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Humanitarian Principles and Dilemmas in the DPRK

This paper will examine the four main humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, independence, and impartiality in the context of humanitarian work in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). The paper will contain an analysis of the dilemmas these principles present to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and international organisations (IOs) who work or have worked in the DPRK, and a comparison of these challenges to those found in other humanitarian contexts. I will argue that despite some particular characteristics, the humanitarian dilemmas found in the DPRK are present in other situations and are thus not wholly unique.

Delivering humanitarian aid to authoritarian states presents a challenge for NGOs and IOs as they must deal with issues of access, information, differing priorities, and the motivations of the regime. A literature review will pull together key ideas relating to the humanitarian principles and humanitarian operations in authoritarian states. In the DPRK, NGOs/IOs must be flexible with the humanitarian principles, or be willing to withdraw. By unpacking how different groups approach this choice and how these choices compare to humanitarian dilemmas elsewhere, this paper seeks to establish the DPRK context as a valuable source of humanitarian knowledge and to enrich humanitarian understanding of authoritarian contexts.

Keywords: North Korea, humanitarian aid, civil society

Introduction

The humanitarian community often refers to four guiding principles: humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence. Known as the humanitarian principles, they are derived from the core principles of the Red Cross. Humanity refers to the need to relieve human suffering. Neutrality dictates that

humanitarians should not take sides in conflict. The principle of impartiality refers to the priorities of humanitarians when delivering aid. Humanitarian groups must deliver aid based on need alone, without bias toward race, religious or political beliefs, or gender. Independence stipulates that humanitarian actors should be autonomous and free from political motives.

In reality, upholding these principles is often a challenge and humanitarian groups must frequently make hard choices. They may be in positions where they have to prioritise one principle over another. They may operate in environments where warring parties clash over humanitarian presence. They may need to compromise principles to avoid being expelled from where they are working. Humanitarian challenges and dilemmas related to the humanitarian principles are found in many environments, and are apparent in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK, also known as North Korea).

The DPRK has been a recipient of international assistance since its inception. Since its founding in 1948 until the early 1990s, the Soviet Union and China were its primary benefactors, with additional aid coming from Eastern Europe and other fraternal socialist states. These sources provided the DPRK with assistance in supporting the economy, reconstructing after the Korean War, and providing inputs so the population of North Koreans could survive. The DPRK suffered from the collapse of the Soviet Union, a reduction in assistance from China, ineffective economic policies, and a series of natural disasters. These factors compounded to result in a famine in the 1990s. Scholarly estimates tend to claim that the famine caused one million deaths, approximately five percent of the North Korean population (Haggard and Noland 2005; Liang-Fenton 2007; McCurry 2012), though other estimates range from 220,000 to three million (Smith 2002).

In response to the famine, the DPRK released its first large-scale appeal for international humanitarian aid in 1995. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and international organisations (IOs), such as United Nations (UN) bodies, answered the 1995 appeal with food aid, nutrition, medical, and

sanitation programmes. At least 55 NGOs and ten IOs had set up programmes by 1997. The majority of NGOs worked in the DPRK without a permanent residential office in the country, instead making regular or ad hoc visits to implement their projects. A small number of NGOs have been able to establish full-time residential presences, with international and national staff. By 1997, six groups had attained such status.

Since the 1995 appeal, over 200 NGOs and 18 IOs have had projects in the DPRK. The 2000s brought some changes to humanitarian engagement – with the famine over but food insecurity continuing to be a problem, many groups heightened their focus on sustainability. Projects that worked to develop North Korean capacity became more popular, in areas including agriculture, business, and healthcare. Currently, more high-level development projects run alongside programmes that deliver basic humanitarian aid.

Humanitarian agencies are met with a myriad of challenges in the DPRK. The nature of the regime requires NGOs and IOs to engage in negotiations with North Korean counterparts in every step of their work. Unlike in other humanitarian contexts where access is hindered by a power vacuum and conflict between rival forces, in the DPRK access is strictly controlled by central powers. Humanitarians cannot freely and randomly speak to North Korean citizens, travel around the country, or arrange their own projects directly with communities. Issues of access are paramount.

This paper explores the challenges and dilemmas humanitarians face in attempting to uphold the humanitarian principles in the DPRK. Since humanitarian aid to the country began, it has been met with controversy. Should humanitarians give aid to a country whose government does not act in the best interests of its people? Is providing aid a form of supporting the regime? How can humanitarians justify aid when they cannot guarantee who its end recipients are? This paper does not seek to give neat answers to these questions. Instead, an examination of the humanitarian principles in the DPRK allows for a richer understanding of their meaning, implications, and the challenges humanitarians

face in upholding them. This analysis is supplemented by consideration of other contexts where the principles present dilemmas. By comparing the DPRK to other humanitarian situations, this paper aims to bring the DPRK into larger conversations about aid. Additionally, exploring the DPRK in tandem with other contexts dispels the notion that the DPRK is too unique, too different, or even too 'crazy' to be worth including in such conversations. While the DPRK undeniably presents its own challenges, it is the belief of the author that shoving the North Korean case into a corner and labelling it as 'other' is a loss for both the bodies of humanitarian knowledge and North Korean studies.

Literature review

This paper uses ideas from transnationalism, North Korean studies and humanitarian studies. Transnational relations concern interactions where at least one actor is not a state government or acting on behalf of a state government. According to Risse-Kappen (1995), the impact of non-state agents is dependent on the domestic structure of the 'target' state and the degree of international institutionalisation. Transnationalism is a useful tool for studying humanitarian aid in the DPRK as the theory considers both domestic and international factors. The DPRK's domestic structure is at the core of many of the dilemmas humanitarians face, while a relatively robust degree of international institutionalisation of humanitarianism supports ideas of access for aid delivery, responding to populations in need, and using non-state actors to deliver aid. This combination results in an acceptable movement internationally that supports the basic idea of aid for the North Korean people, but meets challenges with a closed authoritarian regime.

Kim Jong Un's regime, like that of his father and grandfather before him, attempts to control all aspects of North Korean life and society while also engaging in aggressive and illegal behaviour in international relations. Examples include missile launches, nuclear tests, illicit drug smuggling, and the 2017 murder of Kim's half-brother in Malaysia. While the DPRK engages in 'rogue' state behaviour, it cannot simply be described as crazy or irrational. Smith

(2000) describes attempts to characterise the DPRK as irrational as falling under the bad, mad, and/or sad paradigms. Kang (1995) posits that the DPRK is not irrational and its behaviour can be explained systematically.

Ideas from humanitarian studies literature on delivering aid in authoritarian states compliment Risse-Kappen's ideas of transnationalism and domestic structure. Paik (2011) argues that for authoritarian regimes, the decision on whether or not to allow international humanitarian aid into a country is based on risk and need. Walton (2015) asserts that humanitarians need to consider the motivations of the regime, the capacity of local actors, and the international context when dealing with authoritarian states.

Previous research has explored the humanitarian principles and their role in NGO operations in greater depth and detail. Leader (2007) explores dilemmas found in the principles and how these dilemmas have shifted as conflicts have changed (i.e. blurring of lines between combatants and civilians). He maintains that the principles act as a compass for humanitarians to position themselves in relation to other actors. Stoddard (2002) explores three categories of humanitarian NGOs: religious, Dunantist, and Wilsonian. Dunantist groups, named for Red Cross founder Henry Dunant, are characterised by their intellection and political background, focus on advocacy and human rights, and tendency to oppose government. Wilsonian NGOs, named for American president Woodrow Wilson, have a practical/technical focus and often work more with governments. Schloms (2005) proposes three approaches taken by NGOs when faced with humanitarian dilemmas: affective, introverted, and extroverted. Affective groups have varied mandates, characterise vulnerability as physical (i.e. gender, age, disease), and do not get involved in politics. Introverted NGOs tend to work in agriculture, disaster relief and/or development, view vulnerability as physical and economic, and see humanitarian aid as taking place within a political environment. Extroverted groups often work emergency medical aid with a limited mandate, emphasise the principle of impartiality, view vulnerability as political and social, and regard politics as a negative force in humanitarian work. These studies show different ways that humanitarians can

apply the principles in practice.

Principles and Dilemmas in the DPRK: Humanity

The Red Cross defined the principle of humanity as aiming to ‘prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found’ (ICRC 1965). Groups that endure difficult working conditions do so for reasons connected to this principle. ‘Wherever it may be found’ is pertinent to the DPRK situation, highlighting the principles of humanity’s universality and lack of exclusion based on political or other reasons. Groups that choose to endure these challenges and devise ways to work in the DPRK seem to be guided most strongly by this principle. These groups accept compromises in other areas for the sake of attempting to reduce human suffering.

Humanitarianism does not pretend that aid automatically contributes to alleviating human suffering. The concept of ‘Do no harm,’ which is outlined in a book by Mary Anderson of the same name, relates to humanitarian aid’s capacity to not only help but also to cause harm to the communities it aims to reach. This is also encapsulated in the paradox of humanitarian action – ‘it can contradict its fundamental purpose by prolonging the suffering it intends to alleviate’ (Terry 2002, 2) by supporting negative situations and allowing those who cause suffering to remain in power without needing to fulfil the basic needs of the people. This is one of the main criticisms of humanitarian aid in the DPRK. Critics say aid ‘props up’ the regime by supplying inputs that can be diverted directly, i.e. rice that can be given to feed the military, or indirectly by allowing the regime to spend less on areas such as food – and thus freeing up more cash for things like nuclear tests. Groups that adhere to this interpretation of aid, or that are on the more cautious side of ‘do no harm,’ are unlikely to find suitable conditions for their work in the DPRK.

Even groups that withdraw from the DPRK acknowledge the great amount of need – gaps in food security, medical care, disaster resilience, and other areas necessary for survival are rarely contested, though the specifics of need such as how

widespread food insecurity is or to what extent the medical system is functioning may be debated. Thus group withdrawal is not necessarily a rejection of the principle of the humanity based on a lack of suffering, but more hinged on the concepts of do no harm and the humanitarian paradox. A report from Doctors without Border/Médécins sans Frontières (MSF) from the year they withdrew from the DPRK sums up its position: ‘we don’t know if this aid is loosening the famine’s stranglehold on those suffering from starvation or not. Moreover, because this aid does not give rise to questions on the cause the disaster, we may reinforcing the very system that starves and enslaves a part of the population’ (Biberson 1998, in Binet et al. 2014, 103).

Do no harm and the humanitarian paradox are not concepts created in response to the DPRK. These questions must be asked in all humanitarian crises. In this way, the DPRK is not particularly unique. The response groups and individuals may have towards the humanitarian paradox – such as supporting aid in spite of its potential ability to prolong suffering or arguing that aid should not be delivered as it bolsters the regime – are informed by the specific context of the DPRK. Recognising that dilemmas of humanity characteristic of humanitarian aid in general are very present in the DPRK allows for both integration of the DPRK into a larger conversation about aid and dispels the myth that the DPRK context is too unique for comparison.

Principles and Dilemmas in the DPRK: Impartiality

While access has improved in the twenty-one years of international humanitarian assistance to the DPRK, it is still controlled and restricted. Groups have no way of knowing if their aid recipients are truly the most needy. Upholding the principle of impartiality is a nearly impossible task in the DPRK. This is not to suggest that aid in the DPRK is squandered on the well-off – aid recipients, especially those in capacity building programmes, or members of typically vulnerable groups such as children or the disabled, generally do have need. They may simply not be the most needy. Without the ability to make free and independent needs assessments, humanitarians are unable to decide who is the neediest for themselves.

Since the DPRK government must approve all aid, individuals who the regime wants to hide and/or punish for their perceived wrongdoings will not have access to assistance. Lautze explains, ‘the more important an individual is to the state, the better treated his family will be. This is counter to the humanitarian’s objective of serving the most needy first’ (1997, 10). Food aid must be channelled through the government ration system, which NGOs/IOs have noted is not evenly accessible for all North Korean citizens (Bennett 1999, 3). Channelling aid through the PDS may reduce the burden for NGOs to set up their own distribution system, but sending inputs through a biased government institution goes against the operational values of many NGOs. Individuals in prison camps are wholly unavailable for humanitarian access, and mentioning their existence may jeopardise a group’s standing with the authorities.

Groups that choose to work in the DPRK, despite the difficulty of reaching the most vulnerable, pursue different strategies. Some focus on target groups that are in need of assistance as a whole, such as children or the disabled. Many NGOs include the ability to reach the most vulnerable in their negotiations. In 2011, a group of American NGOs (Christian Friends of Korea, Global Resource Services, Mercy Corps, Samaritan’s Purse, and World Vision) conducted a needs assessment and recommended the US government fund a programme that emphasised targeting the neediest (Portella 2012). The programme did not go forward – the NGOs alleged political interference, while USAID claimed the decision was based solely on the unsatisfactory ability to ensure aid would go to those with the most need. ‘We are verifying that the people who are receiving the goods are in fact vulnerable. We require them to show us a list of vulnerable people and match those goods to the names ... and we can verify that the goods have arrived at paediatric hospitals and there are hungry kids’ (interview with Jim White of Mercy Corps in Quinn 2011). Mercy Corps is demonstrative of an NGO that wishes to uphold the principle of impartiality and is satisfied that the conditions in the DPRK are conducive to doing so.

Other groups have come to different conclusions. Action Against Hunger/Action Contre la Faim (ACF) withdrew from the DPRK due to a belief that aid ‘does not reach the most vulnerable and is completely controlled by the government for its own benefit’ (Reltien 2001, 159). This goes in direct contradiction

to ACF's charter, which states 'Action against Hunger refutes all discrimination based on race, sex, ethnicity, religion, nationality, opinion or social class' ('Our charter,' ACF). MSF also cited concerns about reaching the vulnerable when it withdrew from the DPRK. One key experience during MSF's time in the DPRK was that of trying to provide help to 'street children': 'Neither UNICEF nor anyone else had access to these children because officially they didn't exist. The authorities said that they didn't exist. We were ready to take care of them' (interview with Marie-Rose Pecchio in Binet et al. 2014, 114). MSF was not allowed access to the children and their proposal for an additional programme was rebuffed. The team left shortly after.

The challenges of upholding the principle of impartiality in the DPRK are extreme, as limits of access are extreme. Humanitarians have confronted similar issues with different underlying causes in other contexts. In Somalia, limited access caused by the collapsed state resulted in aid being delivered more on the basis of access than need (Hammond and Vaughan-Lee 2012). In Ethiopia, fighting in 2007 between the government and the Ogaden National liberation Front (ONLF) resulted in accusations that World Food Programme (WFP) aid was being used by the government to reward those who did not have ONLF ties (Binet 2011). These are two examples of more classic dilemmas of impartiality – humanitarians can be accused of favouring political or ethnic groups, for either real or perceived reasons. While the DPRK does not have ethnic cleavages, political designations of citizens by the government may affect access to aid.

A bit of food for thought on impartiality: critics of aid in the DPRK often cite diversion as a major issue. Several individuals with experience delivering aid in the DPRK have pointed out to me that in other contexts, aid is dropped from planes. In these cases, the end recipients can be estimated but of course not ensured. By contrast, aid agencies in the DPRK are expected to account for every grain of rice.

Principles and Dilemmas in the DPRK: Neutrality

According to the principles of neutrality, humanitarians 'may not take sides in

hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature' (Red Cross 1965). While the DPRK remains technically at war, the Korean context is quite different from most cases of conflict where humanitarian aid must navigate – there are no power vacuums affecting aid delivery, opposing factions with different views of aid, or concerns over physical safety and violence. Neutrality is often associated with conflict, but contexts without violent conflict can also have issues of access and neutrality as demonstrated by the Burmese military junta's initial rejection of humanitarian aid after Cyclone Nargis in 2008. Critics of the principle accuse neutrality of potentially manifesting as silence in the wake of human rights abuses, and/or condoning mistreatment. Some advocate for solidarity over neutrality, arguing that humanitarian groups have a duty to speak out for victims. Others claim in complex emergencies, there is no chance to truly uphold neutrality (Seabolt 1996).

According to the argument of aid 'propping up' the regime, humanitarian groups violate the principle of neutrality. In this line of thinking, humanitarian groups are not neutral – they have sided with the regime and are in collaboration with a government that commits human rights abuses. This has also appeared in other contexts, such as Somalia, where humanitarian aid that went through 'the nascent state in order to build its legitimacy and capacity' was argued to violate the principle of neutrality (Menkhaus 2010, S320). It is sometimes argued that humanitarian aid is prolonging suffering because it is allowing the regime to stay in power. While debate and consideration of the negative effects of aid is welcome and needed, these allegations are too far-reaching and ambiguous – it is unlikely the regime would collapse solely from the withdrawal of aid, and there are no guarantees that collapse would not result in a period of great suffering. Leader (2007) poses a relevant question on the dilemma between access and neutrality: 'What will have the greatest impact on upholding the rights of conflict victims?' Groups that choose to work in the DPRK appear to believe it is access.

Another viewpoint deems that by working in the DPRK, NGOs are embodying the principle of neutrality by not succumbing to political considerations or disagreements with their countries of origins. Slim echoes this sentiment, reminding us that 'Truly neutral relief workers and peacemakers are not indifferent,

unprincipled, vacillating creatures destined for the vestibule of hell. On the contrary, they have a determined commitment to particular ideals' (1997, 347). Through this interpretation, NGOs in the DPRK are not only not guilty of violating the principle of neutrality, but they emphasise it (Ojardias 2013).

The issue of remaining silent in the wake of atrocities and violations of human rights is one of the major debates surrounding the principle of neutrality. In one view, aid agencies do not criticise government policies enough, resulting in a silence that 'easily lends itself to be misinterpreted as silent consent' (Maragliano 2002, 183). Nobert Vollertsen, a German doctor who worked with Cap Anamur before being expelled from the country for speaking out against the regime, believed being silent was a major injustice (Becker 2005, 222). Many groups and individuals that believe in speaking out against providing humanitarian aid have instead become involved with campaigns advocating for human rights in North Korea.

In order to gain and maintain access in the DPRK, humanitarians cannot speak out against human rights abuses. In Sudan in 2009, the government expelled 16 NGOs after accusing them of collecting information on human rights abuses – leaving an estimated 1.5 million people without aid (Ferris 2011, Labonte and Edgerton 2013). Around the same time, humanitarian agencies operating in the north of Sri Lanka were prohibited from making public comments without prior government approval (Labonte and Edgerton 2013). This effectively robbed agencies of the opportunity to report freely on adverse conditions and violations of human rights. In the Somali contexts, aid groups often relied on local militias to broker security deals. This left agencies bound to the interests of the militia (Menkhaus 2010). In the DPRK, humanitarians do not need to choose between warring factions inside the country, but still have to sacrifice a portion of their voice to satisfy the interests of the government.

Principles and Dilemmas in the DPRK: Independence

The Red Cross defines independence as the need for their societies to 'always maintain their autonomy so that they may be able to act in accordance with the Red Cross principles' (1965). For humanitarian agencies, this means that groups must be

free to pursue their work without influence from their home country. Autonomy is a prerequisite for neutrality and impartiality, because without the ability to make sovereign decisions, groups may be unable to choose to operate in ways that uphold these principles (Leader 2007).

Independence was a source of confusion for DPRK authorities, which were unaccustomed to working with the international humanitarian community in the mid-1990s (Bennett 2005). Following the release of several articles quoting MSF team members on the famine situation in the DPRK, MSF reported that ‘The [Flood Damage Rehabilitation Committee, a North Korean body] doesn’t really understand why MSF sends out political messages when we’re humanitarian workers’ (Pecchio 1998 in Binet et al. 2014, 96). Compounding this confusion was the use of aid for political goals, especially by the United States and the Republic of Korea (ROK, or South Korea), notably in nuclear talks. It is impossible for NGOs to fully de-link from politics in any context, but NGOs must make concerted efforts to be as autonomous as possible to have success in the DPRK. Relying on government funding or agreements, as some American NGOs have done, can result in access being denied from either the DPRK or the home government for political reasons.

In the DPRK, the concept of independence has spread to include not only the influence of governments, but also other aid groups. The early years of aid saw several consortia and cooperative groups form. These efforts have not continued on the same scale, though some NGOs may regularly send representatives to conferences or share information with selected other groups. Instead, many NGOs now operate independently from other aid organisations inside the country. The DPRK has not cultivated an environment where humanitarians can easily collaborate – for example, an individual entering the country with one NGO may have to leave and re-enter in order to work with a different NGO.

Using humanitarian aid for political purposes in international negotiations is not unique to the DPRK. After expelling NGOs in 1999, Sudan used humanitarian access as leverage in international negotiations. One result was that the United States adopted a new strategy towards Khartoum that emphasised diplomacy, protection for

civilians, humanitarian conditions, and easing sanctions (Labonte and Edgerton 2013). In other cases, humanitarian NGOs have been cognisant of their perception as representatives for their home countries even if this was not their intention. In Chad, NGOs attempted to combat the perception that they were imposing Western forces by providing greater training and employment of local staff. While this may have eased concerns that groups had ulterior political motives, it raised questions of neutrality (Egeland, Harmer, and Stoddard 2011). In Pakistan, MSF chose to use funding only from private sources, not governments, and avoid the use of the term NGO as the term carried connotations of American funding, UN ties, and religious motivations (Whittall 2011).

Implications

This paper has demonstrated that upholding the humanitarian principles in the DPRK is a challenge for humanitarian agencies. Groups must decide their threshold for access at what cost, and grapple between maintaining a principled, ethical stance and securing access to deliver aid. The DPRK is a unique case as the regime has such a high level of control. However, there are still parallels to be found with other humanitarian contexts. The DPRK should not be excluded from debate and discussion of the humanitarian principles for being an outlier. The experience of humanitarian groups and their decisions in the DPRK can enrich humanitarian knowledge and provide a point of comparison for other challenging situations.

The DPRK has been a recipient of international humanitarian aid for over 20 years. Some things have changed in this time – groups have two decades of experience and a better understanding of what to expect when working in the DPRK, and humanitarians have found greater space for innovative projects in capacity building. Rather than regard the situation as temporary, as some experts did in the mid-1990s because they believed regime collapse was on the horizon, humanitarians must be realistic in their considerations of the future of aid. Examining aid in the DPRK is also useful for North Korea watchers, as changing priorities can be reflected in the types of projects the authorities

welcome. Challenges to the humanitarian principles are inevitable in the DPRK, as they are in every context. Humanitarians must continuously revisit their relationship with the humanitarian principles. Questioning the principles at their core is also fruitful. Some humanitarians advocate for a principle of solidarity over neutrality, for example. Examining the humanitarian principles with regard to the DPRK allows humanitarians a valuable opportunity to re-think these principles in the face of new challenges.

Analysing the role of the humanitarian principles, the challenges in upholding them, and comparing and contrasting the DPRK to other humanitarian crises is not simply an intellectual exercise. The decisions humanitarians make in their relationship with the humanitarian principles affects their access, which in turn affects aid delivery to the North Korean people. While DPRK citizens do not have a voice in this debate at the present, their interests must be held in the centre of all considerations. Only time will tell if the North Korean people will thank humanitarians or condemn them for their time in the country.

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Humanitarian principles. Humanity: Human suffering must be addressed whenever it is found. The purpose of humanitarian action is to protect life and health and ensure respect for human beings. Neutrality: Humanitarian actors must not take sides in hostilities or engage in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature. Impartiality: Humanitarian action must be carried out on the basis of need alone, giving priority to the most urgent cases of distress and making no distinctions on the basis of nationality, race, gender, religious belief, class or political opinions. While neutrality is not specifically mentioned in the Geneva Conventions or Additional Protocols, there are provisions that can relate to aspects of neutrality. PDF | Humanitarian diplomacy has emerged as a concept to promote and dissuade certain types of humanitarian action. The concept took hold mainly in the | Find, read and cite all the research you need on ResearchGate. The concept took hold mainly in the post-Second World War era and the advent of global humanitarianism. It is a distinct form of diplomacy. Governments, international organizations, and non-governmental organizations conduct humanitarian diplomacy in the hope of influencing the policies of other governments and international organizations. Humanitarian diplomacy also looks to raise public awareness about humanitarian issues. The concept is, however, not free from controversy or from challenges. Humanitarian challenges and dilemmas related to the humanitarian principles are found in many environments, and are apparent in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK, also known as North Korea). The DPRK has been a recipient of international assistance since its inception. Since its founding in 1948 until the early 1990s, the Soviet Union and China were its primary benefactors, with additional aid coming from Eastern Europe and other fraternal socialist states. These sources provided the DPRK with assistance in supporting the economy, reconstructing after the Korean War, and providing Nicholas Leader cautions, however, that these humanitarian principles cannot be seen as the expression of a universal ethic, because they were historically a compromise between military-political necessity and the dictates of conscience and humanity.³ The "deal" was that the belligerents accepted the role of the humanitarian workers on the condition that humanitarian action would not interfere with the conflict itself. The dilemmas of humanitarian action were, for example, agonizingly exposed in the huge assistance operation for the Rwandan refugee camps in Zaire in 1994.