



Humanitarian Action and Peacebuilding: Incompatible or Complementary?

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INTRODUCTION

Origins of Humanitarian Action

Humanitarian action and humanitarianism, in general, are typically considered to be part of the evolution of Western thought and have their historical foundation in 19th century European and subsequently North American conflicts. In response to the horrors of these wars, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Geneva Conventions were established (1863 and 1864). Vital features of humanitarianism are not, however, exclusive to, nor advanced only in Western conflicts. For example, the duty of assisting others is prevalent in the Sakhat tradition of Islam, as it is in the laws set down in fifth-century Chinese literature.¹

That said, humanitarianism within an international context has, broadly speaking, gone through several phases:

This chapter represents the personal views of the author.

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- i. From the mid-nineteenth century until the end of the First World War;
- ii. the subsequent period stretching until the end of the Second World War, during which key international organizations were shaped;
- iii. the Cold War period, which witnessed the institutionalization of development and humanitarian aid; and
- iv. the current, post-Cold War period, often referred to as a “golden period” or “neo-humanitarianism,” where political ideologies changed and altered the landscape of humanitarian aid.²

Humanitarian aid is founded on four key principles: humanity, independence, neutrality, and impartiality. Organizations that generally fall under the “humanitarian” category give different weight to each principle depending on their history, character, and mandate.³ The ICRC and *Médecins Sans Frontières* (MSF), for instance, focus primarily on medical care.⁴ Other humanitarian organizations operate across a range of activities such as education, water, sanitation, nutrition, and food security, often at the same time. The primary objective that they all have in common as humanitarian organizations is to save lives and alleviate suffering.⁵

Nearly all humanitarian organizations are “self-mandated;” that is, in law and practice, they are non-governmental, private organizations. The major exception is the ICRC, which is the only humanitarian organization with a clear international legal foundation and status enshrined in the Geneva Conventions.⁶

In recent decades, international institutions and donor countries have responded to changing international and geopolitical dynamics by seeking to merge humanitarian aid with development aid. The latter is usually aimed at reducing poverty and supporting “development”—in many guises—in accordance with liberal ideas about how poor and/or conflict-ridden countries can become prosperous and stable.⁷ A host of different issues—from state-building and forced migration to counter-terrorism and reconciliation—have now fallen into what might be called the “humanitarian-development nexus.”⁸ As a consequence, there has been a proliferation of so-called “multi-mandated organizations,” undertaking a variety of different tasks funded by donors. These organizations tend to be less focused on populations—*saving lives and alleviating suffering*—than institutions. Increasingly, they operate in collaboration with governments—donors and donor recipients—as well as other actors, including militaries, broadly seeking the same goals.⁹

That the founding principles and objectives of humanitarian aid are under strain in today's conflict/post-conflict zones is beyond doubt. Nowhere is this more evident than in Africa, where peacebuilding efforts occur on an increasingly complex and contested terrain.

MANDATE SHIFT IN AFRICA

Peacebuilding is often defined as one phase or sequence in a long-term process for states affected by conflict, which also comprises stability, peace support, or peacekeeping operations and, latterly, state-building.¹⁰ More loosely applied, "peacebuilding" is also used to describe the process as a whole, which in the African context has proved especially problematic in recent decades, as it often melds into the concepts of counterinsurgency and counterterrorism. The funders of peacekeeping missions generally hold that a strong state with strong institutions is desirable, since a strong state is seen to be more resilient against threats of insurgency and terror.¹¹ For humanitarian organizations, the changing nature of peacekeeping missions has often put them in an invidious position, challenging their founding principles.

The United Nations' (UN) failure to protect civilians caught up in intra-state conflict in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia, as well as a stronger push from UN member states for missions to contribute more to improving state institutions, spurred major doctrinal changes in peacekeeping worldwide.¹² The Brahimi Report reflected this shift, with a call for stronger peacekeeping missions with expanded mandates, going beyond the hitherto "self-defense" threshold of the use of force, to allow forces to "use all means necessary to protect civilians under imminent threat of physical violence."¹³ The concept of "protection of civilians" was thus born and doctrinally further developed to become an integral part of multilateral peacekeeping missions in Africa.

Two additional characteristics of the shift in Africa are noteworthy: the increasingly integrated role of UN missions to blend political, human rights, humanitarian, and ultimately, statebuilding components into their function; and, more recently, multilateral peacekeeping missions that take on offensive roles that include counterinsurgency operations, and, in some contexts, counterterrorism activities.¹⁴

THE HUMANITARIAN BIND

Historically, and principally, humanitarian action is underpinned by the legal principles of International Humanitarian Law (IHL). IHL as a part of the Geneva Conventions has for decades sought to regulate the conduct of armed conflict including but not limited to, combatants right to health care when wounded or sick, the right of humanitarian actors to access populations in conflict-affected areas, and the rights of the very same populations to receive assistance.¹⁵

Perhaps the most significant shift in humanitarian action, effected by the above changes in peacebuilding, is the emergence of what is often referred to as “humanitarian intervention.”¹⁶ The blending of humanitarian and military-political interventions was spurred by doctrines such as Responsibility to Protect (R2P)¹⁷ as well as a practice of the UN approving several military interventions defined as “humanitarian” with or without UN Security Council approval. The legal foundation on which these decisions are made has been questioned, with critics variously arguing that the interventions are mere “window dressing” for imperial interests or essentially flawed, due to their selective application.¹⁸

The terrorist attacks against the United States on September 11, 2001, proved a turning point for humanitarian action, as with so much else. In the subsequent US-driven paradigm of the “war on terror,” the principles underpinning humanitarian action were usurped and utilized for military and political gains, as new conflict dynamics took hold.¹⁹ No longer simply a pretext for interventions, humanitarian action and aid frequently became a tool to garner popular support in counterinsurgency and counterterrorism contexts. The new era, exemplified by then-U.S. President George W. Bush’s warning to other states and actors that “either you are with us or against us,” would see NGOs described as “force multipliers” by no less than his Secretary of State, Colin Powell. This recasting severely undermined the principles and morality of IHL, and saw humanitarian aid incorporated into the “politico-military toolbox.”²⁰

With the fight against “terrorist” states or non-state actors pitched in stark, Manichean terms, and all forms of aid viewed as tools to win hearts and minds,²¹ traditional humanitarian actors were either sidelined or co-opted. Their scope to provide assistance was also curtailed. Humanitarians found it difficult to engage and provide humanitarian aid to populations in areas which required guarantees and consent from non-state actors or

areas in which foreign forces were conducting counterinsurgency operations.²² Such conflict areas include Somalia, Mali, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and Mozambique, to name a few.

The various actors involved in both peacekeeping and peacebuilding in Africa today have all, in different ways—unwittingly or not—contributed to the undermining of the principled provision of humanitarian aid. Humanitarian actors have always had to contend with competing interests in the spaces in which they operate. What is new, besides altered conflict dynamics and changes to peacekeeping practice, is the introduction of new legislative frameworks that seek to strengthen the hand of states in counterterrorism contexts.²³ The advent and development of increasingly restrictive counterterrorism legislation, both internationally and domestically in many countries, adds a further layer of complexity to the potential of safeguarding IHL in conflict areas.²⁴ This sort of legislation often seeks to outlaw armed combatants and alienate potential areas they may control, which often results in entire communities being placed in legal limbo. Frequently, as in other areas of conflict, these communities may require humanitarian assistance, even more so when located in areas outside of state control. Importantly, who controls the particular area is often not decided by the resident population. Humanitarian agencies seeking to assist these communities face a legal risk due to legislation that effectively prevents any potential support reaching outlawed armed groups or communities.²⁵ So, humanitarians are denied access to needy areas outside of state control and denied the opportunity to engage populations and armed groups.²⁶ And when funding for humanitarian aid is contingent upon winning hearts and minds, they are compromised. This is all a far cry from humanitarians being able to assist all populations in need, irrespective of whether they might find themselves on the wrong side of an ideological or political fault line that invokes the language of insurgency or terrorism.²⁷

It is against this historical and political backdrop that contemporary humanitarian aid's role in a number of peacebuilding case studies in Africa is analyzed below. Modern peacekeeping in Africa has morphed into a function of political objectives,²⁸ yet increasingly these aims are at odds with the legal and foundational principles of humanitarian aid. Through the following examples, the case for separation between the different efforts and mandates of peacekeeping and peacebuilding on the one hand, and humanitarian action on the other hand, shall be made explicit.

SOUTH SUDAN

South Sudan is an example of a large peacekeeping mission whose mandate has evolved in a significantly changing context. The United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) was established following the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Sudan, between the government of Sudan and the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM-A). It was established as a traditional peacekeeping mission, tasked with overseeing a peace agreement, monitoring and verifying security arrangements, support for humanitarian assistance and protection of human rights, as well as providing political support to the parties. This classic peacekeeping mission ended with the independence of South Sudan in 2011 and UNMIS changed to UNMISS, the United Nations Mission in South Sudan.²⁹ The change in mission, mandate, and role of peacekeeping was significant, not only due to the independence of South Sudan, but also because UNMISS's mandate was extended from the consolidation of peace and security to state-building—helping to establish conditions for development and the capacity of the newly independent government to govern effectively and democratically.

This shift rendered the peacekeeping mission both an implementer and supporter of the newly-created independent government. This in itself, was not an undesirable function and role, but one that subsequently and ideally necessitated the need for a separation between humanitarian action and peacebuilding. Prior to a severe breakdown in security in 2013, when South Sudan descended into large-scale civil conflict,³⁰ the country had been affected by several outbreaks of armed conflict between government forces and non-state actors. Within its mandate of consolidating peace and security, yet at the same time functioning as a *de facto* adviser and supporter to the government, UNMISS found itself unable to play an impartial role in certain cases and, in others, unable to fulfill its mandate of supporting delivery of humanitarian aid.³¹ Both of these were essentially in conflict with the interests of the then-government, of carrying out a counterinsurgency campaign against armed groups opposed to the government, and would subsequently impact the ability of UNMISS to fulfill various parts of its mandate.³² UNMISS was forced to weigh its priorities on the basis of its proximity to the government and its need to facilitate the delivery of aid and consolidate security.

In such a scenario, for humanitarian aid to maintain a principled and impartial posture, a certain degree of distance from a peacekeeping

mission is required. But in South Sudan, the peacekeeping mission positioned itself on one side of a civil conflict, which became increasingly evident after hostilities exploded in December 2013. As the country and its armed forces fractured along various loyalties, several of its key interlocutors were now fighting each other on opposing sides of the conflict.³³ As the conflict expanded and the component of state-building slid into the background, UNMISS was tested on its ability and willingness to protect civilians in harm's way during the conflict. On several occasions, UNMISS failed to do so, resulting in loss of civilian lives and, in certain areas, a collapse in civilians' faith in the neutrality of the peacekeeping mission.

Both developments had a negative impact on humanitarian organizations' ability to reach and assist affected populations. When a peacekeeping mission is no longer neutral due to association and proximity to the government, humanitarian actors, who are *de facto* associated with it, get tainted as well. This occurred in South Sudan, where trust between these organizations and the population—essential to delivering principled humanitarian aid—has been compromised due to the relationship with UNMISS. In South Sudan, independence and separation from actors in the conflict *and* from the peacekeeping mission, becomes imperative. As the conflict evolved, UNMISS opened its bases for civilians seeking protection, thus providing passive protection for large numbers of displaced civilians and allowing for UNMISS bases to become *de facto* displacement camps.³⁴ UNMISS was widely hailed for this, and rightly so, yet it was also continuously unable to provide more proactive protection of civilians outside the camps and was still viewed as inactive. By opening the UN sites to displaced civilians in numerous local settings, in combination with the lack of proactive protection, UNMISS opened itself to local partisan communal and ethnic dynamics, often from groups opposed to the government. On a very practical level, the need for separation is required on two distinct levels.

Firstly, when the peacekeeping mission is viewed as proximate to the government which is a party to the conflict, and secondly, when the mission is, on one hand, failing to provide protection and, on the other, when doing so, seemingly favoring certain groups. The complexity is further compounded when humanitarian organizations are required to work inside the same UNMISS compounds and bases that are host to hundreds of thousands of displaced civilians. In the former case, in the past, when UNMISS was viewed as proximate to the government,

there were several instances of the mission being targeted, including the shooting down of a UN helicopter, humanitarian organizations were required to distance themselves as much as possible from the mission in order to avoid becoming a target themselves. The fear was that humanitarian organizations could be targeted either by association or by mistake, as both humanitarian agencies and the UN mission were using similar white vehicles and the large integrated UN mission also has a humanitarian component. In the latter case, of a protection of civilians that, by default, favors one particular group, humanitarian organizations working in the UN bases to provide aid to the civilians seeking protection there are often required to establish projects and provide services outside of the UN bases in order to ensure a minimum perception of neutrality and independence. This raises a real and practical dilemma of proximity for humanitarians—damned if you do, damned if you don’t—when trying to navigate the complexities of impartial aid delivery in South Sudan.

THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), the current peacekeeping mission in the Central African Republic (CAR), was established in 2014, to replace a regional peacekeeping mission and later an African-led mission.³⁵ The mission has been beset by changes and uncertainty over who would fund and, thus, lead the mission, as well as concerns over the reliance on peacekeepers from neighboring countries,³⁶ which have not been viewed as impartial by several local communities. Concurrently, and until 2016, France deployed military forces to support the African-led peacekeeping force.³⁷

The mandate of MINUSCA focused specifically on the protection of civilians though at its core also comprised support for the facilitation of humanitarian assistance and human rights, support for security sector reform, including disarmament and demobilization of armed groups, and support for justice and the rule of law.³⁸ As its name indicates, MINUSCA is an example of a multi-dimensional peacekeeping mission, or a multi-mandated mission. In addition to the challenges evident in South Sudan, the mission in the CAR is more directly involved in active military operations. In fact, most of the actual military operations are carried out by MINUSCA, as the CAR military has very limited capacity.³⁹ With the

peacekeeping mission being an active party to the conflict, humanitarian organizations struggle to maintain the principle of neutrality.

Due to the limited capacity of government, the peacekeeping mission has taken on several state functions, including a central role in supporting justice and the rule of law. It is in the process of seeking justice—investigating potential crimes and interrogating or arresting suspects/perpetrators—that a potential confrontation with humanitarian organizations, operating across the fault lines of the conflict in the CAR, lies. The mission has found itself engaged in violent conflict with armed groups,⁴⁰ and at the same time “dispensing” justice. In cases where peacekeepers themselves have been killed, the mission has sought forceful access to patients in humanitarian facilities, in order to interrogate suspects in the killings. Such practice may not only violate the sanctity and safe space of hospitals and clinics, upon which humanitarian organizations rely in order to impartially treat all victims of conflict; it could also result in situations where patients are not offered the protection to which they are entitled under the law.

The question must be asked: when does the pursuit of justice infringe upon the equal protections afforded to victims and potential perpetrators under IHL? Recent experience in the CAR bears out evidence from other, similar peacekeeping missions: when the mission takes on multiple roles usually reserved for the sovereign power, like seeking justice for crimes against their own staff, IHL and, by extension, the protection of patients, receives less priority. Once again, the danger of losing neutrality—and being perceived by local populations as partial—becomes very real for humanitarians and the consequences can be very grave. In the CAR, humanitarian organizations have become a target for armed groups,⁴¹ who no longer regard them as impartial and independent. This was most pronounced when MINUSCA was tasked with supporting the elections in 2015.⁴² An inherently political task, in which parties are often perceived either tacitly or explicitly favoring the incumbent, the role played by MINUSCA further entrenched the perception that all organizations associated with the mission—including humanitarian—were politicized. In practice, the pursuit of justice in the killing of peacekeepers forced humanitarians to prevent peacekeepers from accessing a hospital, as investigators sought to interrogate suspects for possible involvement in the killings. In such cases, the humanitarian organization made it clear that were the UN mission to violate the sanctity of the hospital and compromise the protection of the patient, this could potentially result in the

closure of the hospital. Not only would it violate the above-mentioned principles, it would likely damage the organization's independence and neutrality if armed actors were to perceive the hospital as handing over patients to an opposing group, be that the UN or someone else.

THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

The DRC offers an additional and very practical dilemma between an integrated or multi-mandated UN mission and humanitarian organizations. The United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), the current mission in the DRC, was established in 2010, replacing the previous mission, the United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC). The latter was established in 1999 as a peacekeeping force overseeing the Lusaka Agreement, which officially brought an end to the regional conflict that had plagued the DRC in the 1990s (its primarily domestic war lasted until 2003). Because of the changing political and security dynamics, MONUSCO was instituted with a change of focus from overseeing a peace agreement to providing support for humanitarian and human rights efforts, and to support the DRC government in its stabilization and peace consolidations efforts.⁴³

Due to increased insecurity in the eastern parts of DRC and poor governmental military capacity, the DRC government, UN, African Union (AU), and regional countries agreed to add an "intervention brigade" to MONUSCO. The intervention brigade was established in 2013 for a one-year period, but the mandate has since been renewed on an annual basis. The brigade consists of regional troops from the Southern African Development Community (SADC), and includes infantry, special forces, and artillery battalions. The brigade is tasked with neutralizing armed groups and reducing risks to state authority and civilian security.⁴⁴ The latter, in itself, represents a unique change in the role of peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions, though the UN goes to great lengths to emphasize that the expanded and offensive mandate of the intervention brigade is not a precedent for peacekeeping operations elsewhere.⁴⁵

As much as there is a need for providing security in the eastern DRC, the fact that forward military operations are carried out by a multi-mandated and integrated peacekeeping force represents yet another challenge to humanitarian organizations. When the same force is tasked with simultaneously securing humanitarian assistance and fighting armed

groups, the element of neutrality is long gone. In practice, the same peacekeeping force that one day supports the delivery of humanitarian aid to a specific area may well return the next day, in the same white vehicles or helicopters, only this time for a military operation targeting armed elements. This inherent contradiction between the more peaceful part of the mandate and the actual military part results in communities and armed groups being unable to tell “which UN” has shown up on a given day. For humanitarian organizations it thus becomes difficult, if not impossible, to uphold a constructive, trust-based dialogue with armed groups and communities.

Trust is the essential currency that humanitarians need to engage constructively with armed groups so humanitarian aid can be delivered on impartial, needs-based grounds. Proximity to the multi-mandated UN peacekeeping force in the DRC has been fraught with blurred lines and conflicts of interest. Unsurprisingly, in the eyes of armed groups, the peacekeeping mission has become a legitimate target, as it appears to have become in South Sudan.

The trust deficit which also affects humanitarian groups is painfully illustrated by the relative weakness of the response to the outbreak of Ebola in 2018 in the eastern part of DRC where, historically, government the UN, and humanitarians have had only a nominal presence. The response struggled with serious security incidents and attacks against the newly-arrived government actors seeking to isolate potential Ebola patients. This extended to MONUSCO, which provided military protection and security for responders to the Ebola outbreak.⁴⁶ The combination of lack of trust, an approach to the outbreak that was overly focused on militarized response, and the proximity of both the government and the UN mission—who were both leading the response—put humanitarian organizations in an impossible position. Unsurprisingly, they ended up in the crosshairs. Some medical practitioners and patients were killed.⁴⁷

MALI

Many of the problems identified above are amplified in the case of Mali by the severe levels of violence against the peacekeeping mission and the counterterrorism context in which the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) operates. MINUSMA was established as a multi-mandated mission, tasked with providing the same aspects of protection of civilians, human rights, and

humanitarian operations as other missions. More significant for this analysis, MINUSMA is effectively tasked with supporting state authority through various security and defense measures across the country, especially in central Mali, home to numerous extremist groups.⁴⁸ Given the existence of multiple international intervention forces along with myriad armed groups, some of whom are not signatories to a 2015 peace agreement, it is not surprising that MINUSMA has experienced the highest number of casualties of UN missions worldwide.⁴⁹

The complexity of the context and high number of armed groups in Mali is mirrored in MINUSMA, which is largely comprised of regional countries' contributing troops. But, almost uniquely for a peacekeeping mission in Africa, MINUSMA also boasts small contingents of troops from European countries, such as Denmark, Holland, Germany, and Sweden, while Canada and the UK have also committed forces and resources. Mali represents an important confluence of interests for these countries, ranging from counterterrorism to energy security and migration.⁵⁰ Mali is of keen interest to European countries from the perspective of curbing migration to Europe.⁵¹ Alongside MINUSMA is the French military *Opération Barkhane*, and the European Union's training mission with the Malian military. Both are predominantly focused on counterterrorism operations in the region. MINUSMA on the other hand, is not specifically focusing on counterterrorism, though it is engaged in battles against the same groups as *Opération Barkhane*. While MINUSMA does not have counterterrorism as an explicit part of its mandate, in practice there is little to distinguish the mission from the forces present in Mali that are undertaking counterterrorism operations. Several contingents, hosted within MINUSMA, are in certain cases "detached" to support either the Malian or French militaries in their counterterrorism operations. Assets and personnel from the European contributors to MINUSMA are at times preoccupied with intelligence gathering, though in that process focusing more—for national security reasons—on intelligence gathering related to international counterterrorism, than that related to armed groups fighting the Malian government.⁵²

In many respects, Mali is where the broader global discourse of counterterrorism intersects and negatively impacts the provision of principled humanitarian aid. The legal marginalization of armed groups (and by extension communities) and the associated "dehumanizing rhetoric" which characterizes the global fight against terrorism, often trumps

IHL. The term “terrorist” is inherently political and sometimes subjective, and thus very open to opportunistic application. By extension, the discourse and actual conduct of the fight against terrorism, by its restrictive approach, ends up alienating entire communities in a conflict zone and cutting them off from humanitarian aid.⁵³

The usual attendant risks for humanitarian organizations, especially related to perceived proximity to the peacekeeping mission, are complicated by the fact that some of the military contingents themselves provide “humanitarian” assistance and rely on humanitarian aid as a way of winning hearts and minds. Humanitarian assistance has been a crucial component of military operations in counterterrorism and counterinsurgency operations across the world, often in the guise of Quick Impact Projects or QIPs.⁵⁴ These are intended to entice communities by providing basic services and infrastructure, in order for them either to abandon armed opposition groups, including some termed as terrorists, or to ensure preference among communities for the state or the intervening military forces.

The real consequence of providing humanitarian aid as part of a military strategy defies the principle of impartiality, as it is no longer needs, but political and military preferences that determine where the humanitarian aid is provided, to say nothing of the inherent contradiction in providing humanitarian aid at the barrel of a gun. This makes the distinction between “principled” and “military” humanitarian aid impossible, and thus indirectly cuts humanitarian organizations off from reaching communities in need, as armed groups question the motives of the entire humanitarian endeavor. This de-legitimizing of humanitarian aid consequently, and directly, prevents humanitarian organizations from providing services where most needed, and may very well make humanitarian organizations a target by armed groups. The UN’s own humanitarian body the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), raised this concern, acknowledging that affiliation with a party to the conflict (including the UN itself) compromises security and humanitarian access.⁵⁵ Thus the complexity of the interaction between humanitarian organizations and peacekeepers is well established to the point of acknowledging it, yet its consequences remain unaddressed.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. *Understand, define, and depoliticize the role of humanitarian aid and action.* The role of humanitarian aid and action is not to contribute to the strengthening of a particular power structure, be it a state or local government, through efforts of peacekeeping and peacebuilding. The role and function of humanitarian action is to save lives and alleviate suffering. The conflation and integration of humanitarian aid into otherwise laudable causes, in most cases, does little more than devalue humanitarian aid and even, in cases where vulnerable populations are excluded, negate the prospects of sustainable peace. Thus, it is important when discussing the potential contribution of humanitarian NGOs to understand that the objectives and missions are fundamentally different and there is, in many cases, a need for separation between peacekeeping and humanitarianism. A separation not based on a value judgment of the need, intentions, and desire for peacekeeping and peacebuilding, but a separation necessary to ensure the ability of both to fulfill their respective mandates. Accordingly, the lack of integration and in some cases even lack of collaboration, should not be viewed as humanitarian organizations spoiling the efforts of peacekeeping, but as a mechanism and a way to maintain coexistence.
2. *Distinguish and separate peacekeeping missions from humanitarian missions.* As contemporary African conflicts and, by extension, peacekeeping missions have changed from the classic approach of monitoring a ceasefire or peace agreement to peacekeeping missions being involved in a wider array of activities, such as state-building, supporting state authority, counterinsurgency, and a blurred mix of counterterrorism and state support, the need for humanitarian agencies to distinguish, and in some cases even separate themselves from these missions, is becoming increasingly obvious. Not only do humanitarian agencies need to separate themselves from these missions in order to fulfill their proper role, but the actions of some of these missions can increase the security risk for humanitarian agencies. The argument is not to undermine the mandate and processes carried out by peacekeeping missions, but rather to accept that the roles, mandates, and objectives of peacekeeping missions and humanitarian agencies are distinct. Humanitarian organizations need to embrace and protect this different

identity. The overlapping of different roles is understandable in certain contexts, yet it remains an uncomfortable compromise. The current trend—dogmatically promoted by donors and the UN—of blending peacebuilding, development, and humanitarian aid into one holistic response should be resisted. The idea of linking the various components typically arises from a noble intent, but, as acknowledged by UN OCHA in Mali and demonstrated elsewhere, principled humanitarian aid is often sacrificed where it is needed most. In the absence of a return to clearly delineated roles in conflict and post-conflict settings, the humanitarian actions will become less and less effective over time.

3. *Enhance the independence of humanitarian organizations through diversified funding.* Humanitarians also need to look in the mirror. To promote their independence, they must do more and do better to secure funding from bi- and multilateral donors. This is not a process that the donors themselves will initiate; they are largely moving in a different direction. It is thus up to humanitarian organizations to make the case forcefully that their role and functions cannot be farmed out to nonexperts or politically “compromised” actors, and to educate donors on the perils of blurring responsibilities.
4. *Create space for humanitarian missions.* Principled humanitarian aid cannot be provided at the barrel of a gun, whether it is a combatant’s or a putative peacekeeper’s. The current operational doctrine which has given rise to multi-mandated organizations is flawed. Humanitarians must be given the space to do their work. No less, no more.

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