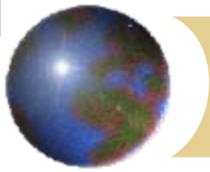


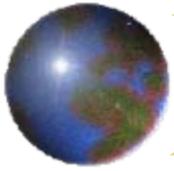
*Disaster Diplomacy and the Dilemma of
Humanitarian Intervention: The case of
Myanmar/Burma in comparison with China*

Miki HONDA,
Waseda University



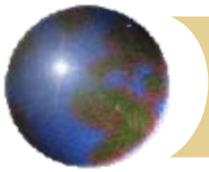
CASE :

***MYANMAR/BURMA:
CYCLONE NARGIS, MAY 2-3, 2008***



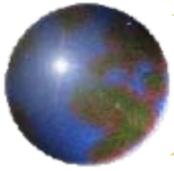
Myanmar/Burma regime

- refused to let the int'l aid supplies and aid personnel.
- did not issue visa except for the limited personnel.



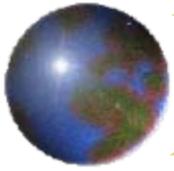
Why?

- because the regime is deeply suspicious of the outside world
- because humanitarian intervention is like a threat of sovereignty
- because the regime pretended to retain control over its population, using the state-run media
- because Burmese were supposed to vote on an important referendum on a proposed constitution backed by the military



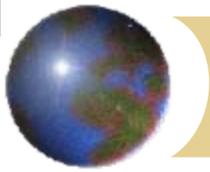
Many countries expressed outrage at delays in allowing aid.

- UNSG Ban Ki-moon expressed his deep concern and immense frustration and warned of the threat of infectious disease taking hold.
- Especially US, UK, France and Australia argued that the int'l community should live up to its responsibility to protect and deliver aid without the regime's consent.
- French foreign minister, Bernard Kouchner, proposed the invocation of the R2P, saying that Myanmar's refusal to the foreign aid was "a crime against humanity."



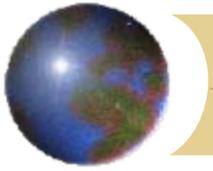
The series of statements by the international community leaders

- hardened the Myanmar/Burma's attitude.
- aroused antipathy of China, Russia, Indonesia, Vietnam and South Africa.



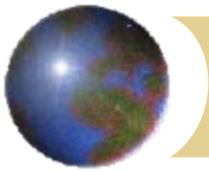
ASEAN and neighboring countries played an active role in changing minds of the regime.

- ASEAN decided to develop rescue activities in cooperation with UN and to send medical personnel .
- ASEAN set up an ASEAN-led task force for redistributing foreign aid through Thailand.
- Thai Prime Minister Samak Sundaravej negotiated on Washington's behalf to persuade Myanmar's government to open the door to Western aid.



In this way, thanks to the efforts of ASEAN and neighboring countries, Myanmar allowed aid supplies from the west.

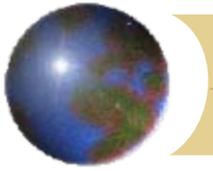
But sovereignty remains a sticking point.



Some cases in Asia suggest that there are warming to humanitarian aid intervention.

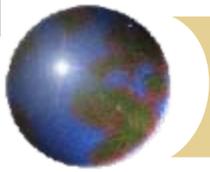
For example, Pakistan government decided to give access to international relief agencies and accepted food and relief aid from neighboring India, with which it has fought three wars over Kashmir.

(on the occasion of 2005 earthquake)



China is another example which opened up the country to the int'l aid.

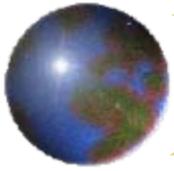
Earthquake in Sichuan on May 12, 2008



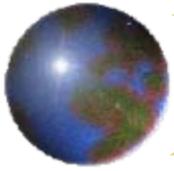
China's "extraordinary leadership"

(Ban Ki-moon, UN Secretary-General)

- opened up the country.
- called for international aid publicly.
- opened a hotline for the U.S. military to have increased communication with its Chinese counterparts.
- eased media restrictions to report the real situation of disaster sites to the world.
- accepted foreign aircrafts to transport food and medical supplies, tents, water and others.



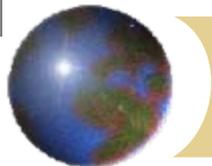
***ARE R2P PRINCIPLES APPLIED
TO NATURAL DISASTER CASES?***



The international society has been up to nonintervention policy in principle.

⊕ UN Charter

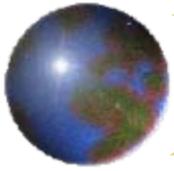
⊕ Genocide Convention



Yet,

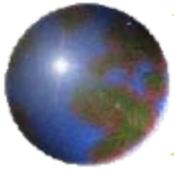
After the international community experienced the Rwanda genocide in 1994 and the failure to halt the 1995 Srebrenica massacre in Bosnia.

□ R2P seeks to bridge two concepts: the international community's responsibility to act in the face of the gravest of human violations, and respect of the sovereignty of states.



R2P principle deals with 4 specific crimes mentioned below.

- The int'l community protects vulnerable population from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

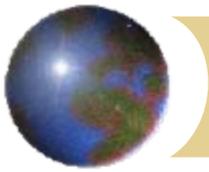


Myanmar/Burma's crime?

The crime the Myanmar/Burma regime committed can be a crime of humanity as the French foreign minister said.

It's a crime of omission or a crime of neglect. The level of culpability appears to be less in the case of genocide.

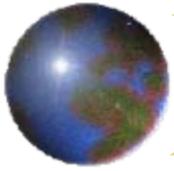
But we can't decide it's the same crime as the 4 specific ones which R2P refers.



□ We cannot easily apply R2P to natural disasters which R2P does not suppose.

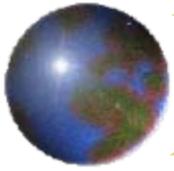
The international community needs to define such a case of overwhelming natural or environmental catastrophes, where the state concerned is either unwilling or unable to cope, or call for assistance, and significant loss of life is occurring or threatened.

We need another principle or create a new kind of disaster cooperation law in Asia?



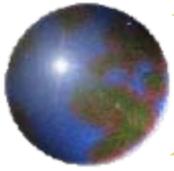
In parallel with the theoretical debate, we need to make a successful loop of disaster activities.

- Make the best of int'l mechanism of disaster relief we already have (e.g. OCHA, IASC)
 - Share disaster experiences and know-how of disaster activities with neighbors
 - Try to arrive at confidence-building
- We need to talk about disaster activities on a routine basis. Based on the relations of trust, peaceful utilization of foreign military aircrafts can be possible.



Partnerships with

- international organization
(UN-related agencies: OCHA, IASC, INICEF, WHO, WFP...)
- regional organization (ASEAN)
- neighboring countries
- local authorities
- NGOs (Medecines sans Frontieres, Save the Children, World Vision...)
- media

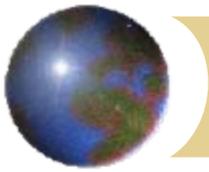


In the Asia-Pacific region,

⊕ We have different political systems and historical backgrounds, and diversified cultures, traditions, and religions. The level of development differs.

→ It seems hard to find “unified view” to a resolution.

However, disaster-related activities are one of the fields of which we can cooperate and work together.



References:

Disaster History, Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, OCHA at <http://ochaonline.un.org/roap/DisasterHistory/tabid/4837/Default.aspx>

Myanmar/Burma Briefing (No. 1&2), Asia-Pacific Center for the Responsibility to Protect, May 2008.

"Armed Force Not Part of the Responsibility to Protect," *Canberra Times*, 12 May 2008.

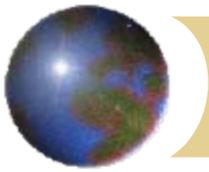
RSIS Commentaries, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University Singapore, 14 May 2008.

Press releases by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 9 July 2008, at http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/press/release/h20/7/1181505_912.html

Myanmar in Crisis, Council on Foreign Relations, May 12, 2008.

Burma/Myanmar: "Facing Up to Our Responsibilities" by Gareth Evans, *The Guardian*, 12 May 2008.

Call for "Disaster Diplomacy" as Millions Are Affected, Worldwatch Institute, June 12, 2007



Thank you for your kind attention!