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Anja Papenfuss (p. 1)

Editorial: A Decisive Year Ahead

Fusun Türkmen (pp. 3–9)

**From Libya to Syria:
The Rise and Fall of Humanitarian Intervention?**

The United Nations has a wider range of preventive diplomacy instruments at its disposal than ever before. These include Special Envoys and Mediators, field missions, dedicated entities at the UN Secretariat, such as the Mediation Support Unit and the Standby Team of Mediation Experts, regional and sub-regional organizations and development actors, such as Resident Coordinators and Peace and Development Advisors. Recent experiences illustrate that despite certain limits, preventive diplomacy can achieve positive results. However, challenges in the form of financial, operational, and political obstacles have to be overcome. The United Nations can use the newfound interest of member states in conflict prevention—driven in part by financial pressures—to its advantage to strengthen preventive diplomacy measures. Humanitarian intervention has long been held hostage to the concept of national sovereignty. Throughout the Cold War, the principle of non-interference in internal affairs has prevailed over the protection of civilians. The post-Cold War genocides perpetrated in Africa and the Balkans have led to the emergence of the ›responsibility to protect‹ (R2P). In the wake of the Arab Spring, the international intervention in Libya appeared to be a turning point, as it was explicitly meant ›to protect civilians‹. When Syria was set afire shortly after that, the regime engaged in mass killings and atrocities, including the use of chemical weapons against the civilian population. But this time, the international community refrained from military action. While attempting to identify the reasons for this contradiction, this article will seek an answer to the question: Is this already the end of humanitarian intervention?

Thorsten Benner (pp. 10–14)

**UN Crisis Diplomacy:
Increasingly Helpless and Irrelevant?**

Syria, Iraq, Ukraine – these are just a few of the crisis hotspots that challenge the United Nations. In none of these cases can the United Nations claim anything close to success. This article puts the problems of UN crisis diplomacy into perspective. Increasing geopolitical fissures have buried the liberal dream of a UN-centric order and contribute to the limits of action, especially in cases where the core geopolitical interests of key powers are at stake (like in Syria, Ukraine). But even where there is very limited geopolitical rivalry (e.g. South Sudan), crisis diplomacy is challenged by rising expectations of protection combined with insufficient means, the often underrated veto power of local elites as well as weaknesses of political mobilization. Despite its systemic weaknesses, the United Nations is unlikely to be challenged in its role as ›provider of last resort‹ in political and humanitarian crises.

Three Questions to: Ivan Šimonović (p. 14)

Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights on Human Rights Situation in the Democratic Republic of Korea

Devin Joshi · Roni Kay O'Dell (pp. 15–20)

How UNDP Human Development Reports Changed the World

For twenty-five years, Human Development Reports (HDRs) produced by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have promoted ›human development‹ based on the imperative of expanding people's capabilities to lead meaningful lives of their own choosing. Supporting this perspective, HDRs compare countries on the composite Human Development Index (HDI) as a way of measuring development as an alternative to measures of economic growth and per capita income. Assessing whether Human Development Reports have changed how people around the world think about development, the authors conducted qualitative and quantitative content analysis of their global academic and mass media coverage. They found that the media frequently covers HDR publications in all world regions and that coverage is largely favorable.

Ingvild Bode (pp. 21–26)

Agents of the Status Quo or Agents of Change?

How UN Officials Can Influence Processes of Policy Change in the United Nations

UN officials are more easily associated with the status quo than with change. Apart from the UN Secretary-General and his Special Representatives, their work has therefore been subject to limited attention. However, the development of major ideas such as human development or sovereignty as responsibility can be associated with the actions and personalities of specific, temporary UN officials. This article argues that temporary civil servants can become agents of change if three factors are combined: first, they occupy insider-outsider positions at the border between the ›second‹ and the ›third‹ United Nations; second, they have the ›right‹ personal qualities; and third, they are able to frame their ideas effectively at an opportune moment in time. These arguments are illustrated with two cases: Mahbub ul Haq and human development and Francis Deng and the international concern for internally displaced persons.

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Anja Mihr

Jan Eckel: *Die Ambivalenz des Guten. Menschenrechte in der internationalen Politik seit den 1940ern (The Ambivalence of the Good. Human Rights in International Relations Since the 1940's)*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Rupprecht 2014

Manfred Kulessa

Kerstin Leitner: *When only the Sky Is the Limit*, Berlin: lulu.com 2014

Roy D. Morey: *The United Nations at Work in Asia: An Envoy's Account of Development in China, Vietnam, Thailand and the South Pacific*, Jefferson: McFarland 2014

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