concern for "civil society," Ferguson argues that the concept helps to legitimate a profoundly anti-democratic politics (2007, p. 385).

The African state, once held high as the chief engine of development, is now treated as the enemy of development and nation-building (especially by western elites), constructed as too bureaucratic, stagnant and corrupt. Now "civil society" is celebrated as the hero of liberatory change, and the aim is to get the state to become more aligned with civil society (Ferguson, 2007, p. 387). Not only that, the aim is to *standardize* state practices, so as to lessen or remove barriers to foreign penetration and to increase predictability of political outcomes and investment decisions (see Obama, 2013/7/1).

In practice, most writers conceive of contemporary "civil society" as composed of small, voluntary, grassroots organizations (which opens the door, conceptually, to the focus on NGOs). As Ferguson notes, civil society is largely made up of *international organizations*:

> "For indeed, the local voluntary organizations in Africa, so beloved of 'civil society' theorists, very often, upon inspection, turn out to be integrally linked with national

and transnational-level entities. One might think, for instance, of the myriad South African 'community organizations' that are bankrolled by USAID or European church groups; or of the profusion of 'local' Christian development NGOs in Zimbabwe, which may be conceived equally well as the most local, 'grassroots' expressions of civil society, or as parts of the vast international bureaucratic organizations that organize and sustain their deletion. When such organizations begin to take over the most basic functions and powers of the state, it becomes only too clear that 'NGOs' are not as 'NG' as they might wish us to believe. Indeed, the World Bank baldly refers to what they call BONGOs (Bank-organized NGOs) and now even GONGOs (Government-organized NGOs)". (Ferguson, 2007, p. 391).

That NGOs serve the purpose of privatizing state functions, is also demonstrated by Schuller (2009) with reference to Haiti. NGOs provide legitimacy to neoliberal globalization by filling in the "gaps" in the state's social services created by structural adjustment programs (Schuller, 2009, p. 85)—a neoliberal solution to a problem first created by neoliberalism itself. Moreover, in providing high-paying jobs to an educated middle class, NGOs serve to reproduce the global inequalities created by, and required by, neoliberal globalization (Schuller, 2009, p. 85). NGOs also work as "buffers between elites and impoverished masses" and can thus erect or reinforce "institutional barriers against local participation and priority setting" (Schuller, 2009, p. 85).

Thanks to neoliberal structural adjustment, INGOs and other international organizations (such as the UN, IMF, and World Bank) are "eroding the power of African states (and usurping their sovereignty)," and are busy making "end runs around these states" by "directly sponsoring their own programs or interventions via NGOs in a wide range of areas" (Ferguson, 2007, p. 391). INGOs and some local NGOs thus also serve the purposes of neoliberal interventionism.

Trojan Horses: NGOs, Human Rights, and Intervention to "Save" the "Needy"

David Harvey argues that "the rise of advocacy groups and NGOs has, like rights discourses more generally, accompanied the neoliberal turn and increased spectacularly since 1980 or so" (2005, p. 177). NGOs have been called forth, and have been abundantly provisioned as we saw above, in a situation where neoliberal programs have forced the withdrawal of the state away from social welfare. As Harvey puts it, "this amounts to privatization by NGO" (2005, p. 177). NGOs function as the Trojan Horses of global neoliberalism. Following Chandler (2002, p. 89), those NGOs that are oriented toward human rights issues and humanitarian assistance find support "in the growing consensus of support for Western involvement in the internal affairs of the developing world since the 1970s". Moreover, as Horace Campbell explained,

> "During the nineties military journals such as Parameters honed the discussion of the planning for the increased engagement of international NGO's and by the end of the 20th century the big international NGO's [like] Care, Catholic Relief Services, Save The Children, World Vision, and Medicins Sans Frontieres (MSF) were acting like major international corporations doing subcontracting work for the US military". (Campbell (2014/5/2)[2]

Private military contractors in the US, many of them part of Fortune 500 companies, are indispensable to the US military—and in some cases there are "clear linkages between the 'development 'agencies and Wall Street" as perhaps best exemplified by Casals & Associates, Inc., a subsidiary of Dyncorp, a private military contractor that was itself purchased by Cerberus Capital Management for $1.5 billion in 2010, and which received financing commitments from Bank of America Merrill Lynch, Citigroup, Barclays, and Deutsche Bank (Campbell (2014/5/2). Casals declares that its work is about "international develop-

ment," "democracy and governance," and various humanitarian aid initiatives, in over 25 countries, in some instances working in partnership with USAID and the State Department's Office of Transition Initiatives (Campbell (2014/5/2).

In order for NGOs to intervene and take on a more prominent role, something else is required for their work to be carried out, in addition to gaining visibility, attracting funding and support from powerful institutions, and being well placed to capitalize on the opportunities created by neoliberal structural adjustment. They require a "need" for their work. In other words, to have humanitarian action, one must have a needy subject. As Andria Timmer (2010) explains, NGOs overemphasize poverty and stories of discrimination, in order to construct a "needy subject"—a population constructed as a "problem" in need of a "solution". The needs identified by NGOs may not correspond to the actual needs of the people in question, but need, nonetheless, is the dominant discourse by which those people come to be defined as a "humanitarian project". To attract funding, and to gain visibility by claiming that its work is *necessary*, a NGO must have "tales that inspire pathos and encourage people to act" (Timmer, 2010, p. 268). However, in constantly producing images of poverty, despair, hopelessness, and helplessness, NGOs reinforce "an Orientialist dialectic," especially when these images are loaded with markers of ethnic otherness (Timmer, 2010, p. 269). Entire peoples then come to be known through their poverty, particularly by audiences in the global North who only see particular peoples "through the lens of aid and need" (Timmer, 2010, p. 269). In the process what is also (re)created is the anthropological myth of the *helpless* object, one devoid of any agency at all, one cast as a void, as a barely animate object through which we define our special subjecthood. By constructing the needy as the effectively empty, we thus monopolize not only agency but we also corner the market on "humanity".

Humanitarian Imperialism as the Globalization of Residential Schooling

In Canada, there have been official government apologies for the abuses committed during the residential schooling era (which lasted until 1996), plus monetary compensation, and a truth and reconciliation commission that was constituted and recently finished its work. Nonetheless the fundamental ethos of residential schooling has not only been preserved, it has been amplified into a template containing the basic operating instructions for how to approach peoples around the world who are understood to be inferior. Such inferiority can be understood, for example, in the way that other people's governments, no matter how indisputably democratic or legitimate they may be, are consistently treated as if they were disposable.

Residential schooling in Canada and its counterpart systems in Australia and the US, all intended to "save" Native children, to "educate" and thus "improve" them, is reflective of a classic settler state ideology of the late 1800s, which emphasized evolutionary progress through assimilation. It is not an unfamiliar ideology either, for those familiar with the thinking behind "modernization" theory and the basic thrust of international developmentalism. What is interesting to note is that it is only out of these same settler states that ideas of the "responsibility to protect" (R2P) emerged and were propagated at the UN in recent years. The main actors who articulated and advocated for R2P have been primarily Canadian and Australian.

The globalization of residential schooling means that certain basic working principles now constitute a template that is applied to a broader set of international relations, as well as revamped forms of counterinsurgency in foreign military occupations. This template consists of the following elements:

(a) the binary between racially and/or culturally differentiated tutors and wards;

(b) a process of abduction, understood broadly, and exemplified by such phenomena as the international traffic in non-western babies in the adoption industry, to the re-implementation of the trusteeship system, to the neoliberal destruction of state-regulated economies and the military occupation of other nations—thus the seizure of individuals and nation-states, rendering them more or less captive to agendas imposed by western powers; and,

(c) what is still essentially a civilizing mission cloaked as "humanitarianism," the defence of "human rights," or "democracy promotion"—that is, ideological narratives and their corresponding practices whose aim is sill that of "saving the natives from themselves" and to prepare them for life in the white man's world (the "international community," or "the community of civilized nations"), so that they may lead productive lives as law-abiding, well mannered servants of the global capitalist economy.

What "abduction" can also mean is that in order for "us" (the interventionists) to presume to "care" for little known and even less understood strangers, these "others" must be seen as living in a state of some sort of neglect and unfulfilled need. That other thus becomes like an object that is first "seized" so that it can be set free. That other is an object set low within a hierarchy, one that resembles old cultural evolutionist schemes where Europeans were always at the top, and Africans locked far down below in a Paleolithic time zone awaiting redemption. Western "humanitarianism" thus works within an imperialist ideological framework: that object—for example an Africa once again imagined as a zone of ultimately helpless destitution—needs *our* "protection" (we are the prime actors, they are the terrain upon which we act). This requires that we do at least two things that one would expect of imperialists. First, we need to construct images of "Africa" as a dark place of gaunt, hungry, pleading quasi-humans, where we effectively open the door to ourselves, and usher ourselves

in as their self-appointed saviours. This is not the same thing as abduction in the form of kidnapping (not yet anyway): it is more of a virtual abduction, an imaginary capture that places "Africa" on a lower scale of welfare and self-fulfillment, and implies our "duty" to rescue them by "raising" them "up" to where we are. Second, we can work to ensure that the material conditions of *need* are effectively reproduced: we can do that with "aid," with "investment" (an odd word, because in practice it means taking away), with "trade" (where the preconditions are that Africans privatize themselves[3]), and with direct military intervention to bomb back down to size any upstart that threatens to guard his dignity (Libya). These too constitute capture. And then there is actual capture: seizing children, indicting "war criminals," or inviting students to come on over and "learn" like we do so that they can become "educated"—or stay there, and let our students teach you.

Two of the most widely read proponents of this application of a neocolonial form of residential schooling, more properly known in international law as "trusteeship" and "conservatorship," were Gerald B. Helman and Steven R. Ratner, both of whom served in the US State Department in different capacities at different points in their career. In what is in many ways an intellectual continuation of Kaplan's "Coming Anarchy," "Saving Failed States" by Helman and Ratner not only posits the existence of such a phenomenon as a "failed" state, they assert that it was brought about by rapid decolonization since 1945 (Helman & Ratner, 1992–1993). They frame their argument in terms of *risk* and *emergency*, and demand: "something must be done" (Helman & Ratner, 1992–1993, p. 3). Fortunately for them, *intervention* does indeed constitute "something," and it is precisely the kind of "something" for which they were looking.

Nations, they argue, need to be "saved" because self-determination has been a failure (they would let the leader assume it is largely due to internal inadequacies), especially in Africa which becomes the primary focus of their

article. They object, almost mock, the "states that achieved independence after 1945," who attach great and "almost exaggerated" importance to the concept of sovereignty (Helman & Ratner, 1992–1993, p. 9). What matters is "survivability" and this only comes from external benefactors, such as a suitably restructured UN which has increasingly become a leading agent of neoliberal transformation (see Cammack, 2006). If it seems like Helman and Ratner are articulating something like a global application of the basic template of residential schooling, as argued above, it is an observation that is commended by their own wording:

> "The conceptual basis for the effort [UN-led nation-saving] should lie in the idea of conservatorship. In domestic systems when the polity confronts persons who are utterly incapable of functioning on their own, the law often provides some regime whereby the community itself manages the affairs of the victim. Forms of guardianship or trusteeship are a common response to broken families, serious mental or physical illness, or economic destitution. The hapless individual is placed under the responsibility of a trustee or guardian, who is charged to look out for the best interests of that person". (Helman & Ratner, 1992–1993, p. 12)

"The very fact that scholars and commentators are seriously advocating this approach," Ruth Gordon comments, "is an indication of how negatively we view certain communities" (1997, p. 907). As Gordon, a professor of international law, further explains, advocacy such as that of Helman and Ratner and other western "humanitarian interventionists" is necessarily based on conceptions of inferiority:

> "The 'civilized' nations of Europe and the United States had the right to control their own destinies free of foreign intrusion. The less civilized Asian and Latin American States, however, were fair targets of intervention. While this view has partially dissipated in this century, 'the power of intervention remains the

power to stigmatize and political meaning is in large measure rooted in historical memory'". (Gordon, 1997, p. 908 fn. 15)

The same binary applies to the military instruments themselves: a US President can declare a "red line" against the alleged use of chemical weapons in Syria, while still using white phosphorous, depleted uranium, and various cluster munitions in the US weapons stockpile. Poisoned gas becomes the weapon of the "uncivilized," and the cruise missile the weapon of the "civilized".

The basic operating premise is that "certain human beings, who were predominately black and brown peoples, were inferior to Europeans and simply incapable of governing themselves" and this is part of the same baggage of assumptions that, to varying degrees, "underlie current paradigms to utilize forms of conservatorship" (Gordon, 1997, p. 909). The abductive narrative here is framed in a manner that "makes this result seem logical and in the interest of both the peoples of the Third World and their kindhearted patrons in the West" (Gordon, 1997, p. 910).

Gordon goes even further, noting that the western tradition on which international law itself was founded, a tradition whose "underlying subcontext…was a belief in racial and cultural inferiority"—indeed, the "very roots of international law are mired in the heritage of colonialism" (Gordon, 1997, p. 911 fn. 30). Again, the basic structural logic of residential schooling comes back to the fore:

> "Once it is determined that particular states have 'failed,' these states would be deemed victims and incapable of managing their own affairs in much the same way we view children as being incapable of managing their own affairs. The international community would then be designated to act on their behalf". (Gordon, 1997, p. 924)

Thus when we in Canada "apologize" for an institution such as residential schooling, for what are we really apologizing? What have we learned about ourselves and our ba-

sic values and working assumptions? The answer to both questions unfortunately appears to be: little or nothing.

We thus turn to the contributions by authors in this volume which, I must stress, are not ordered in terms of a rank based on their quality or importance, but are instead grouped according to three broad themes. Part One thus concentrates on the work of "doing good," with a special focus on NGOs and human rights. Part Two deals with the creation of a state of exception in terms of global and domestic political economy. Part Three involves what might be termed the work of ideologically-informed cultural mystification, where the chief opponents and targets of US imperialism are profoundly demonized and thus dehumanized, western troops are bestowed with a monumental status as heroes, and, as we are taught, US military training consists of teaching young Asian girls how to skip rope. After all of this, can "humanitarianism" be redeemed? I address this conclusion at the end of this chapter.

Good Intentions, NGOs, and Violence

In Part 1, chapter 1, "Iatrogenic Imperialism: NGOs and CROs as Agents of Questionable Care," Émile St-Pierre examines the role of NGOs and Contract Research Organizations (CROs) in the formation and propagation of a neoliberal paradigm in health care. As St-Pierre explains, neoliberal policies beginning in the 1980s forced many states to retract from health care provision. NGOs and CROs have emerged as *gap fillers* in the wake of these policies. The activities of NGOs and CROs in conjunction with states and pharmaceutical corporations produce changes in the everyday lives of people, offering new possibilities for some at the same time that they dominate and classify populations in new ways. NGOs, CROs and the actors they are tied to, rely on patterns of illness and inequality to continue existing, and securing revenues. *Iatrogenic imperialism* is used by St-Pierre as an analytic to bring to light the

way "good intentions," expertise and humanitarianism play into efficiency-driven, neoliberal configurations of health care that fail to produce benefits for all, that undermine public health systems and that tend to reproduce global inequalities. In exploring the roles of lesser-known but increasingly important actors in health care worldwide, St-Pierre's research critically analyzes some of the newest phenomena in the neoliberal turn health care has been experiencing and speaks to their penetration into the everyday lives of people.

In chapter 2, "US Imperialism and Disaster Capitalism in Haiti," Keir Forgie details some characteristic actions of the new, that is, US imperialism enforced upon Haiti leading up to and following the earthquake of January 2010: military and CIA intervention, the UN-administered MINUSTAH occupation, US-funded NGOs, the militarization of humanitarian aid. These tools of disaster capitalism are all part of the new imperialism, Forgie argues. The US military and CIA have repeatedly intervened against Haitian sovereignty to impose US "democratic" systems that favour neoliberalism. Meanwhile, MINUSTAH enforces US objectives repressing free-speech and effectively acting as a large gang, one opposed to supporters of the overthrown president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide. NGOs, for their part, provide a means through which the US can funnel aid money and pursue self-interests while undermining local authority. In addition, the militarization of humanitarian aid in Haiti exemplifies a masked occupation under the guise of altruistic rhetoric. And as Forgie argues, predatory impositions of neoliberalism and corporate interests that pushed through disaster capitalism serve to subvert Haiti to a US means of production and sponge for capital overflow. Each of these coercive methods ensures US hegemonic globalization, acting as distinguishing features of the new imperialism, Forgie explains.

In chapter 3, "Who Needs Me Most? New Imperialist Ideologies in Youth Centred Volunteer Abroad Programs," Tristan Biehn examines the new imperial ideologies present in narratives manufactured by the websites of youth-

centred volunteer abroad organizations. These narratives serve to instil neoliberal, capitalist understandings of the issues of global inequality and poverty in prospective volunteers, resulting in the depoliticization and decontextualization of such issues. Biehn finds that ideas of "change" and "good" are ubiquitous and yet are left undefined, that claims of "helping" and "immersion" are questionable, and that the utility of international student volunteering lies not in the benevolent donation of unskilled western youth labour to underprivileged communities, but in the production of ideal neoliberal subjects. The nebulous concepts of *help* and *change* are commodified and made the responsibility of individuals—the prospective volunteers—who are inundated with the message that actions taken to end global inequality will also benefit them personally. As Biehn explains, such programs contribute to the neoliberal project of redirecting efforts from the pursuit of larger structural changes or solutions to these issues.

Chapter 4 by Hilary King which is titled, "Queers of War: Normalizing Lesbians and Gays in the US War Machine" is a very welcome addition to the subject of gender, sexuality, and corresponding ideas of rights that we first introduced in Volume 3 (see Pas, 2013). In her chapter, Hilary King begins by noting how at a recent Human Rights Campaign (HRC) gala in Los Angeles, US Vice-President Joe Biden, the keynote speaker of the evening, claimed that the rights of LGBT people are an inseparable part of America's promotion of human rights around the world. This speech exemplifies the ways in national sovereignty, and whether or not any nation is deserving of it, has come to be decided by the extent to which a given nation accepts the gay and lesbian subject, King points out. In the past decade, the US has become a vocal advocate for the legal rights of LGBT subjects. Through the careful governance of liberal mentalities, as King explains, the appropriation of these rights by the US government has heavily aided the US in forwarding its imperial war machine. By relying on Jasbir Puar's theoretical framework of "homonationalism," King's chapter looks specifically at

the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act, the repealing of Don't Ask Don't Tell (DADT), as well as the HRC, in order to explore the ways in which sexuality has become a formation in the articulation of proper US citizens.

The Political Economy of Exception

One of the defining features of the existence of a global *dictatorship* (hegemon and superpower might be too "soft" in this "human rights era" of invasions and occupations), is where one state gets to set the rules by which others live, while raising itself above those same rules. This leads to the idea of the practiced reality of "American exceptionalism" as an aspect of the global state of exception imposed by the US—two "exceptions" in one, combining both the ideas of emergency and primacy. In this respect, chapter 5, "The International Economic Sovereignty of the United States of America: Integrating the Exception to our Understanding of Empire," by Karine Perron, addresses the scope of US capacity to influence and set out rules for international economic policies, rules which it then ignores. By examining cases concerning the IMF, the WTO, and even the overthrow of governments, US advocacy of capitalism, free trade, and democracy, each is contrasted with situations in which the US made exceptions for its own benefit. The significance of US power to decide on "the exception" is discussed by Perron in relation to the strategy of enlargement openly promoted by the Clinton administration and pursued by subsequent US governments. As economic growth has been added to the US definition of national security, exceptions have become a permanent feature of American foreign policy. Using Schmitt's definition of sovereignty as the power to decide on the exception, Perron argues that this capacity of the US to decide on exceptions regularly in the international economic realm is significant of its international sovereignty, and its intended supremacy. In these respects, Perron is raising

some critical points of interest similar to those of Scheppele (2013): with respect to international law, what the US does by erecting itself as an exception is to create a rule from the exception. The US works to distribute this law, and uses its rule to extract and centralize gain. What Perron also does, like Scheppele (2013), is to pay respect to the fact that apart from a brief period when economic globalization seemed to reign supreme, powerful states (such as the US) have proceeded to seize back much of the power they had allegedly lost or ceded. A demonstration of the synergy between corporate empire and US empire takes us to the next chapter.

In chapter 6, "Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Wage Labour: The American Legislative Exchange Council and the Neoliberal Coup," Mathieu Guerin produces a fascinating investigation and theoretical discussion of the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), a not-for-profit organization that brings together corporate representatives and state legislators—thus "marrying" both capital and the state. Behind closed doors, Guerin reveals, the representatives and legislators design and vote on model bills. Legislators then bring the model bills home to their respective assemblies and attempt to implement them. The corporate members of ALEC are, in this way, empowered to change citizen's rights without interference from the federal government. By fostering close ties with state legislators, these corporations have the power to impose their vision of society without recourse to military or police violence. Guerin also investigates the connection between the character of gentrification in San Francisco and the bullying might of Silicon Valley's ALEC-affiliated corporate technocracy. This case study demonstrates how capital co-opts the existing state structure as a mode of subjugation and repression. Guerin's research and analysis conclude that ALEC is an organization that symbolizes a *corporate imperium* rooted in the rise of neoliberalism in the early 1970s and emerging within the established imperial state of the US. An in-depth look at the infamous Powell memorandum

reveals an imperialistic ideological continuity between its conception in 1971 and ALEC itself.

Pariahs, Princes, and Playthings

John Manicom's "The Terrorist, the Tyrant and the Thug: 'Anti-Anti-Imperialism' in American Media and Policy" (chapter 7), is a powerful examination of the discursive and narrative practices of US politicians and media with regard to non-US opponents of US power. These US actors generate catastrophizing discourse classifying phenomena in politically advantageous ways and seeking to arouse certain reactions to events. The types of evaluations and reactions that occur in this discourse, Manicom observes, are relatively predictable and based on the subject's level of cooperation with US power. The most negative evaluations are assigned to states and sub-state groups which actively oppose US power. Mainstream western media operate from similar ideological perspectives to governments and benefit from a privileged discursive position in society allowing them to produce knowledge seen as generally legitimate, as Manicom demonstrates throughout. Their practices thus help to enable and sustain the narratives of politicians in demonizing and dehumanizing opponents and thus legitimating the often brutal practice of US interventionism.

Chapter 8 by Laura Powell, "Glorification of the Military in Popular Culture and the Media," fits well between Manicom's and the final chapter of the volume. In this chapter Powell argues that while our military members are generally perceived as heroes, this romanticized perception of the military is more damaging than it is helpful. The mainstream media are part of the problem, Powell shows, as news coverage of conflicts is often incomplete or wrong, and based on an idealized version of the military as an unstoppable humanitarian force, while failing to discuss the terrifying realities of war. The Pentagon-Hollywood union also helps propagate this distorted view

of the military. Perpetuating this view of the military works to disadvantage the men and women affected by PTSD as a result of their deployments and, Powell argues, attracts potential recruits who may not be aware of the dangers associated with enlisting. In some respects then, Laura Powell is furthering this seminar's long-standing interest in "militainment".

On that note, my chapter 9, "A Flickr of Militarization: Photographic Regulation, Symbolic Consecration, and the Strategic Communication of 'Good Intentions'," is based on a study of the US Department of Defense's Flickr photostream, from 2009 through February of 2014, examining a total of 9,963 photographs (with some key examples reproduced in the chapter), and two dozen US military directives, manuals, and guides on public diplomacy, strategic communication, social media use, and photography. Having said that, the analysis is not a quantitative one; instead, the project builds on Pierre Bourdieu's ideas about regulated images, consecrated works, and the objectification and codification of (militarized) values, as well as the works of a number of visual anthropologists. Rather than an activity that expresses the randomness of individual imaginations, US military photographs register a pattern that reflects the prevailing political norms of a given social order. The patterns to be found among these thousands of images is in fact quite regular, and makes a series of clear points. This public engagement is carried out by the Pentagon with a belief that a major part of "the battle" is a "battle of the narrative," one that takes place in the public's "cognitive space," in what is has been termed "Fourth Generation warfare". These photographs are intended to represent the US military as a humanitarian, charitable organization, working among many communities around the world that are populated by children who are only too happy to be vaccinated and to skip rope with US soldiers. Female US soldiers have smiling close encounters with little girls, or cradle babies. When not displaying pure, motive-less good intentions, the photographs also produce a celebration of the awesome power and sophisti-

cation of US military technology: jets flying in formation, shiny drones illuminated at night like alien UFOs, lines of massive ships at sea, etc. Yet, there are virtually no images of actual combat. The photographs collectively portray a world rendered frictionless by the speed and ubiquity of American power and technology. In addition, by being studiously depoliticized, the photographs produce a political effect, for political purposes—they do not tell the horror stories of war, of blood shed and lives lost, of destruction and grief, but rather portray something like a birthday party, with a cycle of endless family reunions. However, as the Pentagon understands that every action is potentially a message, and there is an unresolved tension between "perception effects" and military planning, strategic communication in the form of disseminating photographs through social media faces ultimate pitfalls.

About Those Good Intentions

There are many valid and unimpeachable reasons why students, for example, might be considering humanitarian work and/or working for a NGO. There is no gainsaying that many students have genuine, sincere, and heartfelt reasons for coming to the aid of others: those who come from privileged backgrounds might feel the need to "give back"; those who come from backgrounds of struggle might be determined to lessen the burden of disadvantage on others like them. Having read chapters such as the ones in this volume, or several others, and having been asked to question their beliefs in the value of humanitarian aid or even foreign intervention to prevent atrocities, they might be left wondering whether all forms of altruism are to be forsaken. I would say: not so fast. The real challenge now is to question our assumptions and envision or acknowledge existing alternatives that further solidarity, collaboration, and reciprocity without the paternalism and Eurocentrism of the "white man's burden".

One way to proceed is by questioning why helping others should lead to work abroad. Do you really have any special skills to offer other than the ability to articulate good intentions? Has your assistance been requested by those who would presumably benefit from it? How well do you understand a different society that you can permit yourself to undertake potentially transformative action? What are your motives, and do you think the organization(s) you support, or for which you work, share the same motives? If it is a question of solidarity, is the solidarity spontaneous and one-sided, or the product of actual dialogue and mutual understanding? Why would you not choose to work at home, where presumably you are not a stranger, nor an intruder? Indeed, this last question is one that gains salience particularly with anthropology students. Frustrated with what they perceive as their inability to change the politics of their own nation, some feel that they might make more of an impact in a different nation (Mathers, 2010, p. 169). Yet this assumes that other societies are less complex, easier to change and even receptive to outsiders bringing about change for them. If one feels that Africa is oppressed, then why assume that is to Africa that one must go, rather than work at home to change the policies of one's country, for example, supporting debt forgiveness, challenging unjust trade and aid policies, reining in your corporations, or pushing for the demilitarization of the foreign relations of one's own country? It is important not to assume that others are simply waiting for a stranger to come and lead them, like a Hollywood tale of the usual white messiah who is always the hero of other people's stories. Ifi Amadiume—an African feminist who noted that, increasingly, Black women had begun to expose the racism in the women's movement and accused western feminists of "a new imperialism" (1987, p. 4)—relates to us a story of a young anthropologist in a seminar in which she participated:

> "I asked a young White woman why she was studying
> social anthropology. She replied that she was hoping to

go to Zimbabwe, and felt that she could help women there by advising them how to organize. The Black women in the audience gasped in astonishment. Here was someone scarcely past girlhood, who had just started university and had never fought a war in her life. She was planning to go to Africa to teach female veterans of a liberation struggle how to organize! This is the kind of arrogant, if not absurd attitude we encounter repeatedly. It makes one think: Better the distant armchair anthropologists than these 'sisters'". (Amadiume, 1987, p. 7)

A second set of questions has to do with whether charity is the best expression for one's altruism. This raises other questions especially when we turn to charity at home. Why is it that in a society such as Canada's where virtually every activity, positive or negative, is taxed, we are called upon more and more to give to charity? Rather than mobilize to "raise awareness" about the homeless (as if we were unaware of them), why do we not instead mobilize the same numbers of those giving to charity to combat austerity? Why should taxes not go to feeding our hungry fellow citizens, instead of into funds to provide "incentives" for corporate investors or into military expenditures so we can bomb Libya? Indeed, by taking up the social welfare slack, are we not facilitating the state in increasing the power of the wealthy, in further militarizing our international relations, and in increasing inequality at home? Sure enough, without presenting heaps of documentary evidence and considering all of the implications, these questions may appear simple, or too ingenuous. Nonetheless, is it acceptable that we do not at least ask such questions to *begin* with?

A third bundle of questions has to do with supporting intervention in another country to supposedly prevent or stop mass violence. Assuming that one is in possession of accurate information, that the information does not come filtered through or created by vested interests, and that one possesses the ability to fairly interpret such information in the historical and cultural context of a given politi-

cal conflict—something that daunts most "experts"—then which instrument is best suited to end such violence? Whose army, navy and air force are you calling on to carry out your good intentions? Do militaries ever act in the absence of other political and economic agendas or are they answerable only to your personal concerns? What other agendas are facilitated by military intervention, such that the "cure" can end up being worse than the "illness"? How is war consistent with the defense of human rights? How do you avoid the risk of prolonging, widening and further militarizing a local political conflict by intervening militarily? Are you prepared for the aftermath of intervention, and what degree of responsibility and accountability are you prepared to shoulder? Should you feel comfortable in calling for the sacrifice of the lives of your own soldiers, and inevitably of civilians in another country, while you remain physically detached from the conflict? Are you prepared to intervene in all situations of conflict where human rights are endangered, or is it just some, and if so why just some? Which is the "lesser evil" that you are prepared to live with and to justify: is it the survival of a local regime that you consider to be a "dictatorship," or the survival and reinforcement of a global imperial dictatorship that seeks any justification to renew and assert its military dominance? These are just *some* of the *first* questions we need to ask. We should, if we are being honest with ourselves, also consider other norms and practices, such as Cuba's socialist internationalism. In the latter case, no permanent military bases resulted from Cuba coming to the aid of Angola; Cuban assistance was requested and mutually understood as an act of solidarity; there was no lucrative, extractive gain as a result of Cuba mobilizing to send troops and doctors to Angola; and, Angola's sovereignty was not undermined, rather it was defended by Cuba. Therefore, a consideration of the stakes, aims, methods, and the whole politics of intervention need to be clearly thought out and articulated. What there should not be is any more of the reflex "cries": "something must be done," "we cannot stand idly by," and so forth—complex

situations require maturity and political acumen, not trivial passion.

A final set of questions concerns the prospect of a graduating student working for a NGO. As I tell seminar participants, no one will benefit from their starving and being homeless; no argument will be "won," or should be won, at the cost of their own suffering. Life in a capitalist society is always full of compromises, such that an extra-systemic stance of total purity is unattainable. As a professor, I should know all about complicity: working in an institution essential to the training of new capitalist cadres, with multiple ties to all sorts of corporate interests, under neoliberal management, and even tied to the military and military industries. The point then is not to automatically forego the chance of earning an income in what is possibly one of the few major growth industries left in the west—that of the NGO complex—but to perhaps treat such employment strategically, as a stepping stone perhaps, where one acts as a critical insider, not allowing oneself to be digested by the system, and always being ready to expose hypocrisies and injustices as they arise. One should also be sober about envisioning change purely by individual means. "What am *I* to do" and "what can *I* change" are always flawed questions because they first assume the centrality of individual action, when transformation can only ever be achieved collectively.

Inevitably (because it always happens) students and others will doubt the value of studies in this area, feeling that such work is not practical or applicable, and that it lacks a "real world" extension—we need to "do". It is true that in sociology and anthropology we lack courses on fundraising, writing brochures, community canvassing, or installing electrical wiring and performing dental work—and that is not a problem. We do not need to try to do everything, and students with such interests and motivations need not see sociology and anthropology as terminal points of qualification. Courses in carpentry and financial management are always available to those who are interested. Yet, this is still not a satisfactory way of addressing

the disquiet. The disquiet is itself rooted in a limited understanding and appreciation of what we really *do*, by first of all divorcing thought from action, and secondly not realizing that it is often *thinking* itself that is a woefully absent or minimized action in our society. Certain norms of action in our society are taken for granted, and held as unquestionable, in part because few are those who challenge, criticize, unthink and rethink what is done (military intervention, capitalist development, individualistic consumerism, etc.), and why it is done. It's the generalized absence of such real questioning that precludes the possibility of real debate and consideration of alternatives. Changing what is considered to be *unthinkable* and *unspeakable* is itself a form of practical action, arguably of the most essential kind.

The intention here was not to provide some easy blueprint, or a map of safe or recommended options. The aim was also not to have students abandon their own good intentions. The method is instead one that asks students: what are your good intentions, what makes them good, and how do you put your intentions into practice? *Whose roads are paved by your good intentions, and where do those roads lead?*

Notes

1   From Duke University Libraries' "NGO Research Guide" archived at:
    http://web.archive.org/web/20100611063147/http://librar
    y.duke.edu/research/subject/guides/ngo_guide/igo_ngo_c
    oop/ngo_wb.html.
2   This brought back a slightly ironic realization. While Montgomery McFate, the anthropologist who worked as the senior social scientist of the US Army's Human Terrain System, argued that anthropologists would anthropologize the military by joining HTS, dismissing claims that they would make anthropologists seem like US military agents (even though in uniform, and some carrying weapons), her own husband was saying something different at the same time.

Sean McFate told *Voice of America* that many NGOs and many people in USAID were "leery" of working with AFRICOM or any US military organization "because it might impugn their neutrality or their impartiality which they depend on for their own protection when they're working in countries" (Taylor, 2009/11/1).

3 In this regard I am referring to the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), first instituted by US president George W. Bush: http://trade.gov/agoa/.

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