In the Ndosha Camp near Goma, Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo), food is being distributed on 25 July 1994 to children who lost their parents in the Rwandan massacres. (Photo by John Isaac, United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda [UNAMIR])

Meet the Humanitarians

A Soldier's Primer on the Humanitarian Community

Maj. Benjamin C. Stumpf, U.S. Army

As the fight in Gaza is demonstrating, modern conflicts are becoming messier and more confusing. The distinctions among combatants, belligerents, and nonbelligerents are increasingly difficult to detect, making targeting enemy forces and providing aid to only nonbelligerents progressively more difficult. The displacement of battles into more populated areas increases the probability of collateral damage and calls for humanitarian assistance. This dynamic is progressively placing military and

humanitarian actors in the same spaces. For both actors to achieve their missions, they need to learn to cohabitate amicably.

A principal barrier preventing effective cooperation between the U.S. Army and the humanitarian community is a lack of understanding by soldiers of humanitarians: what humanitarians believe, how they behave, and why. The idea of a monolithic "humanitarian community" is as oversimplified and erroneous as viewing the U.S. Army in such a way (though this article will use the term for simplicity's sake). Just as American soldiers are a diverse grouping of maneuver, enabling, and supporting individuals, humanitarians too have a remarkable diversity of thought and practice. Like the professional bonds of soldiering, humanitarians have principles and norms that unite their professional community. Understanding these humanitarian principles and the accompanying diversity is the crucial first step that military professionals can take to ensure humanitarians are at least not an obstacle and, at best, achieve a degree of unity of effort in future military operations.

History of Humanitarianism

Militaries have needed to interact with humanitarians since the very beginning of the humanitarian movement. The birth of modern humanitarianism is usually marked by the Battle of Solferino in 1859.[1] Shocked by the carnage of the battle and the lack of attention paid to the wounded, Swiss merchant Henri Dunant determined that something needed to be done to alleviate the suffering caused by war.[2] Four years later, in 1863, he spearheaded the formation of what would later become the International Committee of the Red Cross. The Red Cross movement and the idea of humanitarianism quickly spread in the years that followed.[3]

Humanitarianism initially restricted its focus to assisting war wounded. After World War I, nongovernmental organizations (NGO) like Save the Children saw gaps in government capabilities to support civilians affected by war and stepped in to fill those needs. These organizations notably operated with the consent of the government of the country in which they operated and away from the battlefields themselves. With only a few exceptions, the humanitarian community generally abided by the two guidelines of host-nation consent and operating on the periphery of the conflict. These guidelines served both the recipients of aid and humanitarians well until the Rwandan genocide in 1994.[4]

As the Rwandan Patriotic Front, a Tutsi rebel group, completed its seizure of Rwanda from the Hutu-dominated government in 1994, hundreds of thousands of Rwandan Hutus fled into Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo) to escape the anticipated reprisals against their ethnic group.[5] Because of the global ignorance to what was occurring in the region, televised reports sparked a massive fundraising campaign to assist the supposedly victimized refugees in Zaire. This massive humanitarian action not only diverted aid from the genocide victims in Rwanda but also allowed the genocide perpetrators to use the refugee camps in Zaire to regroup and launch attacks across the border against the Rwandan Patriotic Front.[6] As the situation in Rwanda and Zaire became clearer to the international community, it was apparent that the humanitarian response was less than ideal. In hindsight, much of the humanitarian action was seen as a well-intentioned but misinformed and amateur endeavor that did more harm than good.[7]

Informed by experiences in Zaire and Rwanda, many humanitarian organizations recognized a need for change. The lurking but seldom acknowledged idea that aid could fuel conflict was directly addressed. Humanitarians acknowledged that aid could directly support armed groups through theft or indirectly support them by allowing them to essentially outsource their logistics (e.g., refugee camps serving as de facto reception and staging locations).[8] The greatest lesson was that if humanitarian organizations were going to operate in conflict areas, they could not be agnostic to the conflict around them.

This lesson is codified in the humanitarian maxim "do no harm." Doing no harm entailed an emphasis on understanding and analyzing the political and military situations that create humanitarian crises. By understanding the situation accurately, humanitarians could better ensure more of their aid reached its intended

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beneficiaries and help humanitarians mitigate some of the damaging secondary effects of their actions.[9]

The Four Humanitarian Principles

The humanitarian community is guided by four paramount principles: humanity, impartiality, neutrality, and independence.[10] The first two are primarily concerned with how humanitarians should interact with a population. The latter two primarily concern how humanitarians should interact with other influencing entities, namely governments and armed groups. Taken together, these principles form the foundation for all humanitarian action.[11]

The principles of humanity and impartiality guide where and how humanitarians should act. Humanity is the most important principle and the humanitarian's reason for service. This principle professes that every life is important, and the alleviation of suffering is the most noble of human acts.[12] The principle of impartiality is designed to ensure the principle of humanity is applied fairly.[13] Impartiality is essentially humanitarian triage. Those in the most need deserve the most assistance and need alone should guide the expenditure of humanitarian resources.[14]

Neutrality and independence help humanitarians avoid entanglements that could compromise the previous principles. Neutrality means remaining apolitical. Since the Rwandan genocide, humanitarians have adopted a more nuanced approach to neutrality. It no longer equates to a complete refusal to interact with armed or political groups but instead implores humanitarian actions not to produce circumstances more favorable to one side of a conflict at the expense of another.[15] This principle, however, is less dogmatically followed than humanity and impartiality. Some humanitarian organizations such as Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders) have reached points where the political or military situation seems so one sided that they can no longer remain politically neutral and have openly advocated for or against a combatant.[16]

Of less contention is the principle of independence. Rather self-explanatory, independence states humanitarians should make decisions based solely on their missions. Simple in concept; in practice, it is not. The vast majority of funding for humanitarian organizations comes from governments and intergovernmental groups, all with their own political agendas, so the principle is sometimes difficult to fully adhere to.[17] Additionally, humanitarian organizations require approval from the government to operate within a country. Gaining and maintaining such approval can be difficult, particularly if the government is the primary perpetrator of human rights abuses or is a significant cause of the humanitarian crisis.[18] Government attempts to include humanitarian activities into state-building or counterinsurgency strategies like the U.S. efforts in Afghanistan challenge the independence of humanitarians, leading many to loathe the purported compliment that NGOs are force multipliers on the battlefield.[19]

The Humanitarian Charter and Sphere Handbook

The most referenced manual for humanitarians is Sphere's handbook, *Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response*, which is the nearest thing to doctrine within the humanitarian community. A byproduct of the humanitarian introspection after Rwanda and an attempt to professionalize the field, the handbook was first published in 1998.[20] Originally spearheaded by the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and in its fifth printing, the Sphere handbook consolidates the Humanitarian Charter, protection principles, and guidelines for minimum standards for the most common humanitarian activities. The most recent edition included contributions from over 450 organizations, ranging from religious and secular NGOs to a host of United Nations (UN) organizations.[21]

Following a short introductory section, the handbook presents and comments upon the foundational Humanitarian Charter. The charter is a legally rooted proclamation that "all people affected by disaster or conflict have a right to receive protection and assistance to ensure the basic conditions for life with dignity."[22] It proclaims three universal rights: life with dignity, humanitarian assistance, and protection and security.[23] A life with dignity is defined within the parameters of human rights. While obviously these rights include life itself, the charter interprets dignity in not only physical terms such as freedom from hunger or torture but also in terms of "the whole person, including the values and beliefs of individuals and affected communities."[24] In this regard, life is more closely defined as the ability to live life fully in all respects.

UN aid workers package food parcels at one of the UNRWA's largest shelters in Gaza, Khan Younis Training Centre, on 31 October 2023. (Photo by Hussein Owda, UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East [UNRWA])

The right to humanitarian assistance is couched in two terms: the rights of individuals and the rights of administering agencies.[25] The former is only briefly addressed in the Humanitarian Charter since the majority of the Sphere handbook addresses individual rights in terms of specific minimum standards when administering humanitarian assistance. These standards include, for example, how many liters of water and pounds of food a household should receive a day. The rights of administering agencies are an echo of the principle of impartiality. Through a progressive interpretation of impartiality, the charter proclaims that when responsible parties (normally governments but sometimes other armed groups) do not provide the necessary humanitarian assistance to populations under their control, they *must* allow third-party humanitarians the ability to do such.[26]

The Humanitarian Charter states that the right to protection and security is the state's primary responsibility. Unlike a life with dignity, this right mainly concerns physical protection. The charter implores the importance of distinction, proportionality, and precaution in all military endeavors and highlights that certain segments of the population are inherently at more risk than others, such as children and women, and those with disabilities.[27] Much like the previous right to humanitarian assistance, this right also mandates external action if the responsible party cannot fulfill its duty.[28]

The Humanitarian Charter, and the Sphere handbook in general, roots itself in a specific interpretation of international law. This interpretation is not always complementary to American (specifically, Department of Defense [DOD]) interpretations. The bodies of international law cited by the charter are in the categories of international human rights law, international humanitarian law/law of armed conflict, refugees and internally displaced persons law, and disasters and

humanitarian assistance law.[29] A full list of the cited laws is found in the handbook, but there are three aspects of note for soldiers.

First, the United States is not a party to some of the referenced treaties, namely the Rome Statute establishing the International Criminal Court and the first

the foundations of the Humanitarian Charter and the *DOD Law of War Manual* share far more in common than they diverge. Both unambiguously proclaim the four Geneva Conventions as the heart of international humanitarian law.[35] For many of the treaties that the United States has not ratified, it has generally done so

> The humanitarian community widely believes the most restrictive interpretation of armed force is the correct one, and the interpretation that grants humanitarians the most access and protection is the correct one.

additional protocol to the Geneva Conventions.[30] These pieces of law create, at times, a significant divergence in American military legality and humanitarian beliefs. Specifically, the United States does not accept the jurisdiction or authority of the International Criminal Court, and the additional protocol grants lawful combatant status to a significantly wider population than the United States and the original four Geneva Conventions do.[31]

Second, many of the references are soft law. The legal concept of soft law includes documents that are initially interpreted as nonbinding globally like guidelines or geographically limited documents. Over time, many actors attribute such substantial weight to some soft law pieces that they take on a quasi-binding nature, such as the *Gender Handbook for Humanitarian Action* and the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa.[32] Once again, the interpretation and application of soft law creates divergences with American law because the United States places significantly less emphasis on this type of law.[33]

Last, the charter, the Sphere handbook, and its contributing agencies, by and large, hold a liberal interpretation of international law. They believe international laws supersede national ones, a view not held by the United States. The humanitarian community widely believes the most restrictive interpretation of armed force is the correct one, and the interpretation that grants humanitarians the most access and protection is the correct one.[34] These interpretations will differ with the *DOD Law of War Manual* at times. However,

based on narrow objections and, as a matter of policy, adheres to the regulations in most military operations. Examples include how the United States maintains self-destruct capabilities on all landmines and has not used them outside the Korean Peninsula despite not ratifying the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.[36]

Also related to military activities, the Sphere handbook includes a chapter on protection. Like humanitarian legal interpretations, the chapter has a wider scope for protection than the average military commander would likely have.[37] To humanitarians, protection is physical (i.e., from violence) and material (i.e., access to assistance programs). The protection chapter identifies four protection principles to guide humanitarian activities: "(1) Enhance the safety, dignity and rights of people, and avoid exposing them to harm; (2) Ensure people's access to assistance according to need and without discrimination; (3) Assist people to recover from the physical and psychological effects of threatened or actual violence, coercion or deliberate deprivation; [and] (4) Help people claim their rights."[38] To help practitioners put these principles into action, the handbook offers three "modes of protection activity": prevention, response, and remediation.[39]

Prevention is focused on "reducing exposure or vulnerability to … threats and abuse" and is the most durable but hardest mode to implement.[40] Ideally, prevention targets the sources of abuse and seeks to change their behavior. Inducing such changes typically requires political action, which humanitarians tend to

Humanitarian aid pallets rigged with parachutes for an airdrop aboard a C-130J Super Hercules are prepared for takeoff at an undisclosed location in Southwest Asia on 1 March 2024. The humanitarian assistance included thirty-eight thousand Meals, Ready to Eat and water to alleviate the suffering of civilians in Gaza. U.S. Army Central quartermaster company soldiers specializing in rigging supplies for airdrops ensured parachutes were prepared so the palletized food and water supplies could be dropped safely from the air. (Photo courtesy of the U.S. Air Force)

avoid. Instead, most humanitarians focus on shaping the behavior of their beneficiaries through the response and remediation modes of protection activity. Response focuses on stopping an ongoing action such as calling police when there is a crime. Remediation provides coping mechanisms after the fact like medical care or counseling.[41] Using the common military "bang" concept, prevention is left of the bang, response is during or immediately after the bang, and remediation is right of the bang.

A focus on response and remediation makes sense for humanitarians on the ground because they interact with their beneficiaries far more than the perpetrators of violence. This preponderance of interaction with beneficiaries makes the tailoring of protection techniques to them simply practical; it is difficult to change the behavior of people humanitarians rarely interact with. Additionally, the often-static nature of humanitarian facilities (e.g., medical clinics and food distribution centers) generally requires beneficiaries to seek assistance after the fact. The skills of humanitarians are also not conducive to juxtaposing themselves between potential perpetrators and victims with much success. For example, providing medical services by a humanitarian group cannot prevent political violence. Therefore, the greatest potential area of collaboration between military forces and humanitarians is within the prevention mode of protection activities.

An eight-year-old child waits her turn to receive food on 30 January 2024 in Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip. (Photo by Abed Zagou, UN International Children's Emergency Fund [UNICEF])

Humanitarians Do Understand Politics

A common criticism of humanitarians is that they are oblivious to the politics surrounding them; bleeding hearts disconnected from reality. To dispel this notion, the World Humanitarian Summit sought to tackle the political-humanitarian interface head-on. Held in Istanbul in May 2016, and with over twenty-three thousand contributors, the summit was called by then UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.[42] Ban observed a world inflicted by economic and political fragility and compounded by more frequent and deadly natural disasters. He called upon international organizations to increase their ability to support community resiliency to such fragility and disasters.[43] Specifically, the secretary-general expressed "outrage that humanitarian action is still often used as a substitute for political solutions."[44] This unambiguous call for more political action in humanitarian crises set the stage for increased interactions between militaries and humanitarians.

The output document of the summit, *Agenda for Humanity*, is notable for supporting political solutions to humanitarian crises. The *Agenda for Humanity* details five core responsibilities shared across humanity, with humanitarians and governments (and militaries by extension) included within humanity. The first responsibility is to "prevent and end conflict." Supporting functions of this responsibility include acting "early upon potential conflict situations," "sustain political leadership to prevent conflicts," and "address root causes of conflict."[45] These functions are clearly political, and while they support the humanitarian principle of humanity, they can create dilemmas for the humanitarian principles of independence and neutrality.

The other core responsibilities of the agenda are respect for the law of warfare, supporting all in need, trying new approaches, and long-term investment.[46] They also have supporting functions that may challenge the principles of neutrality and independence. Speaking out when observing violations of international humanitarian law, advocating the end of statelessness, and anticipating crises cannot be done in political vacuums—they are inherently political issues with political solutions that require taking political stands. Such steps, such as press releases, can threaten a humanitarian organization's access to populations in need, thereby compromising the principle of humanity for

that organization. To take such steps in a crisis zone is potentially inviting a severe reaction from local armed groups that could disrupt operations and potentially harm humanitarians themselves. If a humanitarian organization cannot reach populations in need, or if the physical risks to their own staff are too high to conduct business, they have little purpose in existing. While there may be strong support by members of a humanitarian organization for certain political actions, overtly supporting or even expressing support for many of these political tasks is near organizational suicide.

The political emphasis within the *Agenda for Humanity* is not, however, a paradigm shift in humanitarian action. The agenda suggests that humanitarians should have a solid understanding of political responsibilities and be invigorated to encourage beneficial government actions. In a battlespace, this could mean demanding military protection for vulnerable populations, encouraging ceasefires and dialogues, or petitioning the demilitarization of certain areas.

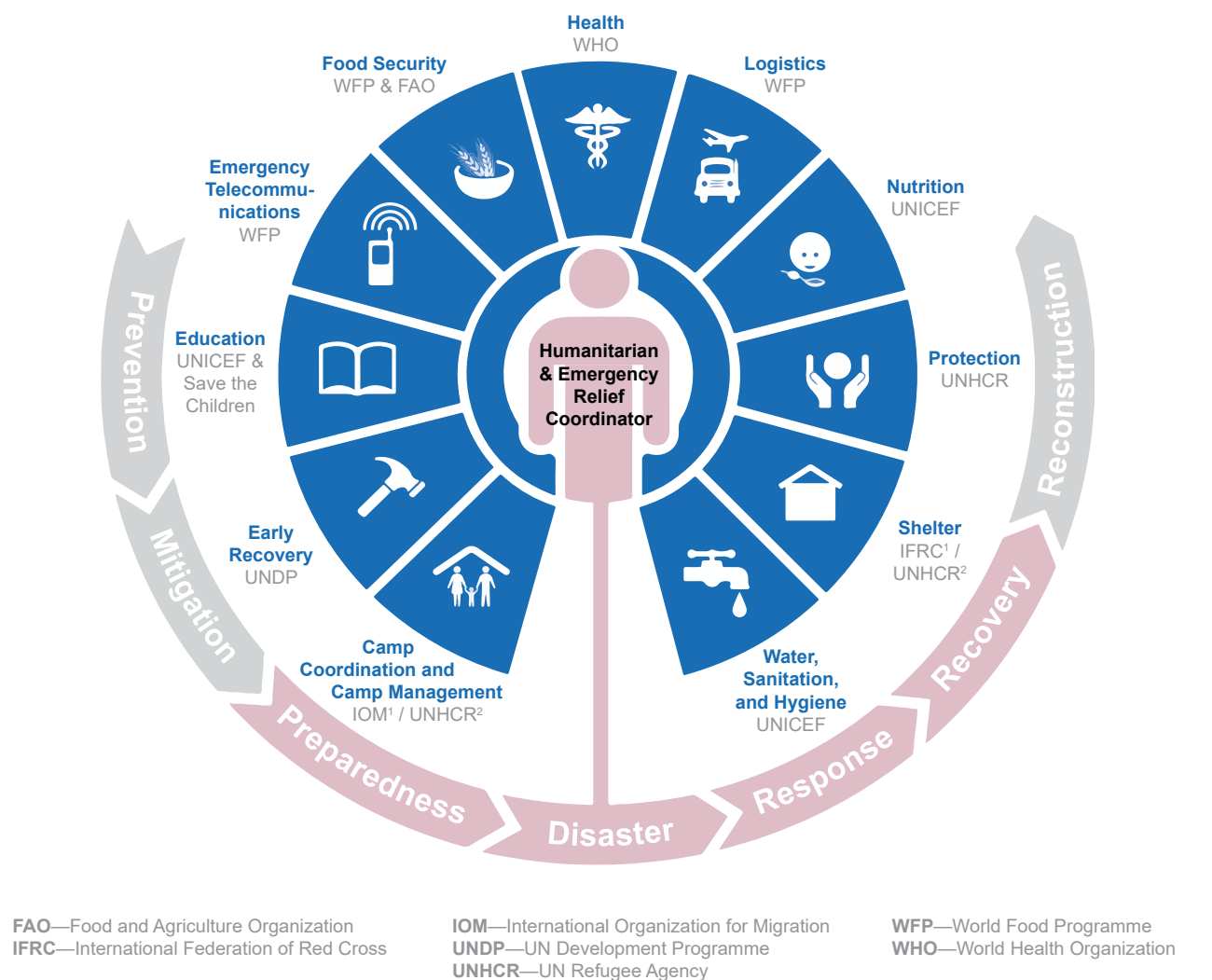## Finding Humanitarians in Conflict Zones

Sorting out the humanitarian "who's who" in a conflict zone is difficult, especially for a military unit. However, most humanitarian organizations abide by two general practices that make finding them easier: registering with the government, and unambiguous self-identification. First, humanitarians seek access to an area through official channels.[47] While the image of humanitarian convoys sneaking across borders and dodging checkpoints is enticing, it is not at all accurate. According to state sovereignty laws, humanitarian organizations must request permission to enter a state. Even in the case of rebellions or civil wars, humanitarians must technically receive permission to enter from the legally recognized government.[48] When operating in nongovernment-controlled areas, it is common practice, and a good self-preservation tactic, for humanitarians to also seek permission from the local armed group(s).[49] Only in the case of occupied territories are humanitarian organizations not beholden to the administering government for permission to enter and operate, but in practice, such permission is usually formally requested.[50] For military units trying to find out who is operating in or near their area of operations, simply asking for such information from

the government or requesting military attachés at the embassy to do so is a good start.

With such required permission, humanitarian organizations are inherently tied, if not beholden, to the recognized government or the local armed group. That is why the principles of neutrality and independence are important to humanitarians. Those principles provide a degree of separation from the sanctioning government or group. Such sanctioning has proven to act as a protective cloak against hostile action more often than not. At a far more basic level, security is maintained in many of the same ways members of the media protect themselves. Humanitarians plaster their logos on virtually everything they own, not as a form of advertising, but as way to help combatants distinguish foe from neutral. Additionally, seeking permission does not stop at the country level but is a part of most travel. Especially when traveling between the territories of rival armed groups, receiving permission is essential to secure safe passage.

The Cluster System

Once in a disaster or conflict area, humanitarians generally organize themselves within a cluster system. They only generally organize in such a way as each humanitarian organization arranges its own access to a country and is free to operate as it likes because of the principle of independence. Most humanitarian organizations participate in the cluster system to avoid oversaturating or neglecting an area and to economize logistics. Developed in 2005 by the UN's Inter-Agency Standing Committee, the cluster system is an eleven-sector arrangement, with sectors functionally defined (see the figure). One (sometimes two) large humanitarian agency is mandated as the cluster lead and reports to a UN-appointed humanitarian and emergency relief coordinator.[51] The coordinator and system are geographically limited by their mandate from the UN, usually with one coordinator and system per country and activated only after a specific disaster or armed conflict.[52] Participation in the system is purely voluntary but highly encouraged, with cluster leads using persuasion without directive authority. Due to their size and worldwide reach, UN agencies are typically the cluster leads. Cluster leads host routine coordination meetings to help coordinate efforts. These meetings typically entail situation updates from the participating organizations, discussions on population

Health
WHO

Food Security
WFP & FAO

Logistics
WFP

Emergency
Telecommu-
nications
WFP

Nutrition
UNICEF

Education
UNICEF &
Save the
Children

Protection
UNHCR

Humanitarian
& Emergency
Relief
Coordinator

Early
Recovery
UNDP

Shelter
IFRC[1] /
UNHCR[2]

Camp
Coordination and
Camp Management
IOM[1] / UNHCR[2]

Water,
Sanitation,
and Hygiene
UNICEF

Prevention

Mitigation

Reconstruction

Recovery

Preparedness

Response

Disaster

FAO—Food and Agriculture Organization
IFRC—International Federation of Red Cross

IOM—International Organization for Migration
UNDP—UN Development Programme
UNHCR—UN Refugee Agency

WFP—World Food Programme
WHO—World Health Organization

(Figure from the UN Inter-Agency Standing Committee)

Figure. UN Cluster System

needs, and nonbinding planning for future operations. Cluster meetings are usually well publicized, and any organization is welcome to attend, including militaries.[53] Sending military representatives to these meetings can increase situational awareness within an area of operations without compromising the independence and neutrality of humanitarian field operatives in the same way that, hypothetically, showing up to a field hospital in a convoy of Strykers would.

More Than One Type of Humanitarian

The term "humanitarian" is often used to encompass a wide range of actors, many of whom do not consider themselves part of the same group. Due to the decentralized nature of their activities, there are few standard ways to categorize humanitarian groups. However, within the humanitarian community, there is an important distinction between itself and the development community, though nonhumanitarians typically label both communities as humanitarian. The humanitarian community is principally concerned with preserving human life. Unsurprisingly then, routine humanitarian activities include short-term solutions like providing shelter, food, and medical assistance. The development community, in contrast, focuses on long-term solutions typically designed to make a community self-sufficient or at least sustainably better off. Development activities

UN aid workers distribute flour on 23 April 2024 in Rafah, Gaza. (Photo by Mohammed Hinnawi, UNRWA)

can include infrastructure and conflict resolution. While humanitarian activities can certainly cost a significant amount of money, overall, development projects are more costly per person impacted.[54] Activities such as hardening shelters, education, and employment cross the humanitarian-development divide, making the distinction between the communities more of a spectrum than a demarcation. For longer-lasting humanitarian crises or humanitarian crises that emerge in more populated areas, it is common to find humanitarian and development actors operating side by side but with different project time horizons.

Within the purely humanitarian realm, there are many different types of humanitarians. A common practice across virtually all the larger organizations is to maximize the employment of local nationals.[55] Employing locals is beneficial for two main reasons. First, locals have more detailed knowledge of the area, actors, and customs than expatriates. By employing locals, humanitarian organizations maximize their

resident knowledge to tailor their activities to more effective and efficient levels. Second, the employment of locals is beneficial to the community being served. Locals reinvest their salaries into the local community in a far more direct way than expatriate staff would, thereby doing a bit more to help alleviate the crisis.[56] So while the first reason is more shaped by business, the second reflects the principle of humanity.

The Red Cross is one of the more well-known humanitarian organizations. However, the phrase "Red Cross" is a catchall for three types of Red Cross organizations that collectively refer to themselves as "the Movement." First, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is the legally mandated custodian of the Geneva Conventions.[57] ICRC personnel ensure belligerents uphold the Geneva Convention. They are the ones who visit prisoner-of-war camps and deliver packages across battle lines. Second, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is an international organization that seeks

to save lives, typically by responding to disasters, and without any mandate from an intergovernmental organization.[58] Third, there are 191 National Societies. The National Societies are organized along territorial lines and sometimes have official relations with national governments.[59] The ICRC, IFRC, and National Societies are all independent of each other but frequently work in close collaboration. Specifically, the IFRC can serve as an international mobilizer for a disaster, while the National Societies within the affected country can direct the day-to-day recovery activities.[60]

Governments and international governmental organizations frequently have humanitarian arms. The UN has a plethora of humanitarian agencies such as UN Refugee Agency, UN Development Programme, and UNICEF. Other well-known agencies include the European Union's European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and the United Kingdom's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. Unlike the more altruistic UN organizations, the other organizations are governmental arms seeking to achieve their government's objectives, in this case, humanitarian projects. These organizations also operate as implementing agencies, meaning they publish contract specifications, award the contract to bidders (frequently NGOs), and supervise the work but do not execute the work themselves. Much of the work paid for by their taxpayers is then done by other organizations, not government employees.[61] While these organizations make few claims of independence and neutrality, they do understand the need for their implementing partners to do so. One example is how the USAID office in Pakistan tolerated the removal of the USAID logo from food donations provided in Taliban-controlled areas.[62]

The final main category is NGOs. They are officially not affiliated with governments of any kind, but the degree of separation varies. The motivations for NGOs run from secular to religious and across all major religions. NGOs vary in specialization or generalization. Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders) is obviously quite medically specialized, while organizations like Oxfam and Catholic Relief Services provide various services.[63] Typically, these larger organizations are organized similarly to the IFRC-National Societies relationship: a parent headquarters manages international marketing and coordination, while local or regional societies that share the same name manage the day-to-day operations. Smaller NGOs typically are more narrowly focused on the services they provide. Confusing the NGO category even more, few professional standards apply to personnel. There are very few humanitarian academic programs, and each organization certifies its own employees. This byzantine arrangement does little to standardize training and education standards or certify those within the field's abilities and required knowledge.[64]

Conclusion

The soldier with a gun and a humanitarian with a bag of rice elicit starkly different ideas and emotions. They are not, however, opposing entities. Military units and humanitarian organizations can complement each other, or at least not undercut one another. The foundational documents guiding each of their actions are essentially the same, so both sides follow similar rule books. The principles of independence and neutrality do not mean there is no chance for cooperation between humanitarians and militaries. But with a greater understanding of those principles and humanitarian modus operandi, militaries can create a unity of effort with humanitarians so that both can better realize their goals. Most importantly, humanitarians and soldiers are motivated by the same goal: to make the world a little better. ■

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