

impartiality, and humanity and; security, referring to violence or the threat of violence between combatants, often also directed at noncombatants, that prevents humanitarians from reaching those suffering. It is clear that securing the humanitarian space is not one way; it is determined by the capabilities and activities of each actor and their interaction.

It is similarly clear for humanitarians that tradeoffs must be made in their strategies and that in following the humanitarian ethic, they may actually end up limiting the quality and quantity of their assistance and even placing themselves at risk. For instance, they may have to turn a blind eye to banditry or the ways in which locals distribute humanitarian assistance, thus limiting the benefit of humanitarianism and perhaps even contributing to ongoing conflict. Conversely, taking steps to combat these measures can lead to accusations of partiality, real or perceived, which raise hostility, forcing a comparable contraction of the humanitarian space. Also, in some cases, just the provision of humanitarian assistance is antithetical to combatants following a strategy of terrorizing and sapping the morale of civilians, making humanitarians the targets for attack.⁴

Indeed, the physical security of humanitarians is also key for securing the humanitarian space; without humanitarians, the debate over tradeoffs would be meaningless. Over the course of the past five years, humanitarians of all organizational stripes have been subject to hostage takings, threats of violence, and killings. To name only a few examples, the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights (UNHCHR) has lost personnel in Rwanda, delegates for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) were murdered in Chechnya, and CARE USA has suffered human loss in Somalia and Sudan. One 1998 study even made the astute observation that more Red Cross workers have been killed in action in recent times than U.S. Army personnel.⁵

In light of this dangerous humanitarian environment, the second challenge is that although this new context has also necessitated the insertion of military forces such as multinational peacekeepers, this action nonetheless entails similar tradeoffs and complications along the three lines presented above. At the extreme, the ICRC asserts that complete independence of humanitarian activity is necessary, regardless of the need for protection or problems with delivery, because not only should humanitarianism be non coercive, it should also not be tied, or perceive to be tied, to a political agenda in which outside forces are but a representative of a larger scheme. Nonetheless, in recent years the ICRC has moved, albeit with great hesitancy, towards acknowledging the role outside forces often have in achieving general stability allowing for operations. Other humanitarians have embraced, to various degrees, the role of outside forces providing such macro elements as general stability through to the more micro aspects of assisting in the delivery and protection of assistance and providing protection for personnel and compounds. The promise and pitfalls in using military forces to help secure the humanitarian space are revealed in the comments of Jan Eliasson, the former United Nations Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs: "NGOs rightly need to maintain

⁴Cedric Thornberry, "Peacekeepers, Humanitarian Aid, and Civil Conflicts," Journal of Humanitarian Assistance. <http://www-jha.sps.cam.ac.uk/a/a017.htm>, posted on 15 September 1995.

⁵ Greenaway and Harris, "Humanitarian Security," p. 5.