Humanitarian Aid and Intervention: The Challenges of Integration

The basic idea of humanitarian assistance—delivering medicine, food, and other supplies to relieve suffering and save lives—appears to be a simple one. Yet, there is a serious debate between different humanitarian organizations, official donors, governments, and the United Nations regarding the operational approach to the delivery of aid that ought to be adopted.

In recent years, harmful side effects of humanitarian aid, such as the strengthening of the grip of armed groups over the population, various forms of aid diversion, and the fostering of dependency among beneficiaries, have been widely discussed. In the starkest cases, some humanitarian organizations have made the decision to withdraw from crises altogether because, in their judgment, continuing their operations on the ground in the particular political environment would do more harm than good to civilians in need.

Recognition of these potentially harmful effects took place amid an unprecedented number of complex international interventions in intrastate conflicts in the 1990s. From these experiences, many concluded that the lack of, or difficulties in achieving, success in efforts to bring peace and long-term stability to conflict-ridden regions could be attributed to the fact that interventions involved multiple actors with varying mandates undertaken in uncoordinated fashion. In response, the United Nations articulated an "integrated" approach, under which military interventions to bring stability, political efforts to introduce democracy, human rights attempts to prevent impunity, and humanitarian endeavors to save lives were to be managed within a common institutional framework mindful of these broader concerns. With respect to humanitarian action, the integrated approach aimed to coordinate the efforts of UN agencies, NGOs, and other components of the "humanitarian community" in order to avoid duplication or gaps and to make humanitarian assistance more effective.

The role of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has become key in this regard and its approach is widely supported by official donors. OCHA aims to ensure that all humanitarian issues are addressed, including those that fall outside of agencies' existing mandates, such as protection and assistance for internally displaced persons; it is responsible for advocacy of humanitarian issues with political organs, notably the Security Council; and it coordinates the humanitarian emergency response. In UN missions, OCHA's resident humanitarian coordinator reports directly to the

secretary-general's special representative, who is entrusted with the overall political leadership.

The motivation behind an integrated approach is a concern for helping people. Even so, and despite the apparent virtues of the integrated framework, some humanitarian organizations have sharply criticized it. The contributors to this section represent different sides in this debate about the integration of humanitarian assistance. Their positions highlight at least three contested operational approaches to the delivery of aid: one in which humanitarian organizations make their own decisions regarding allocation of aid; another in which they retain their decision-making independence but collaborate systematically and on an equal footing with other actors; and a third in which there is a coordinated and centralized mechanism that integrates all components of an intervention into the pursuit of a single strategy aimed at peace, stability, and security.

These disagreements highlight differences among NGOs, donors, the United Nations, and governments in both the principles and the practical goals of their approaches to humanitarian assistance. At stake is striking the right balance between helping all human beings in dire need according and proportionate to need alone, and helping to build structural conditions for a stable peace. How priorities are established will determine how aid will be allocated among possible recipients—which involves trade-offs between many individual human lives.

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HUMANITARIAN AID AND INTERVENTION:
THE CHALLENGES OF INTEGRATION

Humanitarianism Sacrificed: Integration's False Promise

Nicolas de Torrenté

In recent years, there have been concerted efforts to ensure that the different components of the international response to crisis-affected countries, whether conducted under the banner of the United Nations or not, are integrated in pursuit of a stated goal of comprehensive, durable, and just resolution of conflict. This includes a drive to purposefully make humanitarian assistance to victims, one of the principal forms of outside involvement in crisis situations, supportive of the "international community's" political ambition. The implication of the coherence agenda is that meeting lifesaving needs is too limited in scope, and that the principles of impartiality, neutrality, and independence that have typically characterized humanitarian action should be set aside in order to harness aid to the "higher" goals of peace, security, and development.

There is no doubt that, beyond immediate survival, peace, political representation, justice, and socioeconomic development rank high among the wishes of people attempting to survive amid conflict and crisis—leaving aside for a moment the very different meanings they may give to these broad and ill-defined concepts. However, transforming humanitarian action into a presumptive tool of conflict resolution is unjustifiably and unnecessarily detrimental to people who suffer the ravages of war. First, the assertion that

meeting essential needs can go hand in hand with promoting peace and development is belied by the conditionality and selectivity that characterize the actual deployment of humanitarian assistance under the coherence model. In reality, aid is often either deployed as a reward or denied as a sanction in the name of a brighter future, which results in many avoidable deaths. Second, sacrificing or sidelining the humanitarian imperative of immediately saving lives based on assessed needs for future unproven benefits is not only ethically untenable—it is also unnecessary. This is because the role of aid in conflicts is misunderstood. The use of aid as an incentive in conflict zones does not promote peace any more than aid directly provided to those in need fuels war. Third, to link purposefully the deployment of aid to the broader international response to crises as a matter of consistent policy requires a leap of faith—or rather a willful denial of reality—that actual international responses serve the interests of conflict-affected populations. In particular, it overlooks the fact that deliberate neglect—aside from the selective allocation of aid—is often the main form of international political engagement.

It is critical that humanitarian organizations first and foremost focus on their responsibility to provide direct assistance to people in immediate need, wherever and

whoever they may be. Rather than accepting the instrumentalization of humanitarian action in the service of political ends, however well intended, or as a mask of the lack of political interest to respond to crises, humanitarian actors must always be in a position to challenge governments to meet their principled responsibilities—both with regard to humanitarian action itself and with regard to the political nature of conflict and crisis. For it is mainly the failure of governments to act that both undermines humanitarian action and allows crises with massive human consequences to persist.

POLITICS AND THE ALLOCATION OF AID

The coherence agenda's euphemistic promise of carrying out lifesaving assistance while at the same time promoting longer-term conflict resolution and development obscures the stark trade-offs that often take place in practice. Instead of impartiality—the allocation of assistance based on immediate need alone—its operating principle is triage between "deserving" and "undeserving" beneficiaries, under which aid is allocated based on people's expected contribution to the presumably higher goals of peace and development.

The crudest form of triage is conditionality. Making the delivery of aid conditional on a moral and/or political choice, such as the legitimacy and the policies of the authority in charge, is a long-standing practice of development assistance. Yet the coherence agenda extends this development logic to humanitarian aid for victims of conflict and crisis, which has long been defined precisely by its unconditional nature. A most egregious instance of humanitarian aid conditionality was the decision by the United Nations in Sierra Leone, supported by key donors such

as the United Kingdom, to withdraw staff and cut off emergency assistance to a beleaguered population after the AFRC/RUF toppled the internationally supported government of Ahmed Tejan Kabbah in 1997. A study by the Henry Dunant Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue noted that the AFRC/RUF were eventually ousted militarily rather than "starved" out of power and called this willful denial of assistance that only hurt a desperately vulnerable Sierra Leonean population "one of the most shameful episodes regarding international humanitarian action in modern times."[1]

A second kind of triage is the denial of immediate assistance in the interest of reaping future benefits. For instance, would-be refugees are often "contained" inside a war zone in the interest of not creating, or worsening, an intractable long-term refugee problem in neighboring countries. The closure of Pakistan's and Iran's borders to refugees during the U.S. military offensive against the Taliban in late 2001 is one such example. The policy of introducing cost-recovery schemes to fund health-care services, not only in economically and politically stable developing countries but also in intensely poor and conflict-ridden ones, is based on a similar premise.[2] The longer-term interest of building a sustainable health-care system is viewed as paramount, despite the often-catastrophic effects on the delivery of immediate lifesaving services for the population. In Burundi, for instance, the population has been weakened by years of war, displacement, and bitter

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[1] David Bryer, "Politics and Humanitarianism: Coherence in Crisis?" Henry Dunant Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, February 2003, p. 11; available at www.hdcentre.org/datastore/files/pandh.pdf.

[2] Tim Poletti, *Healthcare Financing in Complex Emergencies: A Background Issues Paper on Cost-Sharing*, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, November 2003.

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poverty, and suffers from unacceptably high mortality rates. Against this background, a recent study by Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) found that, under the "full cost recovery" policy introduced in 2002 at the behest of major donors, close to one-fifth of the population was denied access to primary health care for financial reasons.[3]

The third kind of triage is selectivity, where assistance is not provided to certain victims because doing so is expected to compromise "more important" political interests. In Angola, following UNITA's negotiated surrender in early 2002, the UN-led international response to the massive nutritional emergency affecting hundreds of thousands of civilians and ex-UNITA fighters was woefully late and inadequate, resulting in thousands of unnecessary deaths. In the face of government mistrust, the United Nations' primary objective was to secure a role for itself in the peace process, particularly in the area of demobilization and disarmament, the monitoring of human rights, and the oversight of eventual elections. While aid was not explicitly used as a bargaining chip, the United Nations did not pursue the humanitarian imperative vigorously and independently for fear of compromising these political interests. Instead of ringing the alarm, pushing for access, and mobilizing resources, the United Nations refused to contemplate an urgent humanitarian intervention in the quartering and family areas—where death and malnutrition rates were well above emergency thresholds—before a comprehensive agreement covering all aspects of the United Nations' activities there had been reached with the government. It further enjoined NGOs not to break ranks in order to present a unified front to the government, for instance, by calling on donors not to fund NGOs, such as MSF, who sought independ-

ently to provide assistance in the midst of the emergency.[4]

Conditionality and selectivity of aid are most pronounced in cases of external intervention, when armed force is used by Western powers (either under the aegis of the United Nations or not) against one of the parties to a conflict, such as in Sierra Leone, Afghanistan, or Iraq, followed by an international stewardship of the "liberated territories." In these instances, aid is conditionally deployed to reward allies and promote politico-military goals, and the resources mobilized for assistance are in stark disproportion to actual needs—as the allocation of over 50 percent of the UN worldwide humanitarian aid budget in 2003 for Iraq attests.[5] Moreover, independent humanitarian action is also compromised and undermined by the way humanitarian values are co-opted and subsumed at the service of the interveners' politico-military agenda. In these interventions, arguments about collective security are meshed with references to universal morality, such as the promotion of democracy and human rights. Ostensibly minimizing harm and visibly providing assistance are therefore key means of legitimizing what are being presented as "just wars." A well-publicized focus on the "humanitarian" component of the intervention also serves to obscure and sideline the

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[3] Médecins Sans Frontières, *Access to Health Care in Burundi: Results of Three Epidemiological Surveys*; available at www.doctorswithoutborders.org/publications/reports/2004/burundi_2004.pdf. The introduction of a lower, "all-inclusive flat fee" in MSF programs to mitigate the impact of full cost recovery also resulted in almost 10% of the population being excluded from health care.

[4] On Angola, see Médecins Sans Frontières, "Angolans Left to Die: Abandoning the Humanitarian Imperative," October 2003; available at www.doctorswithoutborders.org.

[5] See UN OCHA's financial tracking system at www.reliefweb.int/fts.

scrutiny of crimes that may be committed during the prosecution of military operations and is an essential component of the political battle for support in home countries.

When governments keen on "winning over hearts and minds" make all assistance, including humanitarian aid, an integral part of their overall politico-military enterprise, it can have damaging consequences for the ability of humanitarian organizations to gain access to populations in need, and for the safety of aid workers.[6] This is because the fundamental principles of independence, impartiality, and neutrality not only characterize humanitarian action's single-minded purpose of alleviating suffering, unconditionally and without any ulterior motive— they also serve as operational tools that help in obtaining the consent of belligerents and the trust of communities for the presence and activities of humanitarian organizations, particularly in highly volatile contexts. Making aid organizations associates of Western politico-military efforts makes them prominent targets for violent opposition, particularly for extremist groups for whom killing unarmed aid workers is an easy means to further their strategic goal of destabilizing and undermining the international community's political project (which in reality is highly dominated by the agenda of Western powers). Making aid conditional on the population's collaboration with military forces, as was announced in leaflets distributed by the U.S. military in southern Afghanistan, for instance, contributes to suspicion and violence against all aid workers.[7] The result is that the ability of humanitarian organizations to access populations and deliver assistance is severely curtailed—as the current situation in both Afghanistan and Iraq illustrates. In Afghanistan, which currently receives much less attention than Iraq, tar-

geted attacks against aid organizations have escalated as fighting between the Afghan government backed by the U.S.-led coalition, on the one side, and insurgents, on the other, continues to rage. More than thirty international and national aid workers have been killed since early 2003. On June 2, 2004, three international and two Afghan MSF staff were murdered in Baghdis province in an attack for which the Taliban claimed responsibility.[8] In contexts like this one, subjecting assistance to conditionality and selectivity in pursuit of higher politico-military goals makes meeting even emergency survival needs more difficult, as illustrated by MSF's recent decision to withdraw from the country.

HUMANITARIANISM IN PRINCIPLE AND PRACTICE

These examples show that when political objectives and immediate humanitarian concerns conflict, the hierarchy of priorities inherent in the coherence agenda often results in humanitarian interests being sacrificed or sidelined in the name of a "greater good." The conditional and selective assistance implied by the coherence agenda results in ethically unjustifiable and practically

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[6] See Nicolas de Torrenté, "Humanitarian Action under Attack: Reflections on the Iraq War," *Harvard Human Rights Journal* 17 (Spring 2004), pp. 1–30.

[7] One leaflet pictured an Afghan girl carrying a bag of wheat and read: "Pass on any information related to Taliban, Al Qaeda and Gulbaddin to the coalition forces in order to have a continuation of the provision of humanitarian aid." Another leaflet read: "Any attacks on coalition forces hinder humanitarian aid from reaching your areas." See Kenny Gluck, "Coalition Forces Endanger Humanitarian Action in Afghanistan"; available at www.msf.org/countries/page.cfm?articleid=409F102D-A77A-4C94-89E0A47D7213B4D5.

[8] See Médecins Sans Frontières, "Doctors Without Borders Shocked by Killing of 5 Staff in Afghanistan," press release, June 3, 2004; available at www.doctorswithoutborders.org/pr/2004/06-03-2004.shtml.

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avoidable loss of life. While often mistakenly presented as promoting a win-win equation of lifesaving aid and peace, in practice the coherence approach poses unacceptable and unnecessary trade-offs.

Ethically, there is no justification why future benefits derived from achieving peace or development should outweigh the immediate right of victims to receive lifesaving assistance. Humanitarian action is built on an ethic of refusal; that is, it "directly challenges the logic that justifies the premature and avoidable death of a part of humanity in the name of a hypothetical collective good."[9] For medical practitioners in particular, there is a clear ethical obligation to direct efforts to prevent death and alleviate suffering. Political, socioeconomic, and other conditions define a framework of possibilities, and political, socioeconomic, and other consequences of taking action must be taken into account—but doing so should and could be done without fundamentally compromising the lifesaving imperative that underpins the medical act.

Further, from a purely consequentialist view, it is not evident why providing humanitarian aid independently will in fact impede progress toward peace and development. Indeed some have made the opposite point, that the delivery of humanitarian aid in wartime conveys values of humanity and fraternity that are communicated to all parties in a conflict and hence play a key role in the construction of a meaningful peace. Francis Sejersted, chairman of the Norwegian Nobel Committee, noted in his presentation speech at the Nobel Peace Prize ceremony in 1999: "The peace Alfred Nobel was thinking of when he established the prize was a peace that is rooted in men's hearts and minds. By showing each victim a human face, by showing respect for his or her human dignity, the fearless and selfless aid worker creates hope for peace and reconciliation. That brings us to the heart of the matter, to absolutely fundamental prerequisites for peace."[10]

In practice, conditionality presumes that allocating aid as a reward or denying aid as a sanction are effective political instruments. Not only is the evidence for this scant, but the rationale for making aid a tool of conflict resolution—a means to an end rather than an end in itself—is based on a flawed premise. In recent years, it has somewhat paradoxically been derived from the conventional wisdom that "aid fuels war," particularly in conflicts where access to resources is seen as a primary driver. This has led to arguments that by understanding how aid contributed to conflict, it could be shaped to promote peace, a notion popularized under the banner of the "do no harm" approach.[11] But there is a critical difference between viewing aid as a causal factor that motivates or defuses conflict and simply understanding that aid necessarily impacts the dynamics of conflict in a manner that varies depending on the conditions under which it is distributed. What is in fact at stake for humanitarian organizations is to maximize the benefits of aid delivery for the affected population while minimizing its unavoidable negative side effects, such as co-optation and diversion by armed groups.

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[9] Jean-Hervé Bradol, "The Sacrificial International Order and Humanitarian Action," in Fabrice Weissman, ed., *In the Shadow of 'Just' Wars': Violence, Politics, and Humanitarian Action* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2004), p. 5.
[10] Speech available at www.nobel.se/peace/laureates/1999/presentation-speech.html.
[11] See Mary B. Anderson, *Do No Harm: How Aid Can Support Peace—or War* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1999). Anderson does argue that aid is good, and that her focus is not on removing it but on making it better. However, there is little discussion of how a potential conflict of interest between peace promotion and immediate relief should be handled, opening the door for interpretations that promote minimizing or even withholding aid in order to "do no harm."

This entails ensuring that there is humanitarian space—the possibility for the independent assessment of needs, deployment of aid according to needs alone, and close monitoring of the delivery of assistance to the intended beneficiaries. In exceptional circumstances, humanitarian space shrinks to the extreme: the negative can outweigh the positive and abstention becomes the best option. This occurred when the genocidal authorities' total control of the Rwandan refugee camps in Zaire dictated that aid served to strengthen their grip over the population more than alleviate its suffering. Similarly, MSF chose to withdraw its operations from North Korea in 1998 because the greater part of the aid was irrevocably co-opted by government officials. In order to minimize the potential or actual negative impact that aid can exert on the dynamic of conflict, it is the responsibility of humanitarian organizations to be vigilant about the conditions under which aid is deployed. This meaning of responsibility, however, is wholly different from deciding to whom and how aid should be allocated to serve political goals.

There are in fact no cogent principled or pragmatic reasons to sacrifice or sideline humanitarian action. By extending the logic of development assistance in peacetime to humanitarian action in war, the coherence approach both misunderstands and undermines the specificity and relevance of humanitarian aid for victims of conflict and crisis. Humanitarian action is a reaction to actual observed need and suffering. As long as a crisis continues to create victims, humanitarian action carried out independently and impartially to meet their urgent needs remains extremely relevant. When the needs generated by the conflict abate and as an uncontested political authority emerges, humanitarian aid should be accompanied and eventually superceded by reconstruction and development assistance. It is normal and acceptable practice for such aid programs to be carried out under the direction of the politically legitimate and capable authority in charge, which is in turn supported by it. In these ideal circumstances, the need for, and relevance of, unconditional and immediate humanitarian action fades away. Yet, there is often much pressure for aid programs to fall "coherently" in line to support the emerging political order as soon as a diplomatic agreement has been reached or a peace process is under way. The way most integrated UN missions established to support transitions from war to "peace," as in Afghanistan or Liberia, have made humanitarian assistance a pillar that directly reports to the political leadership from the outset is an example of this logic. This, however, often entails wishful or even delusional thinking, as conflict may continue in parts of the country, reconstruction assistance may be slow to arrive, and/or certain population groups may well be excluded or discriminated against in the course of the political rebuilding process. In those instances, there is no reason for humanitarian action, with its sole commitment to the people in need, to abdicate its responsibilities, and its ability to respond independently should be preserved and defended.

DENYING THE REALITY CONCERNING GOVERNMENTS' RESPONSE TO CRISES

Consistently making aid a tool of conflict resolution does not only entail glossing over the impact of conditional and selective aid on the survival needs of populations caught up in crisis—it also requires presuming that the international response to crises is in fact "coherent" and that international political will is being mustered commensurate with the need of populations for protection and assistance. But it is evident that the foreign

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policy objectives and actions of major powers rarely coincide with the interests of conflict-affected populations. Indeed, aid assessments and funding flows are massively skewed according to varying foreign policy objectives.[12] And while the few international military interventions receive great attention, the most common form of international response is in fact deliberate neglect.

This does not mean that a positive correlation between international political and military actions and humanitarian access and assistance cannot exist. Notwithstanding the efforts of humanitarian organizations, gaining access to people in need and ensuring that they receive assistance is extremely difficult in certain political and military environments, particularly ones that are marked by great physical insecurity. Since most conflicts are internal, belligerents are the key forces relevant to the delivery of aid to be reckoned with in this respect. However, international interventions in conflict can benefit the physical protection as well as the material assistance of populations in grave danger. For instance, the rescuing by U.K. troops of embattled UN peacekeepers in Sierra Leone in 2001 had the effect of improving overall security and opening up parts of the country for easier assistance.[13] But it does not follow that recognizing this positive correlation in certain instances means that humanitarian action's operating principles should be set aside to proactively associate aid delivery with the international political response to crises in general, particularly considering the different forms these international responses can take in practice.

More frequently than carrying out military intervention, governments choose to respond through involvement, such as has been the case in the Sudan, Angola, and North Korea. In those crises, the international community has displayed a formal concern about the massive humanitarian problem, while subjecting aid operations to a strong political agenda—whether it is the attempt to prop up a peace agreement or to contain possible international aggression.[14] International engagement has essentially taken the form of a partisan political and diplomatic involvement with the objective of containing a crisis within certain limits that would not challenge the interests of the most powerful states. Involvement serves the purpose of visibly conveying the impression that the crisis is being addressed, when in fact it is being managed and contained. When aid becomes one of the principal forms of international political action in a given context, the stakes associated with the control, direction, and impact of aid programs are magnified, as was the case in Angola. The result is that, despite the availability of often-significant quantities of aid, deployment is not driven by the interests and needs of the victims.

With respect to conflicts associated with the greatest numbers of civilian casualties, the international reaction has been generally to refrain from intervention or to become involved in a marginal way.[15] The displayed indifference to the extreme brutality of conflicts such as in the Democratic Republic of the Congo stems from the fact that the violence and deprivation suffered by populations are not considered to be a sufficiently important objective by those international actors that are capable of addressing them. In

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[12] See Ian Smillie and Larry Minear, "The Quality of Money: Donor Behavior in Humanitarian Financing," Humanitarianism and War Project, April 2003; James Darcy and Charles-Antoine Hoffman, "Humanitarian Needs Assessment and Decision-Making," Overseas Development Institute, September 2003; available at www.odi.org.uk/hpg/papers/hpgbrief13.pdf.
[13] Bryer, "Politics and Humanitarianism," p. 13.
[14] Bradol, "The Sacrificial International Order and Humanitarian Action," p. 16.
[15] Ibid., p. 18.

such circumstances, humanitarian action is left to deal with belligerents who have, in effect, been delivered a license to kill in a total war with few, if any, international restraints. Without international accountability for violations, and enforcement, of international humanitarian law, humanitarian aid is effectively deployed in a political vacuum. As a result, it is reduced far below actual requirements and subjected to intense pressure by the belligerents, resulting in increased predation, diversion, and hence violence. The situation in Chechnya and the neighboring republics of Ingushetia and Dagestan is a vivid example: international powers have only paid lip service to the devastating humanitarian legacy of a conflict characterized in particular by brutal Russian military operations, while at the same time aid workers are being kidnapped, intimidated, and harassed, and Chechens displaced in Ingushetia have been forcibly repatriated against their will.[16]

Whether it is intervention, involvement, or abstention, the international response to crises is driven primarily by political considerations, rather than the need of the affected population for protection or assistance. In these circumstances, the key question is why it would be justified, beneficial, or necessary to purposefully align aid delivery with such varying responses, particularly given the largely deleterious implications of each type of response on the ability to deploy assistance unconditionally to those in need.

FULFILLING POLITICAL AND HUMANITARIAN DUTIES

Governments have political responsibilities to address conflicts that generate massive human suffering through political engagement and, in extreme circumstances such as genocide, through more robust measures that may include military intervention. And they also have political responsibilities and legal obligations with regard to humanitarian action itself. The legal obligations—which are the result of ever-fragile international political consensus that emerged in the wake of World War II that noncombatants should be spared from the excesses of war by placing limits on the means and methods of warfare and by ensuring the delivery of lifesaving assistance during wartime—are enshrined in the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and Additional Protocols. Instead of undermining humanitarian action by enlisting it to the cause of peace and development, governments would much better serve people in crisis by actively promoting the respect of international humanitarian law and by mobilizing resources for meaningful assistance in a consistent and proportional manner. Insisting on adequate conditions for the deployment of humanitarian aid, such as access to victims, safety of aid workers, and appropriate monitoring, is a critical political responsibility—and, in fact, constitutes the polar opposite of making the allocation of humanitarian aid conditional on political objectives.

In the face of the growing practice of merging aid within a broader agenda, defending the merits of independent humanitarian action that is detached from the international politico-military response is often misunderstood as a nostalgic and naive call for political virginity.[17] Humanitarian action has inherent limits. It has a modest, if critically important, aim of saving individual lives and

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[16] See, e.g., Médecins Sans Frontières, "Left Without a Choice—Chechens Forced to Return to Chechnya," May 2003; available at www.doctorswithoutborders. org/pr/2003/05-06-2003.shtml.

[17] See, e.g., Paul O'Brien, "Politicized Humanitarianism: A Response to Nicolas de Torrenté," *Harvard Human Rights Journal* 17 (Spring 2004), pp. 31–41.

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alleviating suffering in acute crisis situations—and not of reshaping societies. In order for humanitarian action to be effective, this humanitarian imperative must be politically recognized and supported. Vigorously defending the right of each and every victim to survive the excesses of war has always been a controversial and politically charged act. Its idealism, best embodied in the principle of impartiality, must be backed up by hardnosed realism about political practices and interests if humanitarianism is to have a chance of prevailing against brutality, callousness, and neglect. As a concept and as a practice, humanitarian action must necessarily challenge governments to restrain their wartime behavior, to hold other belligerents to account, and to mobilize adequate resources for needs-based assistance.

In this connection, the pursuit of increased coherence between aid and the politico-military agenda of major powers raises fundamental questions about the nature of humanitarian organizations. Instead of external actors rooted within society that challenge political authority, they are promoted as partners working together with powerful governments for a common good. Proponents of integration have pointed that such association carries the benefits of greater funding for, and increased effectiveness of, delivering services to those (few) populations that receive political attention. But there are also significant costs. Among those is the ability of humanitarian organizations to hold states accountable for fulfilling their political and legal responsibilities when they become formal associates of governments. In addition to providing assistance, humanitarian organizations can contribute to the protection of noncombatants from undue violence through advocacy that calls attention to war crimes they witness, which all belligerents, including Western powers

that declare their benevolent intentions, commit. The public scrutiny of the torture of prisoners perpetrated by U.S. forces in Iraq and Afghanistan in the wake of the publication of the Abu Ghraib photos indicates that there is a growing political space to recognize and debate this reality. It also underlines the imperative that humanitarian organizations clearly and unambiguously dissociate themselves from all warring parties, and in particular from powers who readily profess to be acting in the name of humanitarianism.

In contexts in which Western powers intervene militarily, the concept and practice of impartial humanitarian action has been undermined. It is true that the capacity of independent humanitarian organizations to influence this trend is limited. In Iraq and Afghanistan, for instance, all aid organizations, whether independent or "embedded" with the coalition, are vulnerable to attack and constrained in their ability to act. Critics of the so-called classic humanitarianism have emphasized that in the context of highly politicized Western military interventions, radical opponents of the Western agenda have designated all aid organizations as targets for their murderous attacks—whether they are independent and strictly humanitarian, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, or politicized, such as the UN agencies—essentially because their origins, funding base, staffing, and value system are predominantly Western. They have stressed that since extremist forces do not accept restrictions on the means and methods of warfare inherent in international humanitarian law, it is an illusion to rely on humanitarian principles of impartiality and neutrality to ensure immunity from attack.

While delivering aid in war zones is always tenuous and dangerous, and while there is certainly no immediate solution to this quandary, this line of reasoning dismisses the

contribution that aid organizations themselves have made to the perception that their assistance is an extension of Western "hearts-and-minds" efforts by not clearly distancing themselves from the United States and its coalition partners. It also implies that by either retreating from the scene altogether or by clearly embracing a partisan role through the acceptance of funding, direction, and even armed protection from Western powers—the two most widely offered "solutions" to the security problem—humanitarian organizations essentially accept that victims "on the wrong side" in these contexts would be systematically denied assistance. Instead, a much more vigorous defense of the specificity and relevance of independent humanitarian action could, over time and with effort, counter the growing perception that humanitarian aid is part of Western political and military strategy.

Many aid agencies have opted to work with international intervention forces, particularly when they are sanctioned by the United Nations, while attempting to set some terms and limits to this cooperation.[18] They argue that their organizations aim to do more than "merely" save lives, and that the politico-military engagement of Western powers (and their funding) is an opportunity to be seized.[19] Perhaps a fruitful path is to recognize that a diversity of approaches may be useful. Agencies that decide to associate themselves with the promotion of the international—currently equivalent with the Western—agenda should openly acknowledge it, and articulate the principles that they are governed by in this "'new humanitarianism," or "politicized humanitarianism," approach.

Currently, however, a certain hypocrisy prevails, as few organizations embracing cooperation under the integrated model would want to abandon the benefits of claiming to be humanitarian—i.e., neutral and impartial—to gain access to populations, particularly in contexts where there is no international politico-military operation. It is difficult, however, to see how different approaches could be used in different instances—for example, aid organizations choosing to work alongside the United States in Afghanistan and Iraq, and to operate completely independently in the Congo. Adopting such a wide variation in operating principles assumes that conflicts are completely unconnected, and that an international humanitarian organization can insulate its reputation of being "integrated" and politicized in one context, and independent in another. This notion underestimates the role of increased information and growing transnational links between crisis situations.[20]

There is no doubt that, however ill defined, peace, justice, and development are worthy aspirations. But until these elusive goals are achieved, the independent pursuit of the humanitarian imperative, however limited and difficult it may be, remains an essential and relevant endeavor for people trapped in conflict and crisis. To bring tangible benefits to people in urgent need of help, it is necessary to support and respect the independence of humanitarian action—instead of sacrificing or sidelining it through integration in politically driven responses.

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[18] On the approach of aid organizations, in particular U.S.-based NGOs, toward the U.S. government before and during the war in Iraq, see de Torrenté, "Humanitarian Action under Attack," pp. 1–30.

[19] See, e.g., O'Brien, "Politicized Humanitarianism."

[20] For arguments in favor of a "variable" humanitarianism, see Hugo Slim, "A Call to Arms: Humanitarian Action and the Art of War" (Geneva: Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, February 2004).

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HUMANITARIAN AID AND INTERVENTION:
THE CHALLENGES OF INTEGRATION

Upholding Humanitarian Principles in an Effective Integrated Response

Joel R. Charny

The integration of political, military, and humanitarian action in responding to complex emergencies offers a compelling promise of resolving long-term problems and thereby providing peace and stability to an entire population. Significant changes are needed, however, to realize this promise fully. The most critical improvements relate to strengthening the humanitarian leadership within the UN system and so refocusing the collective effort on the protection of vulnerable civilians. A movement of independent, complementary agencies working together to realize protection will strengthen the humanitarian component of integrated missions and make a difference in people's lives.

INTEGRATION'S DIFFICULTIES

There are serious challenges to making the integration approach effective in the real world. The concept of integration is underpinned by the idea that only by addressing the root causes of conflict can societies heal and future discord be prevented. But addressing root causes is a vast project: it involves redressing historic grievances, such as those around land rights or discrimination based on ethnicity or class; reforming the justice system and facing the problem of impunity for past violations; creating pro-

fessional armed forces focused on and capable of defending the territorial integrity of the state; managing natural resources in a sustainable manner, while investing the proceeds in development of the country; creating economic opportunity so that demobilized soldiers have no temptation to reclaim their weapons and become bandits. The agenda appears unending.

The most powerful countries in the world—the permanent members of the Security Council, other member states of the European Union, Japan, Australia—have rarely applied their diplomatic and military resources to respond to conflict, state failure, and the resulting human calamities in countries considered peripheral to their political, economic, and security interests. They have written off large parts of the world and have left humanitarian agencies and the assistance they provide as the sole form of international engagement. Rather than giving politics and diplomacy a humanitarian dimension, integration has resulted in the politicization of humanitarian action.[1] Too often humanitarian personnel find themselves alone and

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[1] Joanna Macrae and Nicholas Leader, "Shifting Sands: The Search for 'Coherence' between Political and Humanitarian Responses to Complex Emergencies," Humanitarian Policy Group Report 8, Overseas Development Institute, August 2000, pp. 3–4.

unsupported in the midst of conflict situations, resulting in increased vulnerability for themselves and their programs.

Where powerful countries decide to intervene, integrated action provides them with the ability to further a political agenda—advancing the cause of the righteous, as in the war on terrorism, or providing broader support to UN-brokered peace accords in countries such as Angola or East Timor. As a result, humanitarian agencies are forced to make choices that may be partisan in substance or appearance. Agencies that refuse to be a part of the integration project in a specific country may find themselves unable to attract vital donor funding because the major donors have chosen to line up behind the integrated approach overseen by the UN's special representative of the secretary-general, in close cooperation with the internationally recognized authorities that have emerged from the peace process.[2]

Precisely because suffering in much of the world is considered of no importance, the major donor governments have trampled on an integral principle of humanitarian action: the proportionality of response to need. On a per capita basis, the response to the displacement created by the conflict in Kosovo, for example, exceeded the funding provided to displaced persons in West Africa by a factor of seven. The United States has so far devoted $18 billion for the reconstruction of Iraq, an amount greater than its entire foreign aid budget. The Bush administration's original Iraq reconstruction program called for rebuilding one children's hospital in Basra for $775 million, an amount greater than the total annual U.S. allocation to refugees. While poor infrastructure leaves hundreds of thousands of people suffering in total isolation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the United States disbursed nearly $100 million to contractors to expedite the completion of the Kabul-Kandahar road in Afghanistan to shore up political support for the embattled government of President Hamid Karzai.

INTEGRATION REAFFIRMED

There have been calls for humanitarian agencies to go "back to basics" and focus on the narrow yet noble task of relieving human suffering, guided by the core principles of neutrality, impartiality, and independence.[3] Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) exemplifies this trend, arguing that it is unethical to trade the saving of lives now for the potential saving of lives in the future, which it sees as the central implication of integrated action that aims to deal with root causes of conflict.

A return to "pure" humanitarianism is neither desirable nor possible. A golden age of pure humanitarianism never existed. The twentieth century is a record of the powerlessness of humanitarianism in the face of political movements committed to expanding their power by whatever means necessary. To save even one life is a powerful and undeniable achievement, but neutral and independent humanitarian action is often impossible to effect without corresponding diplomatic, political, and, if necessary, military action.

There is no inherent contradiction between an integrated approach and independent humanitarian action that may save lives. An effective integrated strategy, ele-

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[2] See Médecins Sans Frontières, "Angolans Left to Die: Abandoning the Humanitarian Imperative," October 2003; available at www.doctorswithoutborders.org. This report is sharply critical of the UN response to hunger among civilians emerging from the areas controlled by UNITA after the death of Jonas Savimbi.

[3] See the survey of the humanitarian movement in the aftermath of the wars in the Balkans and Afghanistan in David Rieff, *A Bed for the Night: Humanitarianism in Crisis* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002).

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ments of which are outlined below, preserves and expands the space for humanitarian agencies to respond to the needs of vulnerable people. A core premise for an integrated approach is that through it conflicts may be resolved and political reconciliation achieved. In a principled sense, integration is not about creating political winners and losers, with the losers being civilians who are cut off from contact with humanitarian agencies. Integration is about unified international action in support of reconciliation and social inclusion.

Integration of humanitarian action with wide-ranging political, economic, and social action is necessary to allow societies to heal and prevent further conflict. Humanitarian action is, by definition, limited to meeting immediate emergency needs. Humanitarian action cannot break the cycle of repeated conflict, which leads to further vulnerability. An integrated response to the fundamental problems that create discord offers the possibility of creating stability and ending or minimizing the need for humanitarian response. El Salvador, Mozambique, Cambodia, and East Timor are examples of countries that have achieved relative political stability and economic progress in the aftermath of major international interventions to support peace and initiate a process of recovery.

That there is no going back to pure humanitarianism is best articulated by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the organization that is considered the guardian of the application of the Geneva Conventions. The ICRC has recognized that humanitarian action must consist of more than adherence to core principles. In the late 1990s, it managed a multiyear collaborative process involving UN agencies and NGOs that resulted in the elaboration of the definition of protection as a concept that "encompasses all activities aimed at obtaining full respect for the rights of the individual in accordance with the letter and spirit of the relevant bodies of law (i.e., human rights law, international humanitarian law, refugee law)." According to the ICRC the activities that enhance protection include environment building, or any activity aimed at creating and/or consolidating a global environment conducive to full respect for the rights of individuals; responsive action, or any activity undertaken in the context of an emerging or established pattern of abuse and aimed at prevention and/or alleviating its immediate effects; and remedial action, or any activity aimed at restoring dignified living conditions through rehabilitation, restitution, and reparation.[4] By including environment building and remedial action within the framework of protection activities, the ICRC has in effect endorsed the philosophical underpinnings of an integrated approach.

The International Meeting on Good Humanitarian Donorship, held in Stockholm in June 2003 and attended by major donor governments, the UN humanitarian agencies, the Red Cross movement, NGO networks, and think tanks, resulted in the affirmation of principles that constitute a further affirmation of the premises of integration. In addition to endorsing core principles such as respect for international humanitarian law and human rights and the allocation of funding in proportion to needs, the group underscored the importance of involving beneficiaries in the implementation of humanitarian response; strengthening the capacity of affected countries and communities to prevent and respond to

[4] Inter-Agency Standing Committee, "Protection of Internally Displaced Persons," Inter-Agency Standing Committee Policy Paper, New York, December 1999, pp. 4, 6.

crises; and providing humanitarian assistance in ways that support recovery and long-term development, and the return of sustainable livelihoods—all key components of the integration agenda.[5]

The resulting document, "Principles and Good Practice of Humanitarian Donorship," does not, however, include provisions for enforcement of these principles or even special incentives for state actors to comply with them. Hence, it is unlikely that these principles will be observed in the real world of humanitarian policy subservient to national security interests. Nevertheless, their endorsement by major donor governments and implementing agencies provides a normative basis for agencies and individuals committed to these principles to advocate for them to be respected. Because of that, some accountability is possible to obtain through the exercise of moral suasion by the UN secretary-general and his under-secretary-general for humanitarian affairs.

CHOOSING THE BEST WAY TO RESPOND

The terrain of the war on terrorism is especially forbidding for agencies seeking to be guided by core humanitarian principles. In Iraq, neutral space is virtually unavailable, so all-encompassing is the American project. In retrospect, especially once it became evident that a large-scale humanitarian crisis would not in fact result from the U.S. invasion, agencies would have been better off withdrawing, while publicly insisting that the United States and its allies had specific responsibilities to protect the civilian population under the terms of the Fourth Geneva Convention. In Afghanistan, the entire UN system, which had carefully negotiated humanitarian space under the Taliban, has been expected to support the overall project of building a liberal, democratic future for the country—which implies that there is huge pressure to provide aid not according to need but according to one's capacity to contribute to this aim. The NGOs, especially agencies with several decades of experience in the country, have more space for independent action than they do in Iraq, but their relations at the community level are inevitably more problematic than before the intervention in 2001 as their actual links to the occupation forces and their agenda may be unclear to their local partners.

The humanitarian response system has almost no options in cases of active conflict and repressive governments that make access impossible, and outside intervention to bring an immediate halt to the hostilities is neither politically nor militarily feasible. The fighting in Darfur, western Sudan, between government-backed militias and rebel movements, with civilians terrorized by the militias, is a current, vivid example of people being almost completely outside the reach of humanitarian organizations. To date, lifesaving action in Darfur has been virtually impossible outside a few enclaves. The conflict there is a result of the Sudanese government pursuing a policy of ethnic cleansing in western Sudan at the very moment that the north-south conflict is being resolved, as negotiations to end the twenty-one-year civil war have finally been successfully concluded. The member states of the UN Security Council have refused to consider action to stop the atrocities in Darfur for fear of jeopardizing action to consolidate peace in the south.

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[5] International Meeting on Good Humanitarian Donorship, "Principles and Good Practice of Humanitarian Donorship," Stockholm, June 17, 2003; available at www.sida.se/content/1/c6/02/18/82/Meetingconclusions.pdf.

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With respect to the north-south agreement, a major international peacekeeping effort will be required to oversee it, while also providing security for the massive task of facilitating the return of more than four million refugees and internally displaced persons and rehabilitating vast areas of the war-devastated country. Political and diplomatic pressure may have to include linking a Security Council resolution authorizing an integrated peacekeeping mission in the south to progress on ending atrocities in the west. But in any case, without the resolute pressure of the United States and member states of the European Union and the African Union, the central government in Khartoum will continue its support for the militias and will not allow humanitarian agencies to operate independently in Darfur.

Eastern Burma, where one million internally displaced people receive token amounts of assistance from semi-clandestine cross-border operations from Thailand, is another case. From a protection standpoint, the critical short-term measure in such cases is to ensure that neighboring countries open their borders to refugees from the conflict, while diplomatic efforts by regional powers or by countries with leverage over the parties to the conflict must be made to bring about a cease-fire that would allow personnel of first response agencies such as the ICRC, MSF, the UN World Food Programme, and UNICEF to access populations in need.

Meaningful negotiation for access and respect of humanitarian principles is also impossible when armed movements degenerate into gangs of bandits who are no longer attempting to win the allegiance of the general population. When the bonds between these forces and civilians break completely, the only effective protection strategy is the introduction of outside mili-tary forces to stabilize the situation, prevent further violence against civilians, and facilitate humanitarian access, as demonstrated by the British in Sierra Leone in 2001 and the French operating on behalf of the European Union in the Ituri province, DRC, in 2003. In Liberia, the refusal of the United States to commit peacekeeping troops after the departure of Charles Taylor in July 2003 and the lack of a ready standing force as an alternative left displaced civilians outside the capital at the mercy of roving bands of rebels who continued to pillage communities, rape women, and terrorize the population.

Surprisingly, the integration debate includes few references to two successful examples of integration that could provide valuable lessons for addressing the current situation in Sudan. The integration of humanitarian intervention and the provision of aid are appropriate when the UN Security Council has mandated a mission to oversee the implementation of a peace agreement between the local warring parties brokered by powerful members of the international community. When the peace holds, monitored by external peacekeepers, the problems of humanitarian access and independence become less acute. After the signing of the peace accords in Mozambique, for example, humanitarian work in areas previously controlled by RENAMO, the guerilla movement that contested the central government during the 1980s, lost its partisan political significance and became at once humanitarian work to meet the needs of vulnerable people and part of an overall process of preparing the country for political unity and reconciliation. A similar process took place in El Salvador. In both cases, international humanitarian organizations were full participants in the response to the immediate needs of the local populations, and their work also became more

effective after peace was brokered and peacekeeping troops were deployed—which assured an environment more conducive to reaching vulnerable groups. In these cases, integration facilitated humanitarian action, while also placing it in a context in which agencies could begin to respond to long-neglected development problems.

TOWARD A MORE EFFECTIVE INTEGRATION APPROACH

With donors, the ICRC, the UN humanitarian system, and NGOs in alignment, holistic approaches to the relief of human suffering will remain the order of the day. The challenge is to define precisely how in the real world humanitarian agencies can undertake remedial action while remaining neutral, impartial, and independent, especially when operating within the framework of large-scale external interventions, with or without UN endorsement.

Complementarity

The starting point for an approach to integration that is effective while embodying humanitarian principles is complementarity, the idea that "a strong humanitarian movement is made up of distinct, independent actors."[6] The actual roles of these actors in humanitarian response will differ, based on their core competencies and comparative advantages in a particular situation. The United Nations should play the "central and unique role . . . in providing leadership and coordination of international humanitarian action."[7] However, the United Nations should lead in the direction of maximizing the strengths of individual agencies in contributing to a collective effort, rather than ensuring that all actors, including NGOs, are moving in lockstep toward a particular political outcome.

Operational Independence

In addition to tolerating diversity, the integration approach should also be able to tolerate a degree of separation of the humanitarian function from that of the political/diplomatic and military. In postconflict peacekeeping and reconstruction efforts authorized by the UN Security Council, the special representative of the secretary-general should continue to play the overall leadership role, but with a primary focus on the political and military aspects of the operation. The humanitarian coordinator should cooperate closely with the special representative of the secretary-general, but should report to the under-secretary-general for humanitarian affairs and the emergency relief coordinator. The humanitarian coordinator requires a degree of operational independence, precisely in order to assess the needs and ensure an effective response to the humanitarian consequences of the overall peace-building process in the respective country or region.

If humanitarian coordinators are to play this analytical and advocacy role effectively, they need to have real experience with humanitarian response. Too often in the UN system resident coordinators, whose expertise is primarily in the area of long-term development in close cooperation with national authorities, double up as humanitarian coordinators. This leads to slow recognition of humanitarian crises as, for example, in Uganda, where the internal displacement crisis caused by the war in the north between the government and the Lord's Resistance Army was largely ignored by most of the UN system until the last quarter of 2003.

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[6] Médecins Sans Frontières, "Angolans Left to Die," p. 3.
[7] International Meeting on Good Humanitarian Donorship, "Principles and Good Practice of Humanitarian Donorship," General Principle 10.

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Protection

For the integration approach to be effective, at least two other breakthroughs are required, one conceptual, the other operational. Conceptually, agencies need to start with the issue of protection and work from an analysis of the protection needs of the civilian population toward the particulars of the humanitarian assistance to be provided, rather than the other way around. Too often protection is an add-on to standard packages of humanitarian assistance, or agencies assume that the mere provision of food or medical care in and of itself constitutes protection. Starting with protection has the advantage of grounding the analysis from the beginning in international humanitarian law, while forcing agency staff to focus attention on the populations most at risk. Access to these people may be difficult, if not impossible, but recognition of the problem should place the achievement of access at the center of the diplomatic and advocacy efforts of the concerned agencies. The humanitarian coordinator needs to provide the leadership at the country level necessary to assure that assessment and response to protection needs of the civilian population are at the heart of the integrated approach of the UN system.

Local Action

An operational breakthrough would involve focusing far more effort on working locally to build an effective response to protection and assistance needs, in partnership with networks of local government officials, local NGOs, community-based organizations, religious institutions, even informal groups of concerned citizens. Despite rhetoric to the contrary, the standard operational response to emergencies still relies heavily on central planning out of the capital city or regional hub, with dependence on expatriate personnel, who have special needs for support and

security. While local institutions may be weak and vulnerable to disruption by armed groups, their personnel often have the critical comparative advantage of being able to move through or negotiate access to conflict areas and to reach populations that would otherwise be completely cut off from assistance. What is often missing is a meaningful commitment on the part of international agencies to identify promising local networks and strengthen them.

The eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo is an example of a region where an approach emphasizing support for local institutions would be appropriate and effective. Congolese are superb organizers and church networks and nonsectarian NGOs have a presence throughout the conflict zones. They have borne witness to the needs of populations subject to the predatory violence of armed groups, but have had precious few resources to respond directly to the suffering. Grants of $15,000–$20,000 to some of these organizations would have made an immediate practical difference in their ability to travel in conflict areas, document abuses, and respond to local needs. Yet in 2001 and 2002 members of a network of organizations tending to the protection and assistance needs of children found it extremely difficult to access funding from UN agencies and international NGOs based in Bukavu and Goma, the two major towns in the eastern Congo. The realization that support for local groups was critical to the effectiveness of the overall humanitarian response was lacking.

Most international NGO personnel have a deep-seated mistrust of local government officials. And indeed, these officials are often part of the protection problem. But these very same officials are often more flexible and less ideological than their national counterparts because they live closer to the population and are more directly accountable for meeting

people's needs. Local government, however, is at the end of a central government funding pipeline that usually leaks throughout; local officials seldom have enough resources to take action to solve problems. Strengthening local government institutions and placing resources in the hands of local officials through a transparent process can be a critical component of an effective response strategy to improving protection over the long term.

Proportionality and Financial Independence

The participants in the International Meeting on Good Humanitarian Donorship committed themselves to allocating humanitarian funding in proportion to needs and to exploring the possibility of reducing earmarking and introducing longer-term funding arrangements. In the real world, these commitments are unlikely to be realized. While the emergency relief coordinator is providing leadership to bring attention to "forgotten emergencies," as long as emergency response at the country level is funded through ad hoc consolidated appeals, countries that are peripheral to the core political and security interests of the major donors will inevitably continue to be ignored. Further, the financial commitments of the United States and its allies in the war on terrorism make a mockery of the principle of proportionality because they intend to bear any burden to defeat the enemy in a global struggle that may last decades. A possible solution would be to fund the UN humanitarian agencies through assessed contributions or, more radically, to create a single emergency response agency that is funded in this way. However, neither of these proposals seems likely to gain political traction in the current global environment.

In this context, NGOs that really want operational independence are going to have to achieve greater financial independence. Some of the major operational NGOs, such as Oxfam Great Britain, the MSF federation, and World Vision United States, are able to limit their funding from the government to about 20 percent of total revenue, which, given their overall size, affords them a high degree of flexibility to respond to need where they find it. But some of the major American humanitarian NGOs are less fortunate. For CARE USA, for example, the ratio is reversed: 83 percent of its revenue comes from government sources. For Save the Children USA the figure is 61 percent; for the International Rescue Committee, 76 percent; Catholic Relief Services, 56 percent; for Mercy Corps, 78 percent.[8] This dependence on government funding, most of which is from the U.S. government, has the potential to hinder the operational independence of the agencies, especially in countries that are on the front line of the war on terrorism.

DESPITE ITS PROBLEMS, the integration of political, military, and humanitarian action in responding to complex emergencies is here to stay. Its promise of resolving long-term problems and thereby providing peace and stability to an entire population is compelling. Significant changes are needed, however, to realize this promise fully. The most critical improvements relate to strengthening the humanitarian leadership within the UN system, resulting in re-focusing the collective effort on the protection of vulnerable civilians. A humanitarian movement of independent, complementary agencies working together to realize protection will strengthen the humanitarian component of integrated missions and make a difference in people's lives.

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[8] These figures are all for the fiscal 2002 year, calculated by the author from tables in InterAction, *Member Profiles 2002-2003* (Washington, D.C.: InterAction, 2003).

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HUMANITARIAN AID AND INTERVENTION:
THE CHALLENGES OF INTEGRATION

An Elusive Quest: Integration in the Response to the Afghan Crisis

Antonio Donini

The UN humanitarian response in Afghanistan spans fifteen years during which humanitarianism has waxed and waned. A retrospective look at this period provides insights on an interesting range of approaches and respect/disrespect for basic humanitarian principles. Afghanistan shows, for example, that definitions of what was "humanitarian" have expanded and contracted to suit particular political contexts. During the Taliban period the definition of humanitarian action was extremely wide and covered rehabilitation and even development activities; post–September 11 we see a dangerous level of contraction that compromises the application of its basic principles for the sake of pursuing nation-building activities in the service of political agendas. Similarly "coherence" and "integration" have become loaded terms. Once used to describe the aspiration for a higher level of concern for humanitarian and human rights principles in the context of multidimensional peace missions, they have now become euphemisms for the subordination of principles to political objectives. My own perspective, having witnessed this evolution on the ground in Afghanistan, is that of a lapsed integrationist who has become a doubting insulationist.

HUMANITARIAN ACTION AS A COLD WAR TOOL

Humanitarian action in Afghanistan has always been subject to varying degrees of political instrumentalization. During the mid to late 1980s, humanitarian assistance was used as a tool for political and military objectives, to give the Soviet Union "its Vietnam." The context was the Cold War, and overt manipulation was fair game.

When the UN humanitarian agencies, who had been confined to assisting refugees outside the country, appeared on the Afghan scene after the 1988 Geneva Accords that resulted in the eventual withdrawal of Soviet troops, they found a very messy situation with an array of NGOs sponsored largely by the United States and other Western governments providing so-called humanitarian assistance to mujahedin commanders. The inept often combined with the unscrupulous: cash was liberally handed out and compromises with unsavory commanders were made from which it became very difficult to disentangle. The United Nations tried, with difficulty, to introduce a more principled approach and reduce the one-sidedness of aid. A "humanitarian consensus" was negotiated with all parties to the conflict and, in order to reduce the stranglehold of Pakistan-based agencies on the assistance market, the United Nations opened

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offices and set up programs in Iran and the Soviet Union as well as in Kabul and other Afghan cities. It thus was able to operate cross-border and cross-line from government-held cities to territory controlled by the resistance according to its concept of "humanitarian encirclement." Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) remained essentially Peshawar- (and Quetta-) based, and considered the very thought of opening offices in Kabul an anathema.[1]

Donors had no qualms about imposing their political agenda on the NGOs they funded and attempted to do so with the United Nations. I recall, for example, how a major donor used strong-arm tactics to try to convince the United Nations to pre-position food aid outside government-held towns besieged by the mujahedin in order to "draw out" the civilian population so that the mujahedin could step up their offensives. These were times of no accountability and happy-go-lucky operationalism.[2]

When the Najibullah regime collapsed in April 1992, Afghanistan dropped off the screen. There were no longer any ideological stakes to fight for. Afghanistan became an orphan of the Cold War and the political patrons of the cross-border NGO cottage industry suddenly lost interest. Paradoxically, it became easier for the United Nations and true humanitarian NGOs to advocate for a more principled approach. Also, some of the more shady characters left the Afghan circuit and many mainstream international agencies with proven track records, who had eschewed the Afghan context during the cross-border period, were now on the scene. Afghanistan thus confirms the rule that when superpower interests are at stake, principled humanitarianism suffers. Conversely, when the superpowers are not paying attention, principles have a better fighting chance. This is largely because in the latter case it is the humanitarian people—not their political colleagues—who are calling the shots in the donor bureaucracies. It should be noted, also, that in those Cold War days, integration as an operational template in complex crises had not yet appeared on the horizon.

THE STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK PERIOD

Following the fall of the Najibullah regime in April 1992, intense factional infighting with frequently shifting alliances replaced the anti-communist struggle. Aid workers started asking themselves some hard questions and massive soul searching spread through the humanitarian community in 1992–94. What did the assistance effort add up to? Were humanitarians part of the problem or of the solution? The field-based quest for more effective and principled action was combined with UN headquarters processes aimed at improving overall UN performance in intractable crises in accordance with the unitary approach that was articulated in the UN secretary-general's "An Agenda for Peace." As a result, in 1998 the Strategic Framework for Afghanistan was born of the frustrations of agencies in the field with a seemingly unending war in which the impact of humanitarian action was questioned, and of a more overarching concern at headquarters for a more coherent, UN-

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[1] During the Najibullah period there were no international NGOs in government-held territory (except for IAM, a religious health organization). Oxfam was the first international NGO to open shop in Kabul, in late 1991. ICRC had a presence throughout the war years.
[2] See Antonio Donini, "Principles, Politics, and Pragmatism in the International Response to the Afghan Crisis," in Antonio Donini, Norah Niland, and Karin Wermester, eds., *Nation-Building Unraveled? Aid, Peace and Justice in Afghanistan* (Bloomfield, Conn.: Kumarian Press, 2004), pp. 120–24.

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wide response to crises. The key assumption was that by reducing the disconnects between the political, humanitarian, and human rights functions of the external interventions there was a better chance for an effective peace strategy to emerge. This was both the strength and, in the end, the indictment of the Strategic Framework.

Contrary to what some revisionist interpretations have claimed,[3] the objective of the Strategic Framework was to provide a stronger voice, or at least equal billing, to the humanitarian and human rights dimensions vis-à-vis the political action. It was not intended to result in the subordination of humanitarian and human rights concerns under the political banner.[4] Some organizations, particularly at the Dunantist end of the humanitarian spectrum, which, like Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), recognize themselves in the tradition of principled and operational independence that has its roots in the blood-soaked battlefield of Solferino, claimed that humanitarian action was being compromised by the Strategic Framework because it provided a single umbrella for the three components of UN action in Afghanistan—political, humanitarian, and human rights. My view is that quite the opposite happened, at least during the period between 1999 and early 2001: thanks to the Strategic Framework and the fact that the document itself contained a clear set of principles and objectives to which all segments of the United Nations had subscribed, the humanitarian voice had a better chance of being heard. This was of course facilitated by the fact that no major powers had strategic political stakes in Afghanistan, that humanitarian action was the main form of UN engagement on the ground, and that the peace process was stalled and mostly reduced to "talks about talks" with no substantive discussions among the belligerents.[5]

The Taliban were a common problem and this facilitated the search for common solutions in the aid community. There was a strong articulation of the humanitarian concerns, sometimes all the way up to the Security Council when, for example, the issue of sanctions was discussed, and in negotiations on humanitarian space with the Taliban. In the case of Afghanistan, it can be argued that issues of principles and rights got a hearing because of the relatively strong degree of unity in the humanitarian assistance community and because the Strategic Framework allowed better access to the political levels.

The donors also supported the process—sometimes for very partisan reasons. By and large, donors refused to dip into their development pockets: everything had to have a humanitarian label for fear of being seen as providing capacity-building support to the Taliban. This, however, resulted in the expansion of the humanitarian agenda to encompass a range of activities that in other least developed countries would have been called development efforts.

Of course, Taliban Afghanistan was a highly unusual place. While the UN humanitarian agencies struggled to gain access to an increasingly vulnerable population suffering from the combined effects of conflict,

[3] Mark Duffield, Patricia Gossman, and Nicholas Leader, "Review of the Strategic Framework for Afghanistan," Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit , Islamabad, 2001; available at www.areu.org.af/publications/strategic%20framework/strategic_framework.pdf.

[4] For a more detailed analysis of the Strategic Framework, see Donini, "Principles, Politics, and Pragmatism," pp. 126–30, and the bibliographical references provided therein.

[5] William Maley, "The UN in Afghanistan: 'Doing Its Best' or 'Failure of a Mission,'" in William Maley, ed., *Fundamentalism Reborn? Afghanistan Under the Taliban* (New York: New York University Press, 1998).

discrimination, and the worst drought in living memory, their relationship with the Taliban deteriorated. On the humanitarian side, more progress was made on operational issues, such as negotiating access to internally displaced and internally stuck people in need, than on matters of principle, such as the Taliban's discrimination against women and girls, and other human rights abuses. The Taliban were, and felt, increasingly ostracized by the international community and Afghanistan transitioned from failed to rogue state, dashing any hopes of a peace agreement. In the end there was little integration between the humanitarian and the human rights pillars of the Strategic Framework, on the one side, and the UN political pillar on the other. The main integration was within the assistance community, which was broadly united under the objectives of the Strategic Framework. Much effort was devoted to developing common programming both in specific functional sectors and geographical areas. The successful coordination of emergency activities—for the victims of conflict, displacement, and drought—was a good example of this. It is true that the Strategic Framework was based on the assumption that assistance activities would "advance the logic of peace." Aid-induced pacification, however, was more virtual than real.

PRINCIPLES UNDER STRESS

After September 11, 2001, the situation changed utterly. Whatever coherence the Strategic Framework may have brought to the overall humanitarian and human rights efforts in Afghanistan was shattered by the political hurricane that followed. Principles were swept under the kilim. Humanitarian action lost its prominence and human rights concerns were wiped off the UN agenda.

First, the nature of the crisis was radically changed by the U.S.-led intervention. It resulted in a process of taking sides in the conflict by the United Nations and the assistance community, to an extent that was not immediately apparent to aid workers but was to the "spoilers" and "losers"—the remnants of the Taliban and other groups bent on weakening the newly legitimized Karzai government. Humanitarian actors who had been part of the Afghan landscape for many years and who had been broadly accepted by all parties to the conflict were now being viewed with suspicion by the losers, if not as legitimate targets in their war effort. This was because the humanitarian agencies in the post–Bonn peace agreement euphoria accepted the conventional wisdom that their erstwhile interlocutors, the Taliban, were no longer a player with which a dialogue needed to be maintained. This in turn broke the social contract of acceptability that normally allows humanitarian agencies to operate in volatile environments. Second, the Bonn peace agreement was a deal among victors, supported by the international community, rather than a comprehensive settlement among all parties. It gave legitimacy to one particular group or, rather, to a disparate coalition of groups put together by the U.S.-led coalition. This one-sidedness came back to haunt. It was made worse by the warlords who returned armed and bankrolled courtesy of the United States' ill-informed largesse. They were remembered and feared for their past abuses and the hopes of the population for an end to the cycles of impunity were dashed.

Third, principles were compromised even before the Bonn peace agreement was signed: in an unprecedented step, in October 2001, all of Afghanistan's neighbors closed their borders to asylum seekers fleeing the intervention; neither the coalition

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countries nor any other donor country thought it fit to protest this violation of international refugee law. Moreover, for the first time UNICEF did not call for a cease-fire during the national immunization days, presumably for fear of antagonizing the coalition; and the intervening coalition itself was responsible for blurring the lines between military and humanitarian action with its food drops, the dispersion of cluster bombs of the same color as the food packets, and, later, with the deployment of Special Forces bearing arms but dressed in civilian clothes who were involved in assistance and "hearts-and-minds" operations.

Fourth, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) was established as the most integrated UN mission to date. Its operating system revolved around the twin mantras of "support the government" and "nothing must derail the peace process." In other words, politics, in the sense of a particular agenda—in this instance to support the Karzai government—ruled.

These features of UNAMA had a number of consequences. Because of the lack of decisiveness in the UN assistance pillar, into which the previous humanitarian assistance coordination structure had been folded, and the Klondike-style rush of aid agencies attracted by the sudden availability of funds, coordination essentially collapsed. Donors set up shop in Kabul and privileged their own bilateral channels and implementing agencies. This undermined multilateralism and defeated any attempt at coherence in the assistance realm. At the same time, the UN humanitarian and human rights efforts that had been a driving force—and the vehicle for coordination—in Taliban times came to be seen as antagonistic to the peace-building agenda by the political

side of UNAMA, largely because they were trying to hold on to their principled approach and were resisting the politicization of humanitarian action. It thus became much more difficult to raise human rights concerns. In the winter and spring of 2002 there were massive abuses in the north of the country—including reprisals against communities thought to be pro-Taliban, forced displacement and recruitment, as well as the killings and rape of aid workers—but there was little interest or traction on the UN and coalition sides either to document them or take action.[6] There has been little or no effort to this date to rein in the warlords (there has been some disarmament but no attempt to loosen their hold on the populations they control) and, of course, no interest in pursuing accountability for past crimes. Finally, there was a premature shift to government support mode while key issues concerning the legitimacy and remit of the Kabul government, whose authority extended little beyond the city limits of the "Kabul bubble," were unresolved.

More fundamentally, two key issues of principle deserve to be highlighted in their own right and also because they put the viability of the peace process into question. First, there was a lack of analysis of the reality of the situation on the ground. The situation was defined by the Karzai government and the United Nations as

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[6] Paradoxically, members of Karzai's interim administration were more open to addressing human rights issues but felt they could not do much without the support of the international community. On the human rights situation after the Bonn agreement, see Norah Niland, "Justice Postponed: The Marginalization of Human Rights in Afghanistan," in Donini, Niland, and Wermester, eds., *Nation-Building Unraveled?*, pp. 61–83.

postconflict to justify putting the government in the driver's seat. But it was far from clear that the conflict was over. Shifting gears to a development mode diverted attention away from the continuing dire humanitarian situation of millions of Afghans still affected by drought, displacement, and grinding poverty, while it was far from clear that the government, justifiably concerned with showing that it was in charge of the reconstruction process, was willing or able to devote an adequate priority to addressing humanitarian needs. Moreover, it wasn't clear that if the government was in charge it would allow humanitarian agencies to work according to established humanitarian principles. Now, large swathes of the country are off-limits because of the security risks to aid workers and programs, and in those areas the humanitarian needs are likely to increase because of the inability of the assistance community to address them.

Second, as is now painfully obvious, as in Iraq, the humanitarian community in Afghanistan is perceived by groups of insurgents and their supporters as having taken sides in the "western conspiracy" against Islam in general. In particular, it is seen as providing a prop for the Kabul administration, whose legitimacy is questioned and whose writ outside the capital city remains weak. The very real dangers faced by humanitarian workers are reinforced by the essentially Northern nature—in terms of funding, nationality of staff, values, and behavior—of the humanitarian enterprise. In both countries, the acceptability of humanitarian assistance, which is the basis of its protection, is now in doubt. Humanitarian organizations' emblems no longer protect and humanitarians are no longer able to be in touch with and talk to those who deny them their space.

THE FUTURE OF HUMANITARIANISM?

All of the above is not necessarily the fault of the United Nations. Much more powerful forces are at play. Afghanistan is a crucial field in the global "war on terror"; it has become a political laboratory for processes that are now happening on a larger scale in Iraq. Nevertheless, the question needs to be raised: If it is true that humanitarian action in Afghanistan was subsumed under a political agenda, did the process of integration of the humanitarian and assistance activities of the United Nations within UNAMA result in the compromising of humanitarianism and in the shrinking of humanitarian space? Was an alternative possible? Having transferred the humanitarian baton to the government, if the situation deteriorates further and humanitarian needs suddenly grow, how well placed is the aid community to perform its traditional functions in such a fraught environment?

The intervention in Afghanistan provides the first post–September 11 example of "world ordering." Coming after the intervention in Kosovo and before the war in Iraq, it provided for the initially optimistic experimentation with some of the recommendations of the 2000 Brahimi report. Politically, the jury is still out on whether this was an effective approach. From a humanitarian and human rights perspective, however, the consequences of some of the trade-offs made are starting to come into focus. Short-term gain at the cost of not addressing the issues of warlordism and human rights abuses may well lead to long-term pain—a resurgent Taliban, continuing insecurity, and a very uncertain future for the people of Afghanistan and the capacity of humanitarian organizations to respond in case of a new crisis.

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Afghanistan, as Iraq, raises wider issues. Since the end of the Second World War the humanitarian enterprise has grown in fits and starts—by molecular accretion rather than as part of an overarching, rational design. This process of patching up may have reached its structural limits: the ongoing movement of tectonic plates triggered by the events of September 11 and the "war on terror" may well increasingly force humanitarianism into functions for which it was not intended. The substantive subordination of humanitarian action to political strategies linked to the global "war on terror" and the use of aid as a tool for the foreign policy objectives of the remaining superpower and its allies does not bode well for principled humanitarianism. Nor do the linkages between humanitarian action and the wider processes of economic, social, and cultural globalization. If humanitarian action is evermore "of the global North" and seen as such not only by violent and militant groups but by wide sectors of public opinion in the "Third World," its claim to universality—one of the cardinal principles of the human-itarian tradition—will become increasingly tenuous.

Humanitarians have cause to be concerned. A recent mapping of the implications of Iraq and other crises for the future of humanitarian action has shown how deep is the malaise in the aid community.[7] Will humanitarianism ultimately go the way of subordination and integration into political designs or will it be able to rebound, perhaps with a more focused agenda centered around fundamental principles? The question remains open for now, but change is likely in the air. Humanitarian agencies can form a powerful constituency able to influence the public, the media, parliaments, and even the powers that be. If there is to be a redress of humanitarianism, perhaps it is time for this collective voice to be heard.

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[7] "The Future of Humanitarian Action: Implications of Iraq and Other Recent Crises," Report of an International Mapping Exercise, Feinstein International Famine Center, Tufts University, January 2004; available at famine.tufts.edu/pdf/Humanitarian.mapping.final.report.jan14.pdf.

HUMANITARIAN AID AND INTERVENTION:
THE CHALLENGES OF INTEGRATION

Understanding Integration from Rwanda to Iraq

*Joanna Macrae**

The past decade has seen profound changes in the relationship between humanitarian and political action. The political determinants of humanitarian crises are now acknowledged, so too is their chronicity, and the limits of relief aid as a form of intervention are thus more fully understood. In 1994, in the refugee camps of Goma, Zaire, there was widespread manipulation of aid resources by armed groups implicated in the genocide in Rwanda. This experience highlighted a wider concern that, rather than doing good, emergency aid can fuel violence. The apparent consensus that humanitarian assistance can somehow stand outside politics gave way to calls for tighter linkage between aid and political responses to crises.

While the arguments in favor of coherent, or integrated, approaches that seek to link operationally humanitarian and political responses to conflict-related emergencies appear self-evident, they frequently fail to distinguish between the different types of politics that are being applied by different international actors over time, and how these undermine the core principles that define humanitarian aid as such. They also risk mid-learning the real lessons of Goma—that those events occurred primarily as a failure of political action, not of relief aid.

POLITICS AND HUMANITARIANISM

Humanitarian action is a highly political activity. The provision of humanitarian assistance and efforts to enhance the protection of civilians and other noncombatants require engagement with the political authorities in conflict-affected countries. International humanitarian law is designed to guide the ways in which wars are fought. In this sense, the provision of resources will have political and economic impacts. While necessarily political, in that it requires a process of analysis, negotiation, advocacy, and perhaps coercion, humanitarian politics is distinct from the partisan politics and geopolitics that underpin war because of its particular, if narrow, goals—the alleviation of suffering and the maintenance of human dignity.[1]

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* This article draws extensively on Joanna Macrae and Nicholas Leader, "Shifting Sands: The Search for 'Coherence' between Political and Humanitarian Responses to Complex Emergencies," Humanitarian Policy Group Report 8, Overseas Development Institute, August 2000; and Joanna Macrae and Adele Harmer, eds., "Humanitarian Action and the 'Global War on Terror': A Review of Trends and Issues," Humanitarian Policy Group Report 14, Overseas Development Institute, July 2003.
[1] David Forsythe, *Humanitarian Politics* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977).

The definition of rules that guide humanitarian actors in their interaction with actors who are involved in the partisan and geopolitical agendas of warfare reflects just such recognition of the inherently political character of humanitarian action. Humanitarian rules and principles represent a deal between humanitarian organizations and the warring parties.[2] This deal is based on the premise that humanitarian organizations will attempt only to mitigate the impact of a conflict—not to influence its course. The principle of impartiality—which requires that assistance be provided proportionate to need and not according to political efficacy, religious, racial, or other criteria—is designed to ensure that the provision of aid does not offer one side undue military or political advantage. The principle of neutrality—not taking a political position with regard to the justness or otherwise of a particular actor's cause—is the practical expression of impartiality and is widely understood to be a requirement of achieving secure access to conflict-affected communities.

THE ORIGINS AND EVOLUTION OF AN ORTHODOXY

At least three broad trends have provided the momentum for efforts to promote integrated approaches to humanitarian crises.

First, the aftermath of the Cold War saw a redefinition of international security to embrace not only traditional military threats but large movements of people, trade in illicit goods, and environmental change. The paradigm of human security, first tabled in the United Nations' report "An Agenda for Peace," implied a broadening of the definition of security and thus of those responsible for its achievement. Specifically, the report implied the need to move beyond

the domains of diplomacy and defense to those of development, trade, and environmental policy.[3]

The 1990s saw unparalleled in numbers interventions in the domestic policy of sovereign states, from economic sanctions to military interventions, which occurred from Somalia, to the Persian Gulf, to the Balkans, to Haiti. Many of these interventions were presented as part of an effort to uphold the principles outlined in the human security approach, including the protection of human rights.[4] The 1999 war in Kosovo was the apex of this newly interventionist approach and was labeled as the world's first "humanitarian war."

Despite the radical ways in which the events of September 11 reshaped the security agenda, there is much continuity with the general post–Cold War trends regarding the positioning of humanitarian aid in international politics. After September 11, humanitarian assistance has been seen by many governments as an instrument of soft security, crucial for addressing the perceived root, social causes of terrorism. In justifying its wars in both Afghanistan and Iraq, the Bush administration used humanitarian

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[2] Nicholas Leader, "The Politics of Principle: The Principles of Humanitarian Action in Practice," Humanitarian Policy Group Report 2, Overseas Development Institute, March 2000.

[3] See, e.g., Boutros Boutros-Ghali, "An Agenda for Peace: Preventive Diplomacy, Peacemaking and Peace-Keeping," Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to the statement adopted by the Summit meeting of the Security Council, United Nations, New York, January 31, 1992; Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Aid in Progress: Development Cooperation and the Review of Dutch Foreign Policy," The Hague, 1995; and United Kingdom Department for International Development, "The White Paper on International Development," Briefing Paper, London, 1997.

[4] Christopher Clapham, *Africa and the International System: The Politics of State Survival* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

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reasons to explain the benefits of regime change. This practice continues the trend of using the provision of humanitarian assistance to legitimize international military intervention to publics in Western countries, as well as in the affected countries themselves.[5] In Kosovo in 1999, the deployment of military assets in the humanitarian operation reinforced an image of an ostensibly benign use of force. The importance of humanitarian assistance in winning hearts and minds, and thus buttressing security, has been institutionalized in military doctrine and in the emerging security apparatus of the European Union.[6]

Second, the often-neglected driver of the coherence agenda is a much broader trend among Western democracies toward "joined up" government. The attainment of complex public policy goals is increasingly seen to rely on breaking down conventional demarcations of departmental responsibility and promoting cross-departmental cooperation toward a common objective. This requires new mechanisms of coordination that effectively bring together different mandates under a single managerial structure.

In the United Kingdom, for example, since 1997, there has been a number of initiatives to promote cross-ministerial working procedures to address complex public policy issues ranging from crime to international conflict. In the case of international conflict, common pools of funds have been managed to promote a general policy of cross-departmental working in support of conflict prevention, which has particularly been applied in Africa. These pools of funds are managed by staff drawn from the departments responsible for international aid, trade, defense, and foreign policy. The 1997 reforms by the UN secretary-general introduced similar modalities within the United Nations. The UN Executive Committees on Humanitarian Affairs and on Peace and Security, respectively, were created. Chaired variously by aid, diplomatic, and peacekeeping/military actors, these forums provide opportunities for information exchange and to varying degrees inform resource allocation and operational decision-making.

Third, throughout the 1990s, official development assistance came to be seen as a policy instrument at first for peace building and eventually for conflict prevention and resolution. This "securitization" of aid came about as a result of the need within the aid community to find a new rationale for development cooperation after the end of the Cold War and of the increasing inability to use conventional diplomatic tools in dealing with the "new" wars.[7] In contrast, in the Cold War conflicts, because they held the purse strings the superpowers could wield considerable influence over the way in which they were fought, and in shaping the terms under which they might be resolved. The gradual withdrawal of the United States and the Soviet Union beginning in the mid-1980s from many of the world's conflicts meant that armed groups steadily increased the range of activities from which they could finance their activities. These activities

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[5] Macrae and Harmer, eds., "Humanitarian Action and the 'Global War on Terror.'"

[6] See, e.g., Emery Brusset and Christine Tiberghien, "Trends and Risks in EU Humanitarian Action," in Joanna Macrae, ed., "The New Humanitarianisms: A Review of Trends in Global Humanitarian Action," Humanitarian Policy Group Report 11, Overseas Development Institute, April 2002, for an analysis of the evolution of the role of the military under the Petersberg Tasks of the European Union; see also Javier Solana, "A Secure Europe in a Better World" (speech to the European Council, Thessaloniki, June 20, 2003).

[7] Mary Kaldor, *New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).

extended from predation on civilians to highly organized extraction of minerals and timber and, importantly, humanitarian aid. Increased understanding of the political economy of conflict led some within the development community to examine whether and how aid might be used as an incentive for peace, by providing alternative sources of income for civilians and to buy off spoilers in peace processes.[8] More broadly, poverty or underdevelopment was seen to be a cause of major grievance and therefore a contributing factor to the conditions because of which people resorted to armed violence.

While initially centered largely on the role of development cooperation, humanitarian aid increasingly came into attention since it was the type of aid most commonly available in war-affected countries. Within many official donors, including the United States, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and many Scandinavian countries, it was the humanitarian aid departments that assumed responsibility also for developing strategies for conflict management.

Increasingly, humanitarian aid was seen as a resource that could be used to address and influence the root causes of conflict. This approach was based on the idea of a "relief-development continuum," which proposed that "good" relief would provide the basis for development and that well-planned development aid would reduce populations' vulnerability to future disasters. In the mid-1990s, this idea was taken even further to imply that by making relief more developmental, aid could serve a role in conflict prevention, mitigation, and resolution by addressing the root, political causes of wars. This formulation suggests that the coherence agenda involves not just the redefinition of the balance between the respective humanitarian and developmental

institutions but the redefinition of the meaning of a humanitarian mandate.

INTEGRATION IN PRACTICE

The challenge of the coherence agenda is that, by redefining the humanitarian mandate and associating humanitarian action with the very partisan and geopolitical agendas from which it has historically sought to distance itself, it threatens the deal between humanitarian organizations and the warring parties. Even the apparently benign political agendas of conflict resolution or development imply taking a position with regard to the relative legitimacy of those in political or military power. The negative effects of the coherence agenda on humanitarian action are evident from the ways in which integration has been implemented in practice.

In the more common but less visible crises, rather than being subsumed by politics, humanitarian action has become a replacement for international political action, and there are attempts to use aid to promote peace building and state building.[9] In those cases, promises of peace through development made under the umbrella of "humanitarian" assistance represent a significant broadening of the humanitarian agenda and imply redefinition of the principles according to which aid is provided, in particular the abandonment of the principle of neutrality.

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[8] See, e.g., Peter Uvin, *The Influence of Aid in Situations of Violent Conflict: A Synthesis and a Commentary on the Lessons Learned from Case Studies on the Limits and Scope for the Use of Development Assistance Incentives and Disincentives for Influencing Conflict Situations* (Paris: OECD, 1999); available at www.oecd.org/dataoecd/33/57/1919902.pdf.
[9] Macrae and Leader, "Shifting Sands."

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In Afghanistan prior to 2001, in the Congo prior to the international intervention in the northeast city of Bunia, Ituri province, in 2003, and Somalia probably since the mid-1990s, aid actors have been virtually alone, and have increasingly sought to deploy the scarce assets at their disposal not only to provide a palliative against the worst excesses of war, but also as the basis for longer-term developmental initiatives, cast as crucial and instrumental in a wider process of peace building and conflict resolution.

Similarly, the 1998–2001 strategic framework process in Afghanistan, while initially premised on intense engagement from the diplomatic and security arenas, in practice became an aid-led approach to conflict resolution. Within this framework, it was assumed that addressing the problems of underemployment, declining livelihoods, and rural-urban inequalities would provide means of addressing the root causes of conflict.[10] In the Congo, revitalizing markets through reestablishing transport links was seen as promoting economic growth that would create demand for private health care—thus enabling communities to access health services. Such an approach to allocating humanitarian aid privileges a long chain of uncertain causation leading to potential future benefits that takes away the resources for the protection of the health and safety of populations in the short term.[11] With this in mind, barges were seen to act as a vanguard for development and peace, not simply a logistical device for food aid delivery.

The potential costs and benefits of such practical policies have been the subject of only limited independent research and evaluation, despite the fact that they represent the most common form of integrated action. Advocates point out that such policies are a natural and pragmatic response to the demands of responding to chronic crises and the need to address secondary, as well as proximate, causes of mortality and morbidity.[12] Critics argue, however, that humanitarian aid can exert only limited leverage over the complex dynamics of conflict. By assuming responsibility for "root causes," aid actors necessarily associate themselves with a particular side in the conflict. This position risks compromising short-term humanitarian gain in return for *potential* medium- and long-term improvements in the political and economic environment. The problem is, of course, that such gains are inherently difficult to predict because of the multiple variables that determine whether and how a particular conflict is sustained or ended. More fundamentally, it implies that the means justify the ends— that loss of life is acceptable in the short term because it will result in the promised peace.

Since the high-profile crises of Iraq, most recently, Afghanistan after September 11, 2001, and Kosovo in 1999, humanitarian aid has also become seen as a means of securing "hearts and minds," legitimizing intervention to domestic and international audiences, and providing incentives for peace. It is in these contexts where the risks and realities of instrumentalization of humanitarian

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[10] Hugh Cholmondeley, "The Role of the UN System in Response to Crisis and Recovery," Report to the UN Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions, 10th session, Geneva, 1997.

[11] David Bryer, "Politics and Humanitarianism: Coherence in Crisis?" Henry Dunant Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, February 2003; available at www.hdcentre.org/datastore/files/pandh.pdf.

[12] Mary B. Anderson, *Do No Harm: Supporting Local Capacities for Peace Through Aid* (Cambridge: The Collaborative for Development Action, 1996); and Robert Miller, *Aid As Peacemaker: Canadian Development Assistance and Third World Conflict* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1992).

aid are most obvious, and where the conventional boundaries between civilian and military actors, and between state and nonstate actors, have been most sharply eroded.

For some, the costs of integration are demonstrated by the attacks on the UN and International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) compounds in Baghdad in the late summer of 2003, and the increasing attacks on aid workers in Afghanistan, including the assassination of an ICRC international staff member in April 2003 and of five Médecins Sans Frontières members, two of them Afghani, in May 2004.[13] Others counter that, rather than constituting a response to shifts in the international response to conflicts, such attacks only reflect the politics of Islamic extremism, in which just being Western, or being seen with Westerners, is sufficient to invite attack. In the absence of a comprehensive understanding of the motivations of individual belligerents and the groups for which they purport to fight, it is, of course, difficult to reach definitive conclusions on the merits of the respective arguments. However, there are two points that can be made.

First, where the project of state building remains deeply contentious, as in Afghanistan and Iraq, humanitarian agencies cannot retain the benefits of the security, autonomy, and access to areas that independent and neutral humanitarian action is seen to carry if they also act, or are perceived as acting, in support of longer-term rehabilitation and peace-building goals. Second, it is notable that while many senior Western politicians are quick to deny any politicization of humanitarian action under the integrated approach that could be attributed to their own states' behavior, they are much more circumspect when other states similarly claim that certain activities have solely humanitarian purpose. For example, it is

striking that many radical Islamic movements also combine their military and political activities with extensive welfare programs—which, in the "war on terrorism," are presumed to be of a political nature.[14] It may not be the integrated character of humanitarian operations per se that attracts attack from radical movements. However, it could be used as legitimizing evidence to claims by radical movements that humanitarian actors are merely the instrument of a wider security agenda, and therefore legitimate targets.

TOWARD A HUMANE COHERENCE?

There is a small but growing number of cases where the coherence approach has been implemented as the authors of the Rwanda evaluation envisaged—potentially the interventions in Liberia and in Bunia, DRC, in 2003, and in Sierra Leone after 1998.[15] In these cases, military and political assets have been deployed to protect civilians, enhance humanitarian access, *and* to support processes of political dialogue and demobilization. However, there has been insufficient independent analysis to reach a definitive view regarding the humanitarian outcomes of these various experiences.

One analysis that provides a positive account of the case of Sierra Leone after 1998 rests in part on the assumption that the Kabbah government and its strategy for postcon-

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[13] Bryer, "Politics and Humanitarianism"; and "Doctors Without Borders Shocked by Killing of 5 Staff in Afghanistan: Aid Activities Suspended Nationwide," press release, June 3, 2004; available at www.doctors withoutborders.org/pr/2004/06-03-2004.shtml.
[14] See, e.g., Jonathan Benthall, "Humanitarianism and Islam after 11 September," in Macrae and Harmer, eds., "Humanitarian Action and the 'Global War on Terror.'"
[15] Paul Smith Lomas (personal communication, November 2003).

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flict peace building enjoy a high level of legitimacy and that therefore it is appropriate for the international community to work with it in partnership.[16] But under such an assumption, the Sierra Leone case can be understood as one of genuine postconflict transition, in which there is a shift in engagement from a humanitarian modality (which relies on neutral and impartial engagement) to a developmental one, premised on partnership with the state.

The cases of Liberia and Bunia are too recent to have been the subject of definitive investigation, but it would be important to examine them.

Yet, it should be understood that coherence between humanitarian action and intervention is not a good of itself: after all, a particular policy approach can be consistent but also *wrong* when it leads to deleterious outcomes. The events of September 11 have shattered the apparent consensus that there was a shared conception of human security and that its determinants and the path to its achievement are known and understood. The liberal values underpinning the model of human security, as interpreted by many Western governments, should now be better understood as deriving from a particular culture—their presumed universality has been challenged not only by radical Islamic movements, but also by the often violent and "criminal" means through which political and economic movements are responding to the pressures and opportunities of globalization.

There are serious questions that the humanitarian "community" itself needs to address regarding how its members collectively and individually seek to position themselves in relation to peace-building, developmental, and geopolitical agendas. But it is important to recognize the limited degree to which humanitarian actors as such are likely to be able to determine the shape of humanitarian action. Part of the challenge of "integrated" approaches to humanitarian action lies precisely in the fact that multiple actors in the for-profit private sector, military, and even diplomatic corps would claim to be informed and driven by humanitarian concerns. While these actors have clearly established humanitarian obligations in their actions, they are also driven by partisan and geopolitical concerns. As long as there is little scrutiny of the extent to which their (in)actions contribute to *humanitarian* outcomes, understood in terms of protecting human life and dignity and preventing suffering, these actors' claims cannot be verified and evaluated in relation to a humanitarian agenda.

The Rwanda evaluation called for coherent approaches to humanitarian crises in the context of a new international "humanitarian order." In many ways, the prospect of such an order seems to have diminished in the decade since the genocide in Rwanda. The glimmers of optimism that might emerge from actions in Liberia, Bunia, and even Sierra Leone are quickly obscured by a wider sense of crisis in agreement on values. Even within the humanitarian community, the purpose of humanitarian action is often disputed. It is therefore unsurprising that as a concept it remains poorly understood within the wider development, security, and diplomatic arena.

Without a widely shared consensus on the objectives of humanitarian action, it would be impossible to reach agreement on the principles that should guide a "coherent" intervention that would be shared by the defense, developmental, and diplomatic communities. In the absence of such consensus, it is the narrow but vital function of humanitarian action and the principles upon which it still relies for its functioning that will remain critically compromised.

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[16] Bryer, "Politics and Humanitarianism."

HUMANITARIAN AID AND INTERVENTION:
THE CHALLENGES OF INTEGRATION

The Value of Integration: A U.S. Perspective

Arthur E. Dewey

The integration of humanitarian action into intervention operations, and particularly the inclusion of a military component, carries risks—but none so great as to be worth sacrificing integration on the altar of humanitarian purity. As in the case of Iraq in the first, emergency phase of an operation, humanitarian teams working closely with the combat troops can greatly reduce civilian suffering caused by shock, displacement, and lack of access to necessities of daily life. In the transition phase, as the military begins to turn over power to an independent political authority, integration of development teams is likewise important. Integration in the interest of humanity is no vice. Humanitarian exclusivity in the interest of purity is no virtue.

The Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration at the State Department is multilateralist in its approach to humanitarian action—because it works. It works for financial burden sharing because UN consolidated appeals permit the U.S. taxpayer to bear only 25 percent of worldwide refugee program costs—as opposed to 85 to 100 percent were we to act unilaterally. Multilateralism also works better for the victims of complex emergencies. This is possible because serious UN supporters such as our part of the State Department understand how to get effective performance out of all actors in the multilateral humanitarian system. We do it with discreet diplomacy. We do it with daily intensive engagement and monitoring in Washington and at multilateral headquarters, such as in New York and Geneva, and wherever the United Nations is engaged in the field. We do it with almost weekly phone calls to UN principals. And we work hard to get the best people to fill senior UN posts. By tying in to the tested competencies of the United Nations, the United States can accomplish its humanitarian objectives with smaller government and less spending than were we to go it alone, while having access to more economic resources that help to ensure that our operations have successful outcomes.

These multilateral practices place us in stark contrast with the unilateralism of key European humanitarian actors. The European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO), for example, delivers approximately 75 percent of its financial contributions for refugees unilaterally through European NGOs. Only 25 percent of ECHO's refugee funding goes multilaterally through the office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the agency mandated internationally with the protection of and assistance to refugees. ECHO, or any other organization trying to do refugee protection and assistance on its own, is in

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effect trying to "play" the UN and UNHCR. By disbursing funds unilaterally to organizations that lack a protection mandate (perhaps as a result of the strong lobbying pressure by European NGOs to receive funds directly), ECHO is missing an important concept: the inseparability of assistance and protection. U.S. multilateralism not only ties in to the burden-sharing economies and the operational competencies of the UN system; it also permits the integration and unity of effort possible through the mutual reinforcement and interoperability of UN agencies. It is the effectiveness and self-interest benefits of multilateral action that drive and define the approach I take to integration in humanitarian action.

We approach integration in terms of the various components of the total civil-military effort: political, security, humanitarian, and development—plus human rights as a vital part of the humanitarian component—executed by various players operating under their mandates and according to their competencies. Political players are, of course, state governments, and the security players include the police force and international military force. The humanitarian component is centered on the four operating agencies of the United Nations—UNHCR, UNICEF, the World Food Programme, and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR). This component receives strong support from the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and from non-UN organizations, including the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The development component includes UNDP, UNICEF, the World Health Organization, and the World Bank and regional development banks. From my standpoint as a practitioner, I

believe there are five major principles and corresponding mechanisms necessary to achieve effective integration among the players of these four principled components.

COMPREHENSIVE MISSION PLANNING

The military is very good at campaign planning—from the advance stages to the in-progress adjustment. But what military persons are not good at—and nobody is good at—is comprehensive campaign planning. By this I mean the planning and integration of security, emergency response, military-to-civilian transition, development, and reconstruction elements—the elements that span the entire life cycle of a campaign. We call it political-military planning; humanitarians prefer to call it political-military-humanitarian planning. The value of comprehensive planning is that it provides a vehicle to include and orchestrate all of the essential actors, a process that begins with their participation in planning the mission and continues with the development of a range of specified and implied tasks that security forces could be called on to provide in support of civilian emergency response and reconstruction efforts. Comprehensive planning becomes a "software program" of the critical path from the start to the desired end of a complex contingency operation that permits the positioning of each key player at both the point and the time they must appear to achieve an integrated operation.

Such planning is indispensable but seldom used in actual practice. Presidential Determination 56 under President Clinton mandated the creation of a political-military plan for any major complex contingency operation. But we have never man-

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aged to produce a political-military plan in time for actual effect on and benefit to operations in the field. The plans that have been written have always been late. Domestically, they have tended to reflect an interagency least common denominator and fall short in terms of clarity and adequate provision for each phase of a complex contingency operation. These are the challenges of effective integration: trying to clear a plan in an interagency process as complex as the one in Washington is a Herculean task; taking into account the interests of the players in the international system and the United Nations makes it nearly impossible to reach agreement on a plan.

It is also necessary that civilian planners and all other key civilian players give military planners their input regarding the expected political, economic, and especially humanitarian impact during the military's mission planning process, which is a component of the comprehensive campaign planning. We also need to look at ways to improve communication with outside players that can provide useful input into planning a U.S. mission: the UN member governments and agencies and the NGOs.

The lack of precedents and guidelines for comprehensive mission planning make it a daunting exercise. Nevertheless, there is potential value even in the process of comprehensive planning: it is needed to extrude civilian planners through the same planning rigor that military persons take for granted and to help avoid some of the major oversights and miscalculations by both civilian and military planners in past contingency operations and interventions. For example, going into Bosnia in 1992 without a comprehensive plan obscured a lack of preparedness to do civil policing and human rights monitoring and to bring minority refugees and internally displaced persons back to their homes. Similar omissions occurred with respect to Iraq, in which case the assumptions about popular Iraqi support for the campaign and the time it would take to establish effective local public safety elements proved faulty.

With such considerations in mind, I ask our bureau staff to write a comprehensive campaign plan for the major emergencies, such as in Afghanistan and Iraq. Even if it doesn't result in an official doctrine or a common statement of purpose or plan on the part of the U.S. government as a whole, undertaking these exercises is valuable for prioritizing our own resources and exercising a serious strategic role with respect to other colleagues at the State Department, the other institutions of the U.S. government, and the international community. The results of this process for Afghanistan permitted the United States to benefit early on from the role of the United Nations and to transition effectively from military operations to the establishment of a local political authority. The process also pinpointed the difficulties in achieving synergy among public safety structures, the justice system, and mechanisms for monitoring human rights. Being aware of those difficulties allowed us to take measures to overcome them, which laid the foundation for nation building by achieving an exceptionally successful transition between the fundamental stages that ultimately led to local rule.

The fundamental stages of the planning for Afghanistan were building capacity in Afghan ministries in terms of staffing and infrastructure and then assisting the ministries to plan, program, budget for, and administer public services. There has been a lot of superficial and ill-considered criticism of how things have worked out in the case of Afghanistan. In my view, the glass is far more than half full. Nearly three million

Afghans have been able to return from abroad, and about half a million internally displaced persons have gone back to their home areas. The importance of such returns should not be underestimated, as indeed Afghanistan's foreign minister Abdullah noted: "Refugee and IDP returns are not just distractions on the way to reconstruction; refugee returns are reconstruction." The United Nations has played a vital role in the transition from the military operation to continuing the humanitarian and public services work that it had performed for years while the Taliban were in power. While initially it took charge of implementing public service duties through the Program Secretariat Process, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan was able to transfer the governance processes of planning, programming, and eventually budgeting to the Afghan authority relatively quickly.

When I was in Afghanistan in July 2002, I was struck by the potential of this process. Hence, I was convinced that it was imperative to neutralize the opposition to it that came, unfortunately, from some of the senior leaders in the Afghan government. There was also the need to counter a strong anti-humanitarian mentality, as well as an anti-UN mentality, at the top of the Afghan government, in order to derive the maximum benefit for Afghanistan's reconstruction. We undertook forceful private interventions with senior Afghan leaders, who needed to become aware that initially donors had less confidence in Afghan ministries than in UN agencies. Serious Afghan watchers began to see the shift in Kabul from criticizing humanitarian action and complaining about the "high overhead" costs of UN and NGOs' personnel (many of whom enjoyed higher salaries and more comfortable living conditions than Afghan public officials), to critically recognizing and applauding the vital contribution of humanitarian action and international organizations and NGOs.

This effort, springing from the State Department, paid off. The Afghan transition experience stands as a model for the vital role the United Nations can play in most nation-building situations, acting as an essential "halfway house" in the postconflict phase by simultaneously delivering governmental services and transferring those responsibilities as rapidly as possible to local authorities.

HUMANITARIAN IMPACT STATEMENT

Evaluating the humanitarian impact of actions taken or forgone is vital for effective integration. Five examples of recent policies underline the importance of evaluating humanitarian impact.

First, the failure to assess in the early 1990s the impact of not acting in the Balkans was a factor in the resulting ethnic cleansing. It should have been apparent to everyone that we could not afford a second Holocaust in the twentieth century and that we would need to act quickly to avoid it.

Second, in the summer of 1995, a few humanitarians were warning that the pending invasion by the Croatian army to "ethnically cleanse" the Serb-populated Croatian region of Krajina would result in the displacement of 150,000 people and that the UNHCR must be prepared to deliver relief articles. That impact was never calculated or operationalized in the policy decisions of major donor countries. Rather, the key people in charge—they included both American and German officials—focused on the advantages of using the invasion to readjust the map of Bosnia. The number of displaced civilians actually turned out to be much

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greater than humanitarians had predicted—more than 200,000—most of whom still remain displaced.

Third, during the NATO bombing of Serbia in 1999, we witnessed how the lack of humanitarian assessment and not acting on intelligence leads resulted in massive movements of people. The U.S. officials and those of the other NATO governments committed a major mistake by not coordinating the air campaign plans with the UNHCR. There was a lot of criticism of the UNHCR for having performed in a substandard manner in the Kosovo operation. Undoubtedly, some of this criticism was justified. However, a significant responsibility rests heavily on the shoulders of the NATO governments who did not share the information with the UN agencies capable of acting on it, and those agencies who failed to calculate the inevitable negative humanitarian impact of not being prepared. When the bombing commenced and masses of people started to move, major donor states failed to contribute sufficient funds to the UNHCR, an accountable agency, so that it could respond adequately. When we feel invited to heap most of the blame on the United Nations, it is important to recall that we, the member governments, are the United Nations.

Fourth, the international response to the genocide in Rwanda that commenced on April 6, 1994, amounted to sleepwalking into an apocalypse that any observer could have predicted. There was a horrifying reluctance and state of denial on the part of the most important UN member states, including the United States. Similar failures at UN headquarters have been detailed in the inquiry commissioned by the United Nations.[1] The sequence of inaction, delayed action, and insufficient action resulted in the slaughter of 800,000 people. Official protests that little could have been done in practice or apologies after the fact do little to wash the hands of those officials from whom much more was expected.

Finally, the crisis in Goma, Zaire, in July 1994 was a disaster whose advent was obvious when the million-person march from southwest Rwanda into eastern Zaire started. The French pulled out of Operation Turquoise, which provided counter-genocide protection for some million Hutus, on July 14, 1994 (ironically, Bastille Day). However unconscionable their pull-out, the French at least put the world on notice that they were going ahead with it. The humanitarian world, especially the UNHCR and the executive director of the World Food Programme, knew it was coming and that it would most likely result in a human catastrophe of biblical proportions. The common excuse for doing nothing was that the crisis was too big to handle. But what these humanitarian leaders neglected to acknowledge was that even biblical disasters could be alleviated by providing essential humanitarian supplies. The four-to-six-week warning period that the UNHCR and the World Food Programme had before this million-person march started offered time to plan for the first priority—water. There was even time to plan for the alleviation of food shortages already ravaging refugee pipelines in Africa to give at least some attention to the impending food needs around Goma. It was left to the Congressional Hunger Center, a nongovernmental organization based in the United States, to get the United States to do its part, and to get the United States to get the United Nations to pick up its responsibilities.

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[1] Members of the Independent Inquiry, "Report of the Independent Inquiry into the Actions of the United Nations During the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda," S/1999/1257, December 15, 1999; available at www.un.org/Docs/journal/asp/ws.asp?m=S/1999/1257.

These haunting examples—and one could cite several others—suggest that unless government and UN policy-makers recognize the importance of heeding humanitarians' warnings about impending human disasters through incorporating a humanitarian impact assessment as part of their policy decision procedures, the response to crises will remain inadequate. In turn, this implies that for an effective strategy of coherence in international humanitarian response, policy-makers must work closer with humanitarian bodies.

CIVIL-MILITARY PLANNING FOR SPECIFIED AND IMPLIED TASKS

This principle, although related to comprehensive civil-military mission planning, goes beyond it to the range of specified and implied tasks that military forces could be called upon to perform in support of the humanitarian or nation-building effort. This principle was practiced for the first time in Iraq in 2003. Well before the operation started, civilian planners worked together with military planners to lay out responsibilities for tasks and how to coordinate them.

For the Iraq humanitarian contingencies, this planning was quite thorough and comprehensive. U.S. civilian planners reached out early on to senior UN officials to attempt to reach a common understanding of likely contingencies and how to deal with them. Although these UN planners almost unanimously objected to the idea of any conflict in Iraq, the support that all the agencies' heads—of the UNHCR, UNICEF, UNDP, as well as the UN emergency relief coordinator and the head of the task force in the United Nations, Deputy Secretary-General Louise Frechette—provided was magnificent. They did everything they could as

far as preparedness, pre-positioning, staffing, and financial contribution to prepare for, and prevent, a humanitarian crisis. Our bureau and USAID did everything in our delegated powers to make it work.

That kind of planning did, indeed, avert a humanitarian crisis in Iraq. But beyond this coordination at the top of the United Nations, there was a need to get input from individual UN agencies and from the NGOs on individual civilian and humanitarian measures that might require security from the coalition military forces. We received input from NGOs on the range of tasks they envisaged might be needed, and came up with a concrete list of specific tasks. We obtained similar input from UN operational agencies, which we then took to the military planners in Qatar and Kuwait to make them aware of the humanitarian community's full range of concerns. A key event was missed—the looting of the Baghdad museum—although other agencies in charge of historical preservation foresaw it. The major omission, as we now realize, was the persistence and the intensity of the resistance of the Baathists and the Fedayeen. We foresaw the chaos, the lack of public safety, and the need for robust civilian policing linked to a justice system. We knew that shortfalls in these areas would produce major problems. Nevertheless, the preconflict planning must be credited with avoiding other major problems, most notably a humanitarian crisis that could otherwise have occurred at any stage during the period following major military operations.

PREDEPLOYMENT "HUDDLING"

It is vital to convene a predeployment workshop prior to intervention. The only precedent for this kind of predeployment "huddle" of all the players is the interactive,

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participatory workshop that Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General Martti Ahtisaari conducted for the UN Transition Assistance Group for Namibia prior to the civil-military deployment to that country in 1989. If Ahtisaari were asked today why this was one of the finest hours of the United Nations, he would answer that it was because we got the whole civil-military team together and discussed where each actor was supposed to be positioned in Namibia, what each actor's job was, who would be reporting to whom, and what mutual needs and expectations there might be. Ahtisaari attended every session during this two-week period, and used them to generate loyalty and esprit in the team and provide the best possible opportunity for the unity of effort. Such team building contributed enormously to the success of that operation. We should have done it for Afghanistan. For Iraq it was done through what the military calls a "rock drill," a huddling of key players, ideally before deployment, to assign roles and missions and identify gaps that could impede or deny success, as well as develop measures that could result in a higher probability of success. But the predeployment "rock drill" was very short. It did, indeed, identify critical gaps that could become significant obstacles but there was insufficient time to address them.

REAL-TIME POSTACTION REVIEW

Finally, there is need for all the key players to conduct individual and joint assessments of the progress of the operation as it unfolds from day to day. Such real-time assessments permit greater optimization of the integrated approach because they suggest necessary adjustments—both civilian and military—to personnel, priorities, and procedures. The military does this—and, indeed, it did it in Iraq—and it credits much of its success to the rigor of this during-action review. There was no comparable civilian assessment conducted by the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Aid, headed by General Jay Garner (Ret.), or by the Coalition Provisional Authority, headed by Paul Bremer. Although admittedly hard to do, this kind of running assessment needs to go beyond the military to include the other parts of the operation so that adjustments can be made, particularly in the civil affairs, police, justice, human rights, and infrastructure areas.

The United States tries to make the different actors involved in humanitarian action—political, military, and humanitarian—accountable and to give them incentives consistent with the government's priorities and responsibilities to the American people. The United States uses—and urges other states to use—a system of close monitoring, both in headquarters and in the field. Diplomatic tactics usually work to these goals—we lavish public praise for good performance and private admonishment when operational improvements are needed. In one rare case of sustained poor performance (many years ago), we made it known that a UN official had lost the confidence of the United States and he was replaced. But in international diplomacy, we much prefer "face-saving" solutions where possible.

HUMANITARIAN AID AND INTERVENTION:
THE CHALLENGES OF INTEGRATION

Improving the U.S. Government's Humanitarian Response

Anita Menghetti and Jeff Drumtra

The Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) was created in 1964 to provide emergency nonfood humanitarian assistance in response to international crises and disasters, in order to save lives and alleviate human suffering and to reduce the economic impact of those disasters. The office operates under the overall mandate of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), which is to provide "economic, development and humanitarian assistance around the world in support of the foreign policy goals of the United States."[1] OFDA coordinates relief efforts for the U.S. government, and funds relief efforts by UN humanitarian agencies, private nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and other international organizations.

In a 1991 amendment to the State Department's Foreign Affairs Manual, OFDA was designated as the lead office for responding to crises involving internally displaced persons. Now the office has extensive experience helping to provide basic shelter, water, sanitation, health care, and even supporting livelihoods to uprooted populations.[2] There is a growing recognition, however, that physical aid is not enough. Having watched in horror during the 1990s as beneficiaries of relief assistance were subjected to wholesale massacres in Bosnia, physical intimidation and extremist indoctrination in central Africa, ethnic cleansing in Kosovo, and countless depredations in other places, policy-makers and the humanitarian community increasingly recognize that providing relief items by day to people who are routinely being killed, raped, or terrorized by night is insufficient. "The U.S. government . . . must now place special emphasis on the difficult question of protecting war-affected populations, especially the internally displaced," a USAID report stated in 2002. "While traditional discomfort lingers in the humanitarian community over mixing human rights with humanitarian assistance programs . . . the problem of the 'well-fed dead' must be faced. A necessary part of addressing the broader protection issue will be a far more rigorous and systematic approach to guarding those internally displaced."[3]

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[1] See USAID, "Frequently Asked Questions"; available at www.usaid.gov/faqs.html#q1.

[2] OFDA's lead responsibility within the U.S. government for responding to needs of internally displaced persons abroad is cited in the Foreign Affairs Manual, 2 FAM-0, Foreign Disaster Emergency Relief, 2 FAM 066.3 Department of State (TL:GEN-270; April 1, 1991). The Department of State Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration also funds humanitarian assistance for internally displaced persons through the International Committee of the Red Cross and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

[3] U.S. Agency for International Development, *Foreign Aid in the National Interest: Promoting Freedom, Security, and Opportunity* (Washington, D.C.: USAID, 2002), p. 26.

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OFDA is in the early stages of responding to the heightened challenge. An invigorated USAID policy toward internally displaced persons should, at its best, serve to reinforce a commitment agency-wide to assist uprooted persons during all phases of what often become protracted displacements: from the early emergency phase; during the long-term relief maintenance period; through the complicated transition phase of reintegration or relocation; and into long-term development. Better protection of vulnerable populations is often possible with more sophisticated design and implementation of assistance programs as well as more diligent monitoring and reporting on security and human rights problems suffered by vulnerable populations.

This article will focus on current initiatives under way as OFDA and the Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance (DCHA) try to ensure that the U.S. government's humanitarian response to disaster situations in today's world is wise, thorough, accountable, and well coordinated. The initiatives deal with changes inside the institution to facilitate a more integrated response, efforts to achieve a more unified approach among donor nations supporting disaster response programs around the globe, and to strengthen the capacity of organizations involved in humanitarian work.

INSTITUTIONAL REFORM

OFDA is a fairly peculiar entity within the U.S. government and even within USAID. For many years, policy-makers and international development experts considered emergencies to be freakish anomalies that only temporarily interrupted a country's steady march toward long-term economic development. Even highly predictable disas-

ters—such as floods in flood zones—were treated as incidental blips on the planning radar, events that would vanish as rapidly as they materialized. This view of disasters as small aberrations led policy-makers to place OFDA, in its early years, as a stand-alone office within USAID, relatively unconnected to the multibillion-dollar bureaus within USAID in charge of working on the serious issues of long-term development.

The relentless regularity of natural and man-made disasters gradually forced policy-makers to think differently about emergency response and how it fit into the overall goals and development strategies of USAID. Development experts began to realize that disasters often pushed economic and social development backward by years or even decades. USAID formed the Bureau for Humanitarian Response (BHR) in 1992 and placed OFDA inside it, along with the Office of Food for Peace (FFP). The new bureau grew in 1994 with the creation of the Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) to address the gaps that existed between the humanitarian relief work performed by OFDA and the development work performed by other USAID bureaus.

USAID Administrator Andrew Natsios determined in 2001 that the agency needed to adopt a more holistic approach to the troubling phenomenon of failing, failed, and recovering states. The Bureau for Humanitarian Response was reorganized to become the Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance. In addition to the three offices that addressed these issues under the BHR—OFDA, OTI, and FFP—the new bureau absorbed USAID's Office of Democracy and Governance and established an Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation in 2002 to provide expert technical assistance, training, and analysis in accordance with USAID's mis-

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sion to assist countries and societies to manage and mitigate the causes and consequences of violent conflict. Where OFDA previously stood alone, it now finds itself housed in a bureau of specialists able to deal with failing, failed, or recovering states and operating in an environment that emphasizes the value of cross-fertilization and integrated approaches.

OFDA determines that it will spend emergency response resources when the U.S. chief of mission in an affected country has declared a disaster based on three criteria: if the magnitude of the disaster exceeds the affected country's capacity to respond; if the affected country has requested or has indicated willingness to accept U.S. government assistance; and if it is in the interest of the U.S. government to provide assistance.[4] OFDA also retains the prerogative not to respond to a disaster declaration should it be determined that the needs previously identified have been satisfied via other means. The third criterion, that aid be provided in the interest of the U.S. government, has been questioned by some NGOs as potentially having an intent that exploits human suffering. However, to the authors' knowledge, no individual or agency has provided a substantiated example of where the U.S. government has refused to respond on purely or even primarily political grounds. It also should be noted, in order to gain a better understanding of this criterion, that the traditional litmus test for "being in the interest of the U.S. government" has been that providing aid will demonstrate the generosity and goodwill of the American people toward the victims of the disaster or crisis.

Within this revised framework, OFDA has received clear instructions from the administrator and senior bureau staff to put more effort into working more collaboratively within USAID, with other U.S. government agencies, and within the international humanitarian community to improve coordination and management of humanitarian assistance programs so that the protection and longer-term transition and development needs of displaced persons and other vulnerable groups are anticipated and addressed. USAID's Disaster Assistance Response Teams (DART), which deploy on short notice into disaster situations where it is likely that OFDA will need to determine if additional or new support will be required, provide immediate expertise, and help USAID to identify priority needs and make rapid funding decisions, now include more experts from a broader range of government offices.

One of the newest and most experimental developments within DCHA, which OFDA finds to have significance for its work, is the new entity known as the Humanitarian Protection Team (HPT) housed within the Office of Transition Initiatives. The HPT was created in 2003 to work for the protection of fundamental human rights of civilians in complex humanitarian disasters and armed conflict. The HPT, originally called the Abuse Prevention Team, deployed to the field for the first time in 2003 as part of USAID's Disaster Assistance Response Team in Iraq, where it dealt with issues connected to the discovery of mass graves and potentially violent landownership disputes. An HPT representative deployed with the DART to Liberia in late 2003 and to Darfur, Sudan, in July 2004, to analyze ongoing atrocities and recommend proper program responses. OFDA and the HPT conducted a joint assessment mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo in early 2004 to investigate sexual and gender-based vio-

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[4] Mitigation or preparedness funds may be expended in a region or country without a disaster declaration.

lence, brief policy-makers in Washington, and identify possible program responses.

BETTER DONORSHIP, STRONGER COORDINATION

As a major donor with expenditures of a quarter billion dollars, OFDA has become acutely aware of its potential and responsibility to influence the large and often unwieldy field of emergency humanitarian assistance. It is a field in which coordination among independent-minded agencies and donors is important but does not come naturally given the fast pace of events and the need for rapid decision-making with lives on the line.

Coordination requires transparency and consultation. OFDA set out to improve the transparency of its own decision-making and priority setting in the mid-1990s by providing clearer and more detailed instructions to NGOs applying to OFDA for funding. In 1996, OFDA wrote guidelines that detailed what it wanted to know about a given proposal in order to judge its merits; the guidelines have been significantly revised three times since then. Prior to 2000, OFDA rarely used competitive mechanisms for the award of grants. Now Annual Program Statements for many country programs clearly detail the sectors OFDA is interested in supporting. OFDA has also invested more effort in better communication with other relief agencies and donors at the headquarters level through increased visits and sharing of plans with other donors and greater participation in the management bodies of the United Nations through both involvement in drafting statements and positions and serving as a member of official delegations to UNICEF and World Food Programme (WFP) executive board meetings. These efforts resulted in some-

what better coordination, although problems continued, some of which were of our own making, such as burdening our partners with too much administrative work. Starting with the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the Food and Agricultural Organization and eventually adding the WFP and UNICEF, OFDA has gone from awarding multiple grants to one agency in a given country in a given year to having one primary award for each agency into which country or cross-cutting initiatives or programs receive allocations in response to the agency's annual appeal, consolidated appeals, and, still on occasion, specifically written proposals. Furthermore, though OFDA is prohibited from contributing to UN, or any other, trust funds, we have devised means by which we can allocate rapid response funds for the programs we will most likely fund: coordination, emergency agriculture response, logistics, and air operations.

USAID/OFDA's most recent revision to the "Guidelines for Proposals and Reporting," in July 2004, make clear that agencies applying for OFDA funding should adhere to principles of developmental relief.[5] In the interpretation that OFDA applies, developmental relief is more about the sensitivity with which humanitarian assistance is provided—in our view, it is necessary that humanitarians think about the impact their aid will have on development. Even if their final analysis is that in the particular circumstances relief aid will have some negative implications, yet they judge that it is still

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[5] Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance, "Guidelines for Proposals and Reporting," pp. 11, 12, 64, and 65; available at www.usaid.gov/our_work/humanitarian_assistance/disaster_assistance/resources/pdf/guidelines_2004.pdf.

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necessary to act, being aware of the potential negative effects will help them to pay more attention to the details of their aid strategy in the particular case, thus making humanitarian aid more effective overall. The underlying premise of USAID/OFDA's principles of developmental relief—collaboration and coordination, context specificity, promoting livelihoods, addressing the needs of the most vulnerable, prevention, mitigation and preparedness, utilization of international standards, protection, systematic information collection, capacity building, and utilization of local capacity—is that the humanitarian community has too many failures and successes in its history not to learn from and apply the resulting lessons. While OFDA is aware of and accommodates the fact that many organizations have no way to know everything about a specific location when they first arrive, in reality much of our funding goes to the same NGOs, in the same countries, year after year. What may be considered an acceptable level of context specificity and uncertainty regarding future impact of aid in the crush of a rapidly unfolding emergency should surely not be acceptable even six months later. OFDA does emphasize the importance of development goals in principle but not at the cost of the emergency needs to save lives immediately. Given this, the "back to basics" discussions that have become prominent recently appear to be a rejection of why we have come to demand more from ourselves to begin with—that is, because the basics were not sufficient.

OFDA and other donor agencies acknowledged in 2003 that the time had come for donor nations to practice what they preach by putting greater effort into coordinating and standardizing their own activities to prevent duplicative efforts and ferret out competing priorities. Thus was born the Good

Humanitarian Donorship Initiative, which seeks to hold donors such as OFDA more accountable to all of their stakeholders—affected populations, taxpayers, and other donors—for their policies and decisions. OFDA welcomes the challenge to improve its coordination with other donor agencies.

The Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative, which involves most of the world's major donor governments, commits OFDA and other donors to observe many of the same standards of performance and accountability that donors expect of their funding partners—for example, the use of objective criteria for demonstrating need, coordination, and results. The initiative is pushing to standardize the reporting requirements imposed by donors on relief agencies and will try to improve the tracking of financial flows by making donors' financial reporting on humanitarian expenditures more uniform. OFDA is particularly eager to capitalize on the initiative in order to encourage improved needs assessments that will more reliably depict the true humanitarian needs in disaster situations and point to proper funding priorities. Better and more dependable needs assessments could have a major impact on how OFDA chooses to disburse its funds.

The Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative is regarded by some as a watershed effort that will instill the highest principles and performance standards to the donors charged with disbursing billions of dollars of assistance. Others have more skeptically asked if the initiative is simply a well-intentioned but ultimately difficult-to-implement and hence fruitless effort.[6] How-

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[6] For a solid overview of the initiative, see Joanna Macrae and Adele Harmer, "Good Humanitarian Donorship: A Mouse or a Lion?" *Humanitarian Exchange* 24, July 2003, p. 10.

ever, it must be understood that donors need to invest in humanitarian assistance efforts for the long run; this necessitates a slow and careful review of how implementing the principles bumps up against a myriad of existing national policies, practices, and laws that will have to be addressed if lasting and significant improvements are to be realized. OFDA and the Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance see the Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative as a welcome challenge. OFDA is participating fully in the young process and is committed to giving it every opportunity to succeed. USAID has specifically taken on responsibility for cosponsoring, with Belgium's government, a pilot Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 2005. During the last week of July, representatives from OFDA, Office of Food for Peace, and the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration at the State Department as well as USAID's representative in Geneva attended preparatory meetings in Kinshasa along with the Belgian cochair and other donors, UN agencies, and NGOs.

STRENGTHENING HUMANITARIAN CAPACITY

Because much disaster response work is reactive in nature, OFDA has pushed itself and its partners in recent years to take proactive steps to plan, coordinate, and improve expertise where possible. As of August 2004, OFDA has provided more than $38.6 million to OCHA since 2000 to ensure that it mobilizes and coordinates humanitarian action worldwide within the family of often fractious and turf-conscious UN agencies. OFDA has been a leader in furthering the development of shared services within the UN system in order to systematize and structure the humanitarian response and increase accountability and performance. OFDA has been most closely associated with promoting the use of Humanitarian Information Centres, Joint Logistics Centres, and the UN Humanitarian Air Services.

Many disasters can be anticipated and their effects can be mitigated. Therefore OFDA generally utilizes 10 percent of its annual budget for mitigation, planning, and preparedness activities. More than twenty years ago OFDA began to offer courses for national and regional government officials who had responsibility for disaster management. This training, greatly refined, is especially well respected in Latin America and the Caribbean, where it has now been brought into universities and training centers throughout the region. OFDA has also supported the Asia Disaster Preparedness Center's regional efforts and is currently looking into how these experiences could be appropriately applied in Africa.

In addition, OFDA provides financial support to cross-cutting projects that address issues of performance, security, and technical capacity in relief work. Recipients of OFDA funding for these cross-cutting activities include the Sphere Project, which is attempting to improve the quality and accountability of humanitarian assistance by setting core minimum standards; the Active Learning Network on Accountability and Performance, which works to identify common problems and consensus solutions among relief agencies; the Humanitarian Policy Group, a program of the Overseas Development Institute, which provides research, evaluation, and advice on humanitarian assistance practices; and InterAction, an alliance of more than 160 international humanitarian organizations based in the United States.

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OFDA also recognizes that there are specific, community-wide needs such as better security-related practices and improved emergency health management. OFDA therefore supports Red R, an organization that recruits aid workers for other humanitarian agencies and provides them with technical support and a wide range of security training and other technical training. OFDA also supports a Columbia University program offering advanced training to emergency public health managers.

The goal common to all these projects and initiatives is to encourage and support efforts that improve disaster response by making the people who do it and the people who fund it more skilled, better coordinated, better informed, and more accountable.

HUMANITARIAN AID AND INTERVENTION:
THE CHALLENGES OF INTEGRATION

Informing the Integration Debate with Recent Experience

Larry Minear

The overriding challenge faced by policy-makers in the post–Cold War era is not, as many would have us believe, the achievement of integration of humanitarian action into the prevailing politico-military context. It is rather the protection of its independence. The debate, rather than focusing on fitting humanitarian action more snugly into the given political framework, should explore how to ensure the indispensable independence of humanitarian actors from that framework.

The experience of the Humanitarianism and War Project, an action-oriented research and publications initiative studying humanitarian activities in post–Cold War conflicts, suggests the essential elements of such independence. They include structural protection for humanitarian action against political conditionality; more sensitivity to local perceptions regarding humanitarian actors and action; tighter discipline within the humanitarian sector by those providing assistance and protection; increased attention to the origins of aid resources and of the personnel administering them; greater participation and ownership by local institutions and leaders in crisis countries; and an agreed overarching political framework that gives higher priority to human security.

An agenda for action along these lines will require structural changes in three areas: the political project, the humanitarian sector, and the interplay between the two. In order to change the prevailing view that humanitarian activities are fundamentally an extension of Western foreign and security policies, governments will need to examine those policies. In order to alter the perception that international humanitarian action is predominantly a Western, Judeo-Christian construct with little participation by local institutions and little serious building of local capacity, the humanitarian sector itself will need reconstruction and greater universalism. This essay reviews a number of structural remedies that have emerged from case studies carried out since the Humanitarianism and War Project's inception in 1991.[1]

INTEGRATION, INSULATION, AND INDEPENDENCE

Broadly speaking, there are three models that describe the relationship between humanitarian action and the political framework that is applied to complex emergencies. The first is the integration of assistance and protection activities firmly within

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[1] Most of the Humanitarianism and War Project's publications are available at hwproject.tufts.edu.

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the given political framework, which may include military or peacekeeping/peace-making elements along with political and diplomatic objectives. The second is the insulation of humanitarian action from that framework, at the same time affirming the complementarity of aid work with the broader set of policies in the spheres of politico-military activities, development, trade, and conflict resolution. The third is the independence, structural and adminis-trative, of humanitarian activities from the political agenda that guides other forms of international involvement in a given crisis.[2]

High-profile international interventions have demonstrated at one and the same time the major political importance and the prominent, if often cosmetic, role of humanitarian action. At the same time, they have intensified the ongoing debate about the appropriate positioning of humanitar-ian action. During the Kosovo crisis, the use of military forces from belligerent nations such as Italy and the United States for human needs assistance in Albania and Macedonia blurred aid work with politico-military agendas. The same tarmac in Tirana housed military aircraft poised for eventual strikes in Kosovo and for logistic support of civic-action activities by the military on behalf of vulnerable civilian populations.

In Afghanistan, the Afghan authorities as well as the UN assistance mission have made human rights monitoring, protection, and enforcement subservient to the achievement of political stability, security, and peace. The vaunted Provincial Reconstruction Teams, comprised of U.S. civilian and military per-sonnel and mandated to perform security, humanitarian, and reconstruction duties, are a case in point. Moreover, coalition leaflets encouraging local communities to provide information on the Taliban in order to keep humanitarian aid coming posi-

tioned such aid as an explicit element in the coalition's politico-military strategy. Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) surely has a point in implicating instrumentalization of aid in the killing of five of its workers in June 2004; the deaths and the impunity for them led to the agency's withdrawal from Afghanistan.[3]

Since efforts at insulating humanitarian activities within a preestablished political framework have proved generally unsuccess-ful, instead ensnaring and vitiating aid work, the independence model has become more attractive—though its effectiveness is by no means a foregone conclusion. It is not suffi-cient that there be operational insulation and that a humanitarian organization proclaim adherence to impartiality, as the bombing of the Baghdad compound of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the institutional exemplar of independent action, indicates. So long as there are other factors that associate the humanitarian proj-ect as a whole with a political agenda—the predominantly Western provenance and character of humanitarian institutions and personnel is one—humanitarian action will be jeopardized.

Given the high cost of integration to the humanitarian project and the difficulties of providing effective insulation, the case for taking an independent approach to human-itarian action has become more compelling. Embracing the independence option has wide-ranging ramifications in the areas of humanitarian coordination, the manage-

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[2] For a more extended discussion, see Larry Minear, *The Humanitarian Enterprise: Dilemmas and Discoveries* (Bloomfield, Conn.: Kumarian, 2002), pp. 132–34, 75ff.
[3] Médecins Sans Frontièrs, "MSF Pulls Out Of Afghanistan," July 28, 2004; available at www.msf.org/countries/page.cfm?articleid=8851DF09-F62D-47D4-A8D3EB1E876A1E0D.

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ment of political response, and attentiveness to the views of humanitarian field staff.

IMPLICATIONS FOR COORDINATION

UN aid officials have sought to defend the integrity of humanitarian assistance by saying, in effect, We are UN humanitarian agencies and not the UN Security Council; we are here suffering with you and are prepared to help. However, the United Nations as an institution has never seriously addressed the schizophrenia between the "good," or humanitarian, United Nations and the "bad," or political, United Nations. Humanitarian activities by UN agencies such as UNICEF and the World Food Programme are inseparable from the activities of the world body itself, which has multiple functions (including peace operations and political affairs) and multiple constituencies (first and foremost member states).

As a UNICEF official based in the former Yugoslavia noted in the early 1990s, "We [who manage the UN's aid effort] are a part of the UN system and will always be seen as that. . . . For people here in Serbia, the U.N. is the U.N., and the U.N. is UNPROFOR."[4] Such tensions not only make life difficult for UN personnel, whichever part of the institution they report to. They also create confusion among governments and publics in the areas to which international personnel are deployed. It is time to acknowledge and take serious steps to resolve such recurring contradictions. After all, an institution cannot function effectively if it allows its staff to group themselves into good and bad contingents.

Membership in the UN system calls into question the most earnest protestations of principled action by UN humanitarian personnel. Recently, Under-Secretary-General Jan Egeland, the ranking UN humanitarian official, lamented the deaths of more than thirty aid workers in Afghanistan in a sixteen-month period, along with scores more in other hot spots. "In principle as well as practice," he wrote, "humanitarianism is independent of the policies of any government or rebel group. Our loyalty belongs to no nation, religion or ethnicity—but only to the principle of humanity: providing aid to people in need."[5] In calling for a humanitarianism that is "neutral and impartial—in name, deed, and perception," however, Egeland basically finessed the reality that, well-meaning and energetic UN aid officials and UN aid agencies to the contrary notwithstanding, the United Nations' humanitarian apparatus is structurally unable to function according to those cardinal principles of humanitarianism.

Protecting the integrity of humanitarian action from politicization is complicated by the reality that there is an apparent convergence between the humanitarian objectives of aid agencies and the political goals of Western governments. "[Aid] agency visions of the good society and what it might look like in Afghanistan and Iraq," writes Hugo Slim provocatively, "have much in common with the Coalition's."[6] As he points out, the perceived convergence is greater for aid agencies involved in reconstruction, development, and human rights work than for those providing only humanitarian assistance and protection. The latter, while predominantly Western in origin, take care not to embrace coalition objectives, as indeed humanitarian principles require.

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[4] Ibid., pp. 101–102.

[5] Jan Egeland, "Humanitarianism under Fire," *Christian Science Monitor*, August 5, 2004; available at www.csmonitor.com/2004/0805/p09s01-coop.html.

[6] Hugo Slim, "With or Against? Humanitarian Agencies and Coalition Counter-Insurgency" (Geneva: Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, July 2004), p. 4.

Given such structural difficulties, a non-UN-centered approach to humanitarian coordination in emergencies merits consideration. Reflecting on his own experience as former executive director of the UN World Food Programme, James Ingram concluded that "there is no reason why a coordinated international humanitarian response should be built around the UN."[7]

What alternatives are available? The ICRC is one, given the mandate it enjoys under international humanitarian law for involvement in situations of internal armed conflict. However, the ICRC has made clear its reluctance to take on the orchestration of humanitarian sector-wide activities. Its soul mate on independence issues, MSF, would be equally reluctant and, even if willing, would not be accepted by the wider NGO community in that role. However, a strong and knowledgeable NGO that embraces humanitarian principles, is not heavily involved in reconstruction and development, and has the necessary political support offers an alternative to a UN-centric response.

At the United Nations, the authority of the body that is tasked with coordination of humanitarian activities needs to be strengthened. Here some signal successes may help to chart the future course. The value of assertive coordination was demonstrated in Tanzania in 1994, when host government authorities gave UNHCR the power to choose which NGOs would be allowed to work in the refugee camps for Rwandan refugees in Ngara.[8] Another success story involved Operation Salam in Afghanistan under Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, whose leadership was reinforced by his access to a pot of resources for funding UN agency activities. A third positive experience was the Office of Emergency Operations in Africa, which functioned, it should be noted, in quasi-independence from the UN's institutional aid bureaucracy.

STRENGTHENING THE UN'S POLITICAL RESPONSE

There is also much that can be done within the UN system to infuse the institution with a more commanding sense of humanity. The impartiality of the international humanitarian enterprise is compromised by the unevenness with which crises around the world are monitored and resourced. Humanitarian organizations that depend on government funding can operate only in places where such funding is made available—for example, in Iraq but not in Chechnya. Because of this, they cannot escape fueling the perception that they serve the interests of powerful governments rather than those of suffering humanity.

During the post–Cold War years, the UN Security Council has become more attentive to conflict-related survival needs and human rights abuses as threats to "international peace and security." However, the Security Council still applies that criterion with considerable unevenness. An automatic trigger could be devised and put into place that would ensure that when certain thresholds are reached (for example, when a percentage of a country's population is in extremis, when an ongoing pattern of gross violations of human rights is established, and so on), the Security Council would be required to review the situation. An alternative would be to have an independent

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[7] James Ingram, "The Future Architecture for International Humanitarian Assistance," in Thomas G. Weiss and Larry Minear, eds., *Humanitarianism Across Borders: Sustaining Civilians in Times of War* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1993), p. 183.

[8] Marc Sommers, *The Dynamics of Coordination* (Providence: Watson Institute, 2000), p. 41.

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monitoring body perform this function and make recommendations to the Security Council through the secretary-general, who under Article 99 of the UN Charter may bring forward "any matter which in his opinion may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security."

In situations when the Security Council has imposed economic or military sanctions under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, a specially created and trained cadre of military professionals could be deployed to assist and protect affected civilian populations. This would obviate the perceived need for the civilian humanitarian organizations of the United Nations to operate in volatile or insecure environments. Traditional aid personnel could be reintroduced when sanctions are lifted and/or the particular conflict subsides. Such a cadre would help to protect the credibility of humanitarian work and reduce the tension that comes when humanitarian activities and personnel are associated with political agendas.

In order to address the recurrent blurring of military and humanitarian operations in high-profile political settings, a proposal made initially by Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld in 1958 may merit revisiting. He suggested that the United Nations reject military support to an intervention from belligerents, from the Permanent Five, or "from any country which, because of its geographical position or other reasons, might be considered as possibly having a special interest in the situation."[9] While this proposal would presumably reduce the roles played by the United States, it might still allow for the use of U.S. military logistic support for deploying UN peacekeeping troops.[10] In a broader sense, however, military assets more disinterested in character might represent an investment in the greater integrity of humanitarian work in such settings.

Similarly, the practice of posting nationals from belligerent countries on the ground in conflict settings needs to be reviewed. Paying more attention to the nationalities of UN staff may be viewed by some as politicizing the international civil service. However, recent examples abound of member states using "their" nationals within the United Nations to advance their own purposes (as in the case of UNSCOM's monitoring of nuclear nonproliferation in Iraq). Conversely, in the case of Afghanistan under the Taliban, the United States and United Kingdom insisted that their nationals, for their own safety, not be posted on the ground.

Finally, the recurring inability of the UN humanitarian organizations to deal with nonstate actors needs attention. In crisis after crisis, the bias of UN aid agencies toward member governments engaged in civil wars undermines their perceived neutrality vis-à-vis humanitarian work in areas controlled by insurgent forces. At a minimum, it should be possible to clarify in core documents of aid agencies throughout the UN system that negotiation of humanitarian space with belligerents does not convey political recognition of their cause. In fact, humanitarian actors should be *expected* to find interlocutors among all warring parties and to gain and maintain access to civilian populations under their jurisdiction.

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[9] Report of the Secretary-General, UN General Assembly, 13th session, document A/3934, October 9, 1958, para. 158ff.

[10] Larry Minear, Ted van Baarda, and Marc Sommers, *NATO and Humanitarian Action in the Kosovo Crisis* (Providence: Watson Institute, 2000), pp. 67–68.

PRIVILEGING FIELD PERSPECTIVES

Given their firsthand view of humanitarian imperatives and impacts, the field staffs of relief and rights agencies have an indispensable "ground-truthing" function in the formulation and monitoring of political policies. Yet more often than not, program managers in emergency settings are denied an "eyes-and-ears" role for their organizations. In the Gulf War, UN humanitarian staff in the region in late 1990 noticed that the economic sanctions imposed on Iraq were beginning to put pressure on the authorities, as had been hoped. Yet humanitarians were not consulted as the Security Council proceeded from economic to military action. Nor did staff in Baghdad and Amman, sensing a process driven by political rather than humanitarian concerns, come forward and convey their perceptions.

The fact that views from the field are generally more reflective of the hardships being experienced by the civilian population may account for their easy dismissal by hard-nosed officials with high-level political portfolios. There is little evidence to suggest, however, that integrated UN aid officials are taken more seriously these days by the political side of the house than are independent observers such as the ICRC or NGOs.

The dynamics of the process also reflect another casualty of integration: humanitarian officials tend to become second-echelon players, if players at all, whose inputs into broader political frameworks more often rationalize already determined policies than assist in their formulation. A telling example of officials' unwillingness to be used to validate such policies is the refusal of a senior UN aid official to meet with U.S. ambassador Richard Holbrooke in Kosovo when the Rambouillet peace process was floundering. Suspecting that such a conversation would be used by Holbrooke to justify an eventual NATO decision to bomb, the bar-the-door UN official sought to protect the humanitarian effort from political abuse by refusing to be drawn into the debate.[11] Whatever the counsel, however, those who frame the context for humanitarian action should solicit and give due consideration to the views of aid officials. They have a clear self-interest in doing so. Political policies that wreak humanitarian havoc can also prove politically counterproductive or even self-defeating.

At present, officials in the headquarters of aid agencies vary in their willingness to take views from the front lines seriously. Still fewer aid agencies are willing to delegate to field staff the orchestration of the interface with politico-military actors or, for that matter, decisions about whether to remain in their postings amid conditions of deteriorating security. Some agencies—the ICRC is a prime example—vest most decision-making in their field delegations. Others—the UN system is one—reserve key decisions for headquarters. ICRC decisions to withdraw international staff and suspend operations are generally made by the head of the delegation in the field. In the UN system, they are the task of the New York–based UN security coordinator, although some individual UN organizations have edged into the UN security coordinator's turf by having their own security units at headquarters.

Each approach to the geography of decision-making has its own costs and benefits. Headquarters' involvement ostensibly helps to ensure consistency and coherence in aid agency responses to a range of crises. However, global consistency is not guaranteed by centralized security decision-making, as UN aid organizations and the UN staff association pointed out in decrying the failure to

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[11] Ibid.

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withdraw UN staff from Iraq before the August 2003 bombing of its Baghdad headquarters. Moreover, centralized decision-making also injects political and broader institutional concerns into the decision-making process, straitjacketing humanitarian activities accordingly. This is only natural, given that people in the offices of the UN's political and peacekeeping apparatus—and, for that matter, of its aid agencies as well—in New York, Geneva, and Rome have different portfolios and different responsibilities. Clearly, distance from the front lines of humanitarian action also affects perceptions of the challenges, the dangers, the proportionality, and the effectiveness of humanitarian work.

At the UN headquarters level, officials with political portfolios such as those in the Department of Political Affairs (DPA) and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations generally favor integration. One DPA official observed, "Every time there is a major crisis, the UN secretariat reaches for the integration model and then modifies it around the edges to accommodate the individual circumstances."[12] At the political level there is also a tendency to discount negative effects on the United Nations that arise from the perception of it as an agent with a political agenda. The cumulative experience marshaled above notwithstanding, one DPA official has observed that the fact that in the former Yugoslavia and Kosovo the United Nations had been associated simultaneously with bombing and feeding was "not a significant problem." In contrast, aid officials viewed confusion of humanitarian with politico-military objectives as seriously compromising the neutrality and acceptability of their work.[13]

While decisions taken in the field are generally more geared to humanitarian considerations than those that emerge from headquarters' consultations, perspectives from the front lines are nevertheless often far from unanimous. In Somalia, in late 1992, as the famine worsened and security deteriorated, a number of U.S. NGOs joined in a letter to U.S. national security advisor Brent Scowcroft. The letter, urging deployment of "appropriately armed UN security forces tasked with protecting emergency supplies and staff," was signed by executives of a number of NGOs whose field staff had encouraged the initiative—but also by several whose Mogadishu-based staff strenuously opposed the recommendation.[14] However diverse the viewpoints of field staff may be, it is time that they receive greater attention in the decision-making councils of political and headquarters' bodies.

EXPERIENCE FROM THE POST–COLD WAR period provides ample justification for taking a far more critical look at the significant damage to humanitarian—and, for that matter, political—interests often associated with integration. Insulating humanitarian action from the UN political framework within which UN aid agencies are situated has also had its shortcomings. Hence, it is imperative to ensure that the delivery of aid in settings of armed conflict enjoys greater independence, even though doing so raises major problems for the presumed coordinating role of the UN system. In addition, there are some available options for reform that could be instituted to advance the effectiveness of humanitarian and political activities alike.

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[12] Telephone conversation between DPA headquarters official and the author.

[13] Comments made at the roundtable, "Humanitarian Aid and Intervention: The Challenges of Integration," Carnegie Council on Ethics and International Affairs, New York, N.Y., October 30, 2003.

[14] Minear, *The Humanitarian Enterprise*, pp. 102–103.