

Conclusion

It is clear that for humanitarians to embrace the private option as *Mean Times* suggests, there would be effects on both the humanitarian ethic and correspondingly on the dynamics of securing the humanitarian space. While appealing in light of the retraction of the public sector in providing security, interaction between PSCs and humanitarians cannot be understood as a value-free economic relationship subject to the forces of supply and demand. As one moves along the spectrum of security services from passive to active, the interaction becomes complicated by the issues of consent, legitimacy, and longer term factors relating to the universality of humanitarianism, cost, and conflict resolution. Simply put, the concept of a free and competitive marketplace where humanitarians can choose from and contractually control a variety of providers offering an array of services does not exist. Furthermore, it may not be altogether wise if political endeavours are needed to solve the problems that led to the humanitarian problems in the first place. Assuming an expansion of the already existing relationship between humanitarians and private security providers, the nature of the industry as currently structured and regulated would, depending on the service, change in varying degrees how humanitarian activities are perceived, delivered, and make an impact.

This should not be an excuse, however, to attempt to limit this relationship or dismiss it out of hand for fear of jeopardizing humanitarianism. Danger still confronts humanitarians in their daily operations. Calls such as the recent demand made by Canadian Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy for a humanitarian intervention force operating outside the confines of the United Nations Security Council reinforce the need for something to be done to resolve conflicts and protect humanitarians and those they serve.⁴⁸ While security was not a worry for humanitarians during Cold War times, current conditions demand that it no longer be neglected. Indeed, increased interaction between humanitarians and international forces earlier in the last decade revealed that many, while holding some reservations, are willing to deliver humanitarian assistance in a more pragmatic manner where flexibility is stressed over holding the humanitarian ethic as a moral absolute. While the private security industry, due to its business orientation and own limitations, is not a panacea allowing for humanitarians to return to the moral absolutes, it does serve as an option, and in fact is the only option other than humanitarians scaling down or pulling out, if public providers do not step forward. Whether it becomes the sole option or efforts are made to mitigate its more controversial immediate and long term effects are matters for future needed discussion.

⁴⁸Mike Trickey, "Canadian Axworthy urges humanitarian force outside UN," Montreal Gazette, 11 February 2000.