

independence and distance from political issues in order to have access to the victims and to preserve their humanitarian credibility...Conversely, the presence of United Nations Peacekeeping forces may secure a suitable environment for humanitarian activities. These forces provide protection to relief workers and protect the distribution of aid".⁶ Therefore, it is clear that in attempting to assist humanitarianism, the use of international force is a double-edged sword.

But, as the *Mean Times* report implies, and others overtly state, trying to dull the adverse effects for humanitarianism may be a moot point.⁷ Problems discovered in operations in the early 1990s and a fear of sustaining casualties for causes not directly tied to the national interest of the most powerful states have led to a retrenchment, thus putting in jeopardy humanitarians and their work. Certainly, casualty sensitivity tied to the national interest is not necessarily a bad thing. Stephen Kinloch notes that "[t]he fear of casualties on the part of states can be considered a healthy phenomenon, reflecting governments' responsibility and their accountability for the lives of their citizens. National armed forces are, after all, primarily for the defence and protection of the interests and citizens of the country they serve".⁸ However, no matter how healthy the sentiment, this once again catches humanitarians between a rock and a hard place. On the one hand, humanitarianism, encompassing both the personnel and their activities, continues to require a reasonable degree of security which military actors can provide. This may only be provided, however, on a case-by-case basis depending on the interests of those on the United Nations Security Council or in regional forums. Moreover, once in theatre, the military agenda may not coincide with the humanitarian timetable. On the other hand, this means that provision of outside force, when it is offered, is due to particular national interest which might affect the humanitarian space.

Here lies the appeal of turning to the private sector. Undoubtedly, the outside introduction of potentially coercive means for the sake of humanitarianism, whatever its source, remains bothersome for many. But for those who have experienced the perils of post-Cold War humanitarianism and have gained a more pragmatic approach, commercial security seemingly mitigates many of the dilemmas surrounding force and securing the humanitarian space: it can be employed and dismissed on the basis of performance and humanitarian, rather than political, timetables and, in a related manner, is not only *available* but also comes with no political strings attached.

⁶ Jan Eliasson, "Humanitarian Action and Peacekeeping," in Olara A. Otunnu and Michael W. Doyle, eds., *Peacemaking and Peacekeeping for the New Century* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1998), p. 209, p. 211.

⁷ See Richard Falk, "Human Rights, Humanitarian Assistance, and the Sovereignty of States," in Kevin M. Cahill, ed., *A Framework For Survival: Health, Human Rights, and Humanitarian Assistance in Conflicts and Disasters* (New York: Routledge, 1999), pp. 122-136; Richard C. Longworth "Phantom Forces, Diminished Dreams," *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* (March/April 1995), pp. 24-28. Some examples of trying to improve the relationship between international forces and humanitarians are the UNHCR's handbooks *Working with the Military* and *Handbook for the Military*. Similarly, the latest British Army Field Manual stresses the dynamic and challenging nature of humanitarian operations and the need to maintain consent throughout.

⁸ Stephen P. Kinloch, "Utopian or Pragmatic? A UN Permanent Volunteer Force," *International Peacekeeping* 3 (Winter 1996), p. 171.