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## September Roundtable: Introduction

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## September Roundtable: Introduction

### Abstract

An annotation of:

"The New Colonialists" by Michael A. Cohen, Maria Figueroa Küpçü, and Parag Khanna. Foreign Policy. July/August 2008.

### Keywords

Human rights, Humanitarian aid, Colonialism, Development

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**"The New Colonialists" by Michael A. Cohen, Maria Figueroa Küpçü, and Parag Khanna. *Foreign Policy*. July/August 2008.**

An annotation

For many, international aid agencies and humanitarian organizations provide incomparable services to those in the world's poorest and weakest states. However, according to authors Cohen, Küpçü, and Khanna, the increasingly direct role of these groups demands further consideration. Specifically, the authors contend that when weighing the positive aspects of foreign aid assistance, it is necessary to examine the underlying causes and consequences that have allowed for the entrenchment of these groups in the politics and economics of states and populations in need.

**"The thin line that separates weak states from truly failed ones is manned by a hodgepodge of international charities, aid agencies, philanthropists, and foreign advisors. This armada of nonstate actors has become a powerful global force, replacing traditional donors' and governments' influence in poverty-stricken, war-torn world capitals."**

Comparing the typically invasive policies and practices of aid agencies and humanitarian organizations with those of former European empires, the authors label these groups "new colonialists." The authors point to the fact that in providing drastic degrees of political, economic, and social-welfare assistance, these groups do little to allow feeble states to grow and develop independent of outside support.

**"As a consequence, many of these states are failing to develop the skills necessary to run their countries effectively, while others fall back on a global safety net to escape their own accountability."**

Thus, the development of national infrastructures in weak and vulnerable states remains hampered due to continued dependence on aid agencies and organizations, which in turn actively maintain structures and cycles of dependence. As a result, it is necessary to question the apparent role of aid agencies and humanitarian organizations in contributing to the failure of stable development. Moreover, the argument continues, the "new colonialists" have been instrumental in further establishing detrimental policies and practices that cement their position in places and among populations of need.

**"Many aid organizations will say that their ultimate goal is to ensure their services are no longer needed. But aid organizations and humanitarian groups need dysfunction to maintain their relevance. Indeed, their institutional survival depends on it...No matter how well-intentioned, these new colonialists need weak states as much as weak states need them."**

Given the business aspects of aid assistance, particularly in providing much needed services across the globe, aid agencies and organizations rely on the continued inability and lack of resources of weak states for sustained employment. Furthermore, as these groups create a competitive market for access to needy states and populations, one must ask if the established

structures of dependence will ever be broken. Needless to say, it is essential for the international community, states, and, most importantly, aid agencies and humanitarian organizations to reconsider the methods and consequences of assistance.

**These issues and others are considered in this month's Roundtable.**