

Civilian-Military Humanitarian Coordination Workshop

March 28–30, 2022

Summary Report



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Foreword

On behalf of the Center for Human Rights and Humanitarian Studies (CHRHS) at the Brown University Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs, the Civilian-Military Humanitarian Response Program (HRP) within the College of Maritime Operational Warfare (CMOW) at the U.S. Naval War College, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) Civil-Military Coordination Service, and the United Nations World Food Program (UN WFP), we are delighted to share the final summary from the 2022 Civilian-Military Humanitarian Coordination Workshop Working Groups.

After two years of virtual events, the research symposium and workshop once again occurred in person on the Brown University campus in Providence, Rhode Island from March 28-30. Our research symposium on March 28th featured five presentations of recently completed empiric studies, several of which have grown out of working group discussions at our prior workshops, which analyze a range of contemporary challenges in global humanitarian action. This year's presentations covered several timely topics, including humanitarian-military relations in complex emergencies; humanitarian access in the era of strategic competition; humanitarian action in the age of climate change; trends in Russia's foreign humanitarian assistance; and stabilization initiatives in the Lake Chad Basin.

The research symposium was followed by a two-day workshop on March 29th and 30th and was the latest in a series of annual workshops designed to bring together international leaders from UN agencies and humanitarian Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and International Governmental Organizations (IGOs), the U.S. armed forces and allied militaries, and academe to explore current and future challenges in humanitarian response.

Attended by almost 100 participants, the theme of this year's workshop was "Humanitarian Response in Conflict: The Challenge of Humanitarian Response in the Era of Strategic Competition." Participants were grouped into a series of working groups that met during the workshop to discuss and refine both a policy and research agenda for five major thematic areas, including humanitarian access, protection of civilians in conflict settings and natural disasters, aid worker security, infrastructure resilience in a changing climate, and outbreaks of disease.

On behalf of the leadership of Brown University and the U.S. Naval War College, we would like to express our most sincere gratitude to the R. Dudley Harrington, Jr. Charitable Foundation, the US State Department Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, the U.S. Naval War College Foundation, the Widgeon Foundation, UN OCHA, and UN WFP for their generous support of this year's Civilian-Military Humanitarian Coordination Research Symposium and Workshop.

PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS

Leads: Katherine Kramer (InterAction) and Jacob Kurtzer (Center for Strategic and International Studies)

Rapporteur: Kethural Manokaran

Summary of Outputs

The main objectives of the 2022 Protection of Civilians (PoC) Working Group were to:

- a) Generate common understanding definition for the terms of discussion
- b) Identify the protection risks to civilians in Great Power Competition
- c) Identify protection actors and the role of civil-military coordination in reducing these risks
- d) Highlight areas for further study and research

The Working Group concluded that there was a significant amount of work to be done to reduce civilian harm and prepare a humanitarian response in of the context of Great Power Competition and confrontation. As such, the Working Group proposed research and follow up action that can ensure learning from the past and present informs future action in a variety of contexts.

Participants in this year's PoC Working Group included representation from academia, civilian governmental and intergovernmental agencies, non-governmental organizations, and military.

Key Themes

Defining 'Great Power Competition'

'Great Power Competition' (GPC) was broadly defined as the battlespace between the United States, China, and Russia; other states move around this competition, especially within the domains of infrastructure and informatics. The traditional 'battlespace' continues to shift with the rise of social-digital terrain. Social-digital terrain has rearranged where conflict occurs and where civilian security risks occur and interface, and we may not yet fully understand the implications for humanitarian protection, assistance, and response. In addition to social-digital terrain, cyber and space war are now considered part of this new and evolving battlespace. The Working Group considered whether Protection of Civilians (PoC) will be prioritized in GPC and discussed the extent to which PoC may occur within these contexts.

Defining Protection of Civilians

The Working Group discussed whether there is a need to rethink what PoC means in terms of GPC. There was a disagreement as to whether the ability to enjoy basic rights should be included. Those against raised the challenges of defining this among non-Western cultural understandings, as well as with the fear of expanding it so far that it becomes so diluted as to lose its value, while blurring the lines for humanitarian space.

One culminating definition of PoC was: "The political, institutional, military, interpersonal, operational strategies to limit the effect of armed conflict on civilian populations." There was a suggestion that it should focus on "foreign" civilian populations, but a reminder was made that a

party to GPC must also take care of its own civilian population as well as those in the areas in which it operates.

Amplification of Risks to Civilians in Great Power Competition

Civilians face violence, coercion, and deliberate deprivation in any conflict situation. The Working Group felt that the risks to civilians in GPC is a question of magnitude of scale, rather than in terms of new vulnerabilities. Several participants felt that in GPC, once it hit 'phase III' all international humanitarian law (IHL)/the law of armed conflict (LOAC) rules would be set aside due to the scale, tempo, lethality, limited availability of precision weapons, and decision-making processes in the heat of the moment. Yet, this may be short sighted, as one participant stated, "*One has few real allies when one ignores the rules.*"

Perhaps the greatest risk to civilians will be the reverberating effects as critical infrastructure and systems go down, and civilians will not be able to access basic services and goods nor carry out their livelihoods, and humanitarian access will be extremely limited. It is also anticipated that these conflicts will have global impact potentially leading to violence in other areas. The current crisis in Ukraine is already leading to food shortages in Africa and the Middle East. Likewise, sexual and gender-based violence as well as the coercion of adults and children into fighting will also have significant impact.

Protecting Civilians in Great Power Conflict

There are a wide range of actors who have a role in PoC. Governments and their security forces, first and foremost, should protect their civilians, along with other parties to armed conflict. Yet, the burden often falls on civilians and community actors (faith leaders, community leaders, youth) who have no other recourse, when international humanitarian actors have access to denied.

The best way to protect civilians is to prevent conflict from breaking out, and if it does, to prevent and minimize civilian harm to reduce humanitarian need. Governments, alongside humanitarian actors, should develop tactical contingency plans for if war breaks out that both avoids civilian harm and responds to resulting humanitarian needs, while keeping in mind the desired post-conflict stabilization phase. Humanitarians can contribute to contextual analysis and giving a sense of the humanitarian impact the plans may have. This is challenging in two respects. The true human cost of conflict is not understood by governments and militaries when undertaking war planning. The capacity of humanitarian organizations to respond is also over estimated, both by those doing the planning as well as by the organizations themselves. The humanitarian system is not nimble nor agile. It is reactive, so the speed in which it can mobilize resources, build its capacity, and respond is slow, especially when considering how stretched it is already.

The protection of civilians must be absorbed into militaries' organizational culture. The U.S. military has a powerful role in transferring civilian harm mitigation knowledge and capacity to its allies and security partners and influencing their uptake of international humanitarian law (IHL) and overall behavior towards civilians. These efforts need to be adapted to the partner's needs, resources, existing capacity, and operational context. To prevent war crimes, the U.S. could condition assistance on the adoption of human rights and IHL into policies as part of the training package. Accountability mechanisms for IHL violations must also be strengthened to function as an adequate deterrence.

Civilian self-protection methods also need to be considered within PoC systems. For example, knowledge transfer for how to rescue people from bombed out buildings. Social media has already been used by Syrians to share information with Ukrainians. Facilitating resettlement for those who flee is another form of self-protection, which can be beneficial for all parties.

Roles of Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination in Achieving Protection Outcomes

Civil-military coordination for PoC is perhaps too simplified a term to describe the varied interaction that takes place in this umbrella. Humanitarian actors on behalf of themselves and affected communities engage with militaries and their political/humanitarian establishments at various levels. Communities do the same, while the political/humanitarian establishments engage with their own militaries, while at the same time militaries engage with other militaries. Engagements happen on and off the battlefield and cover a range of actions from deconflicting humanitarian and military action to PoC promotion. The Civil-Military Coordination frameworks established in one context may not be transferable to another. No matter the system that is established, it will only work if outcomes are tangible, and trust is built. For this reason, personal connections are important, so establishing and maintaining a network is key as people often move positions.

Future Action

Proposing a Future Research Agenda

The Working Group proposed various research projects to further knowledge on the topic. One key take-away is that more research should be conducted on best practices and learnings outside of the U.S. experience. Specific research topics include:

- ◇ Impact of humanitarian assistance in Russia, with a focus on Russian civilian society and what informs Russia's strategy; this research would increase our understanding of a context to which we have limited access
- ◇ Humanitarian implications of PoC in Great Power Conflict through a historical case study analysis that emphasizes comparative models of PoC, such as how governments approach similar issues, and what worked and what did not work
- ◇ Applications of these historical case studies of PoC in low resource settings, with an emphasis on sustainably increasing scale and continuing engagement
- ◇ Case studies of those armed actors that have complied with IHL and the tools they've used to do this to inform future scenarios, for example a reflection of UN Peacekeepers
- ◇ Comparative analysis of how other governments are approaching GPC issues

Finally, the Working Group proposed potentials for continued collaboration as follows:

- ◇ The PoC and civil and military communities should convene to establish and implement new guidelines to ensure the protection of civilians; these guidelines should be informed by research

- ◇ Regular exchanges in the form of multi-disciplinary forums are instrumental in breaking barriers and generating thought on better ways forward. As such, academic institutions may serve as a network and a neutral intermediary between civilian and military actors to protect humanitarian standards and achieve military objectives

Individuals interested in learning more about the Protection of Civilians Working Group can contact the team leads at jkurtzer@csis.org and kkramer@interaction.org.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND COASTAL HAZARDS

Leads: Daniel Eisenberg (Naval Postgraduate School) and Lt. Col. Theodore Shanks (Watson Institute Military Fellow)

Rapporteur: Matthew Neubacher

Summary of Outputs

On March 29th and 30th, the Climate Change Working Group met for its fifth annual iteration to further discuss the effects of climate change on the workings of Civ-Mil humanitarian assistance and to continue the dialogue and research begun in previous working groups. The working group consists of representatives from the U.S. and foreign governmental defense, academia, local government, public safety, and engineering fields, and met three times over two days. This year's discussion began with a recap of the CIVMIL Humanitarian Symposium presentation, "The Rising Tide: Humanitarian Action in the Age of Climate Change," presented by National Defense Fellow and Watson Institute Visiting Scholar, Lt Col Theodore Shanks, USAF, who also acted as a co-lead of this working group. This presentation, a summary of Lt Col Shanks's research, focused on the national security implications of climate change, and how it will likely reshape the future of international humanitarian response. Dr. Daniel Eisenberg, Research Assistant Professor at the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School and the other co-lead of this working group, also provided an overview of climate security and infrastructure resilience based on his research at the Naval Postgraduate School to help frame the working group discussions. Over the course of the discussions, the working group emphasized the need for incorporating climate resiliency into humanitarian action planning and decisions.

Project Goal and Methods

The group facilitated a collaborative discussion using previous working group structures and aforementioned issue presentations to work through future climate security challenges and propose future actions and research. The working group sessions were broken into three focused areas of dialogue:

Session I: Where are the current research gaps or opportunities for investigation surrounding the confluence of climate change and global humanitarian action?

1. Which effects of climate change are likely to impact humanitarian operations, cooperation, and policy?
2. How will climate change affect the future infrastructure needs of both the humanitarian enterprise and the recipients of assistance?
3. How can the humanitarian and climate change communities better manage discussions surrounding climate change and their respective operations?
4. What lessons can be drawn from the world's COVID-19 pandemic response that could be applied to future climate change-affected humanitarian action?

Session II: How does the re-emergence of great power competition shape the future of climate change cooperation and humanitarian operations?

1. How will geopolitical resource competition for climate-friendly resources impact competition/cooperation in the humanitarian arena?

2. What are the differences in humanitarian action and its purpose/intent (i.e. humanitarian action as a form of colonialism) between major world powers?
3. Is there a need to restructure the world's humanitarian assistance structure?

Session III: How can the humanitarian community foster better climate change accountability?

1. Is there space for third-party, medium-size countries (or multinational corporations) that can provide guardrails to sustainable programs?
2. Could or should climate change be added to a “Responsibility to Protect” category? Should it be its own category?
3. Could NGOs play a role, as neutral actors, in influencing wealthy/powerful nations to be more accountable for their sustainable practices?

Key ideas and issues

At the conclusion of each session, working group members summarized key takeaways and thoughts from each discussion. A summary of those key ideas, comments, and issues are summarized below:

1. Members felt there was significant overlap between climate change and humanitarian operations, and this confluence deserved greater attention and urgency. This includes, but is not limited to, **improving strategic messaging and education** across both communities emphasizing the extraordinary impact climate change is having—and will continue to have—on global humanitarian operations.
2. There is an urgent need to **examine infrastructure needs and vulnerabilities** of both civilian and military humanitarian action communities. This urgency includes the need to critically research the climate change resiliency of HA material storage facilities, logistics chains, aid beneficiary vulnerabilities, and understanding the “tipping points” of climate change-driven vulnerabilities. Moreover, members emphasized the need for humanitarian planning and responses to engage directly with local communities, encouraging a more accurate assessment of vulnerabilities.
3. The return of **great power competition** has thrust differing worldwide HA philosophies into the spotlight. While much of the world's HA response structure is generally aligned—especially among the governmental and intergovernmental organizations—China and Russia largely do not participate in these organizational structures, often electing to act unilaterally to humanitarian responses worldwide. This has several implications for the interdependence and strategic distribution of humanitarian aid.
4. While the importance of beneficiary-focused HA responses cannot be understated, there may be a place for **NGOs** to bridge philosophical gaps between major governmental players. Not only could these neutral organizations serve as mediators, they could also be relied upon to focus solely on the needs of aid recipients, rather than on political/social differences.
5. There is ample space for continuing and growing the discussion of climate security within the military/defense community. This involves, but is not limited to, further communicating and developing **climate threat education** as well as elaborating on the secondary and tertiary threats involved with both the direct effects of climate change as well as those involved in transitioning to more sustainable practices (i.e., mineral/natural resource scarcity and sourcing of electrical storage materials, sourcing of photovoltaics, mineral rights conflicts, etc).

Future Actions

After the synthesis of participant discussions, the working group created several future actions and research proposals for consideration. Among the most prominent are:

Seed Grant Proposal

Reach out to local leaders in Bangladesh or Pacific Islands, tying in military leaders. Taking a breakout group. Find existing structure to put our objectives into. Put a breakout group for a future climate scenario vis a vis military - NGO workers.

Actionable Items

- ◇ Create military modeling of climate change to highlight its impacts on warfighting capacity
- ◇ Develop Civ-Mil educational fellowships (involving military, academic, and NGO humanitarian actors) and training courses to further climate security discussion and research
- ◇ Create a unified clearinghouse of HA-focused climate change data, gather data from NGOs or military responders for their centralized use
- ◇ Create a community of practice wherein military and humanitarian experts that can meet and update each other, broadening the discussion to a wider audience

Potential Research Questions from Great Powers Discussion

- ◇ Is the current international HA architecture fit for its purpose? Can we scale differently or do we need to change how it operates?
- ◇ Every system needs to be able to answer what purpose it is fit to serve. Where is the tipping point where you need to do something different, re-evaluate your purpose or function?
- ◇ What is the effect of a major power working outside the already-established humanitarian system and operating unilaterally? How does it affect humanitarian resource capacity?
- ◇ In a multi-polar world, do militaries and humanitarian groups have different objectives, functions, purposes?
- ◇ Should “top-down” approaches continue to fail, could a more regionalized architecture be more beneficial? What will be the organic, default evolution of future HA architectures if they aren’t deliberately developed?

Future research

Downscaling

Targeted localization-related work in communities that do not (yet) experience climate disasters, are predicted to be at risk.

- ◇ Shifting risks, emerging risks
- ◇ Measures taken to protect HA assets
- ◇ Understanding the negative effects of CC stresses in specific communities, i.e., organized crime

Resource capacity

Evaluating humanitarian assistance architectures (e.g., centralized v localized). Historical case studies, attention to resources expended and organizational capacity.

- ◇ Do responses balance the challenges of mitigation? Where is the local v central balance, in terms of resource allocation?
- ◇ Humanitarian group carbon footprint?
- ◇ Throwing resources vs. changing structures?

Vulnerability of humanitarian assistance resources

Where is the existing capacity for HA? How is that vulnerable/at-risk? How does that need to adapt to maintain HA capacity in the future? Are there military assets that could support or complement vulnerable HA resources (e.g., a better sharing of resources)?

- ◇ Mapping vulnerability of disaster-relief and humanitarian response resources

Education

Develop and implement climate change-focused training, emphasizing humanitarian response and Civ-Mil interaction.

- ◇ Educational fellowships that involve military, academic, and NGO humanitarian actors
- ◇ Involve vulnerable communities in educational programs to develop local capacity for prevention, adaptation, and mitigation

Individuals interested in learning more about the Climate Change and Coastal Hazards Working Group can contact the team leads at theodore_shanks@brown.edu and daniel.eisenberg@nps.edu

OUTBREAKS

Leads: Samuel Boland (London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine) and Emily Chapman (Australia Civil-Military Centre)

Rapporteur: Madison Bates

Summary of Outputs

It is the mission of the outbreak working group to explore challenges and identify good practice in humanitarian civilian-military coordination during pandemics, outbreaks, and other public health emergencies, both in conflict and peacetime. Since 2016, this working group has sought to develop action and research plans, foster transatlantic growth and cooperation, and foster a community of experts in the field. The focus of this year's working group was to continue discussions from the September 2021 workshop, in defining and discussing the potential for guidance or policy for practitioners operating in domestic and international public health emergencies, including where the emergency is overlaid with another setting such as conflict (i.e., a complex emergency).

This year's discussion built off previous analyses of existing humanitarian civil-military engagement policies and guidance documents as they apply to disease outbreak response (including the WHO guidance document (2021) on national civil-military health collaboration and the Oslo Guidelines), with participants discussing the intended audience, scope, and limitations of potential future works. Participants in this year's Outbreak Working Group included representation from academia, the medical field, civilian governmental, transnational, and intergovernmental agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and military.

Outbreaks as a Distinct Operational Context:

Participants discussed the unique contextual factors of outbreaks and outbreak response when compared with other kinds of humanitarian emergencies such as natural disasters. These unique contextual factors included outbreaks':

- ◇ Protracted nature
- ◇ Dynamic and Unfixed Geography
- ◇ Indiscriminate and invisible nature, the latter significantly elevating the need to develop community trust when implementing public health measures
- ◇ Need for a joined-up and/or whole-of-government approach making principled action (esp. independence) difficult to comprehensively apply

With these factors in mind, the discussion highlighted the need for specific guidance regarding domestic and international outbreak settings, to allow practitioners the ability to refer to standardized best-practices when planning and conducting operations. Additionally, many of the factors discussed further reiterated the differences in acceptability between military assistance in natural disaster settings as opposed to public health emergencies, which helped the group transition into subsequent discussions on the relevance of existing guidance and best-practice.

Relevance of Existing Guidance and Best-Practice

Building off prior conversations, participants discussed the merits and gaps of existing civil military coordination guidance as they apply to disease outbreaks and disease outbreak response. Existing civil-military principles such as the need for civilian leadership, adherence to the SPHERE standards, and the maintenance of distinction between civilian and military assistance were discussed as a starting point for future complementary guidance that seeks to fill the ‘gaps’ in existing documents and discourse. Furthermore, several points were raised about standardized pre-departure training materials for all actors operating in humanitarian spaces, and how these might apply to public health emergency responses.

Relevant Assets and Capabilities by Armed Actors

To elaborate on potential gaps in the literature to be addressed, there was significant discussion regarding the specific assets held by militaries (i.e., functions and capabilities). Deployable and high-volume workforces, significant expertise in logistics/supply chain management, and incident command and planning capabilities were all discussed as critical assets provided by military actors in emergency settings, though it was acknowledged that these are specific to a respective nation’s military and not generalizable to all forces. Furthermore, the relevant assets and capabilities were discussed in the context of acceptability and principled responses. For instance, disclaimers were made regarding organic military capacities that might be acceptable in some contexts, but that might be inappropriate in others (including the role of the military as a quarantine enforcement actor or in lieu of a civilianized police force). This discussion also highlighted how many military forces are reliant on Reserve forces, which might include those already working in health systems (therefore also plausibly placing concurrency pressures on civil-military responses to disease outbreaks).

The Need for Flexibility and Context-Specific Guidance

A variety of settings and emergencies were discussed regarding the need for context-specific guidance. Particularly the differences between the use of military assets in peacetime (for example, in national COVID-19 responses) and the coordination with armed actors in conflict settings (for example, in the North Kivu Ebola Epidemic), were highlighted. Furthermore, factors regarding communities’ perceptions of the military, type of military assets deployed, and whether actors are parties to conflict were discussed. Participants agreed that this spectrum of different settings and contexts necessitates a flexible guidance document rather than binding policy, so that organizations can weigh considerations and adapt according to context while still having guidance to draw upon.

Other Key Considerations

Several other factors and considerations were discussed at length, including the:

- ◇ Need for scale-up but also scale-down planning (& other ‘pivots’ in response design and leadership) in military engagements
- ◇ Need for foundational focus on community feedback and participation (and ideally ownership) over design of a given response
- ◇ Need to differentiate international vs. national; police vs. military; non-state and private armed groups vs. governmental forces in policy and best practices
- ◇ Principle of Last resort and military enforcement in outbreak settings

Future Action

Participants began mapping potential response functions by armed actors in a given public health emergency, as well as discussing the pros and cons of each function. Though this, a draft guidance document was started with participants, as a basis for further discussion. This working document aims to provide practical considerations to apply current policy to the specific context of outbreaks by mapping out functions and capabilities that are useful during these settings, as summarized above. The two broad areas of activities are preparedness and response, which are further categorized into functional areas such as planning, logistics, medical services and care, surveillance, and security and enforcement. The setting of these functions, either domestic, international or both, and their level (i.e., strategic, operational, or tactical), are included in order to provide civil-military engagement considerations for a wide range of outbreak and public health settings. Each function, and the pros and cons of using military capability, are linked to existing guiding principles and policy to orientate the document towards its purpose.

Several participants were involved in ongoing research projects in the field, which would help to inform the future guidance document. These research projects also presented future opportunities for engagement by working group members. A timeline for development of guidelines was discussed among working group participants, with team leads working to fully draft the document which will later be disseminated for comments and contributions. Finally, a discussion of consultation and ideal contributors was had, especially regarding the need for input from a wide range of sources.

Individuals interested in learning more about the Outbreaks Working Group can contact the team leads at samuel.boland@lshtm.ac.uk and emily.chapman4@defence.gov.au.

AID WORKER SECURITY

Leads: Jonathan Robinson (CHRHS Global Fellow) and Aneesah Akbar Uqdah

Rapporteur: Marion Sellier

Summary of Outputs

On March 29 and 30, 2022, the aid worker security working group convened an in-person meeting after a two-year hiatus of virtual gatherings in 2020 and 2021. The group drew together military, academic, humanitarian, and civilian experts to provide a snapshot into key operational trends in aid worker security as well as strengthen collaboration between civilian and military actors focused on aid worker security.

The specific objectives of 2022's working group were to identify and record how aid worker security could be impacted by strategic competition now and in the future, before suggesting areas of collaboration or research that could begin to address some of these challenges. This document summarizes key observations made during six hours of working group meetings that was also presented at the 6th Civilian-Military Humanitarian Response Workshop at Brown University in Providence on March 30, 2022.

Key Trends Impacting Aid Worker Security in an Era of Strategic Competition

Framing the discussions were definitions of strategic competition outlined by the *Congressional Research Service* report 'Strategic Competition and Foreign Policy: What is "Political Warfare"?' (March 2019), the *US Army Modern Warfare Institute* article 'What the Army's Return to Large-Scale Operations Means for the Intelligence Warfighting Function' (August 2018) & *Joint Publication 3.0 Joint Operations* (January 2017).

The group settled on discussing strategic competition as a notion that key world powers (e.g. US, China, and Russia) are once again competing across multiple domains, especially the political, economic, and military areas, in order to achieve foreign policy and national security goals. This could see the use of large-scale combat operations (LSCOs) that would be "more chaotic, intense, and highly destructive" than previous military operations over the past several decades.

Using this notion as a basis for discussion, four key concerns for aid worker security during an era of strategic competition were identified through the course of discussions. These have been listed in no particular order below.

Concerns Around Unreliable Information Environments & Role of Technology

Participants noted that based on historical trends (such as Syria), there was an expectation that there would be an increasing use of mis/disinformation to delegitimize aid workers by different conflict actors (especially China and Russia). The example of Russia's sustained and organized disinformation campaign against the White Helmets / Mayday was given. The importance of consistent messaging over time and speed to respond in the information environment was given as

an important factor for humanitarians to consider (“who gets there first and who gets there the loudest”).

While it was appreciated that technological solutions improving aid worker security can be positive it was also noted depending on what technology is employed, it can negatively impact the impartial profile of humanitarians and potentially increase the targeting of aid workers depending on the tech used. The growing role of the private sector in the humanitarian tech sector was given as a feature that is increasingly blurring the lines between humanitarian and military actors. The example of a European based tech company trying to make inroads into the humanitarian sector with a security incident dashboard and tracking app was given as the entity in question noted their biggest client was the French military. Some participants noted that it is still not clear if the benefits of using technology in aid worker security outweigh the potential risks.

Concerns Around the Politicization of Aid and Dehumanization of Aid Workers

Somewhat related to the above point, participants also noted that how conflict actors in a strategic competition view aid workers or use rhetoric against aid workers (e.g. as part of or supporting the adversary) has on the ground ramifications for humanitarians.

Russian government notions towards humanitarians were a particular concern. Notions given by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs make little mention of humanitarian principles while Ministry of Defense personnel appear to view humanitarians as foreign intelligence agents and agent provocateurs. Russia’s actions on the ground in Syria and Ukraine (esp. bombing humanitarians and hospitals) suggest that Russia does not value the impartiality of aid workers, or their security. It is also unclear how views towards aid workers proliferate from senior staff to the rank and file.

For China it was noted that their views and actions towards aid workers in an armed conflict has not really been tested given their predominance for operating in natural disasters rather than conflict. While focus was placed on Russia and China, it was also noted that during an LSCO the US may not be immune to viewing humanitarian aid workers as helping the adversary or contributing to winning a certain environment.

The influence of organized criminal actors in aid work (e.g. in DRC, CAR and Lebanon) and the difficulty in engaging and address this influence (esp. in financial and security matters) was also noted as an underappreciated area in future conflict. In particular, fears over how Russia and China may leverage criminal connections to adversely complicate the humanitarian space or use ‘NGOs’ connected with criminality (e.g. Akhmet Kadyrov Foundation) were mentioned.

Concerns Related to Diversity and Inclusion

Participants noted that there is currently a lack of representation (esp. women) at decision making levels, especially in Russia and China. This could be an issue in understanding concerns of aid workers and those receiving aid during a strategic competition. While representation is increasing in the US and other western countries, it remains an issue at the time of writing and remains heavily westernized in its construct that may not always translate well into other cultures. In addition to this, places where potential conflict could be seen during strategic competition are often also restrictive environments for implementing of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). Current measures in aid

worker security often lack holistic considerations, have gendered perspectives, and remain western focused– esp. towards local partners and local contractors despite many aid workers being local.

Concerns Around Lack of Preparations and Guidelines

Participants noted that variable levels of training and guidance related to aid worker security exist in the sector and to the group’s knowledge, there is no standardization or mandated pre deployment training in force. The lack of security training for local aid workers and private sector staff (esp. contractors) supporting humanitarians was especially highlighted. It was also noted that Russia and Chinese NGOs often receive indoctrination during security training which is an issue. Discussions also focused on using this training and guidance to address strong cultural issues in aid worker security related to the male domination of the sector, macho attitudes, and the acceptance of high risk as a normal procedure for aid work.

Future Actions to Explore

Noting that certain biases were present in the group, such as there being more military representation in the group in 2022, that no Russian or Chinese perspectives were in the room (it was asked if this was even possible), and that voices from the global south / local aid workers were missing, four potential future actions were identified to begin to address some of the above concerns. These have been listed below in no particular order.

Develop the Standardization of Minimum Pre-Deployment Security Training for Aid Workers

Participants discussed the need to develop minimum pre-deployment security training that should be mandated or strongly encouraged for types of aid worker workers. Both military and civilian practitioners in the room noted examples interacting with aid workers who had received no training especially at the local level, as well as the private sector (i.e. contractors, consultants and ‘silicon valley’ NGOs). It was suggested that government donors, the UN and parent NGOs could require this to ensure wider participation. However, it was noted that any solutions to these should be incorporated into existing structures rather than start a new process as well as take into consideration contexts, cultural aspects, local laws etc. However, who mandates this, enforces the training, checks it is being conducted and funds it was not identified by the group.

Strengthen Forums for Humanitarian-Military Exchange and Trust

Participants discussed that more resources (staff, time, incentives, and funding) are needed to ensure the maintenance *and* building of relationships and information sharing opportunities related to aid worker security. It was also suggested that efforts should be made to look for other impartial actors to coordinate aid worker security issues, not just UNOCHA, as in the future UNOCHA may not be perceived as impartial (i.e. Syria). It was emphasized that existing forums should be used to encourage collaboration and exchanges between civilian and military actors focused on aid worker security, such as military exercises (i.e. RIMPAC) and academic exchanges (i.e. CHRHS / NWC workshop).

Identify Next Steps for Data Landscape Related to Aid Worker Security

Participants wanted to ascertain more granularity in analysis and data collection related to aid worker security (i.e. identifying direct vs collateral attacks, understanding drivers of violence, and building case studies). Ideally this could help with creating a forecasting model. Ideally existing organizations would be used to do this, but care must be taken not to place too much burden on humanitarians for more collection of data.

New Group at The CHRHS Conference Focused on Privatization of Humanitarian Space / Security

Participants discussed that given the growing privatization of the humanitarian space and aid worker security, a new group could be dedicated to the implications of this development. While participants in the group wanted it focus on aid worker security, it was appreciated that it encompasses a larger topic that could be relevant for other groups. Focus could be placed on the use of Silicon Valley NGOs in humanitarian work, the role of private entities in conflict (i.e. Mosul response or private security companies) as well as the role of private sector and technology in the humanitarian sector.

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HUMANITARIAN ACCESS

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Summary of Outputs

In the context of the 2022 Civil-Military Humanitarian Response Workshop, the humanitarian access working group met to continue the dialogue established in previous workshops. The WG was made up of operational humanitarian organizations, humanitarian think tanks, academic entities, and governmental representatives. While much of the discussion was dominated by the Russia-Ukraine conflict, other topics of discussion emerged over the two days of discussion. The goals behind the WG discussion were to devise potential solutions to ongoing challenges and to develop a research agenda on humanitarian access that will support operational humanitarian access.

Key Themes

Seven central themes were identified through the course of discussions as significantly impacting humanitarian access. The non-prioritized list from the discussions include:

Humanitarian access in peer or near-peer conflict

Humanitarian access in peer or near-peer conflict is characterized by highly kinetic operations, besiegement of cities, and targeting of civilian populations. While Ukraine was discussed as the most topical of the access contexts, it is by no means the only context creating humanitarian access challenges. Topics that were discussed include:

- ◇ The humanitarian bias towards Western and Western trained militaries
- ◇ The variety of armed actors (national militaries, territorial militias, non-state armed groups, international brigades)
- ◇ Need for distinction between humanitarian and lethal aid at border crossing points (BCPs), shared road and rail networks, and seaports and airports
- ◇ Ability to establish dialogue (access, language, culture, acceptance) with local commanders and those controlling territory or contested areas
- ◇ The impact of sanctions regimes on humanitarians operating in the context

Residual effect of COVID-19 on humanitarian access

Discussion centered around the additional restrictions on humanitarian access caused by COVID-19, in both conflict and natural disaster settings. While the Ukraine context does not include COVID-19 restrictions by any party to the conflict, it has been a very real barrier for humanitarian operations as many organizations operating in Ukraine and surrounding countries have been forced to temporarily shut down offices because of COVID infections. Many INGOs have encountered access impediments because of COVID and have turned to local partners to implement programming. In other conflict settings, humanitarian access has been restricted by government policies during the COVID outbreak (bureaucratic or medical restrictions). COVID has also significantly restricted

access for responders to natural disasters, including both humanitarian and military actors. National governments have been reluctant to allow foreign responders into their countries for fear of external COVID infections, as exemplified in Tonga (volcanic eruptions and tsunami), the Philippines, Vietnam, and several others.

Local Actors and Humanitarian Access

The discussion looked at how the international system engages with local actors to support access, especially in high risk/hard to reach contexts – complicated by COVID restrictions. While national NGOs have a large role in ensuring access to populations in need, there is generally a lack of training and technical support available at the local level. The implications are significant as local populations volunteer to help on the ground, but often fail to think through second and third order effects, including trafficking of women and children, targeting of vulnerable populations, safety and security of staff and people in need, and numerous other protection issues.

Use of Humanitarian Notification Systems (HNS), Humanitarian Corridors and BCPs

The WG discussed the use and efficacy HNS – especially in influencing targeting practices of the parties to the conflict. While much of the work on HNS was discussed in the WG, resolution on what is and what is not the purpose of HNS still remains unresolved. While some humanitarians see HNS as an additional information sharing tool, others want to use it to enforce accountability for targeting humanitarian infrastructure. The WG also discussed the lack of clarity on “Humanitarian Corridors” in Ukraine, asserting that specific language and definitions are needed as there is a wide disparity between the term and how it is operationalized in the Ukraine conflict.

Physical vs. Non-Physical Access

Discussions focused on how the effects of sanctions and bureaucratic access fit into the dialogue, especially in Large-Scale Combat Operations (similar to Ukraine). Suggestions were made to explore virtual engagement, like what is happening on YouTube to train specific subjects or provide guidance from virtual training videos. An example cited was Syrian NGOs conducting surgery with virtual support providing instruction and technical knowledge from outside of the conflict zone. Access should be viewed more broadly in the sense that assistance providers can still benefit from technical knowledge without face-to-face communication. Further effort is required on determining how technology supports access and knowledge/technical transfers, keeping in mind the need to establish and maintain trust. Additional discussion included the implementation of martial law and its impact on humanitarian access to people in need as well as the issue of conscription and the mobilization of society during conflict. Related to this are specific industries and skills that are required for humanitarian operations and humanitarian efforts to gain conscription exemptions from government (e.g. truck driver conscription based on age, gender, or skill).

Planning vs Action

WG discussion generally concluded that there was a poor job of scenario planning in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Ukraine. Others argued that there less of a failure in planning, but there is a failure to act on the planning and to commit resources to various scenarios. Significant discussion centered on how to build enough trust in scenario planning to commit resources to preparedness and response, especially as NGOs cannot mobilize funding fast enough and Donors limit allocation of

resources until the needs are tangible. The WG asked the question about how to contingency plan and prepare without potentially enabling the conflict or being perceived to do so. Does being part of the planning process impact NGOs neutrality and/or independence.

Access and Humanitarian Organizational Issues

The WG looked at how Access is staffed and resourced as a function across humanitarian organizations. Most participants expressed concern about the lack of consistency within organizations regarding the lack of dedicated staffing and the resulting lack of relevance of Humanitarian Access beyond the rhetoric. For most organizations, despite the numerous conversations and discussions on Access, there are very few dedicated Access officers, especially at the headquarters level. At field level, there is also inconsistency as some operations have established Access Working Groups (AWG) although the majority lack an Access strategy or plan. There is also a disparity across country level Access Working Groups as there is currently no template or guidance on how an AWG is composed or what its focus should be. Most in the WG agreed that prioritizing Humanitarian Access was largely based on personalities and preferences – especially those of the humanitarian leadership at country level. Suggestions were made for increased and collaborative Access training and standardization across the broader community.

The Way Forward

The Access Working Group looked at relevant issues that could be advanced, both from an operational standpoint as well as contributing to a research agenda. One area that was central to the discussion is the engagement of humanitarian actors with military and political actors. While humanitarians have historically preferred to be removed from politics to be perceived as neutral, recent experience has demonstrated that humanitarians need a seat at the table with both political and military actors. Much of the discussion related to the fact that humanitarians and military actors operate in the same space in almost every humanitarian context and that engagement is critical to preserve humanitarian space and Access.

The WG acknowledged that humanitarians should prioritize informing military and political planning – to the extent to which there are humanitarian implications; to engage with military actors through training, outside of actual conflict operations; and that humanitarian leadership should embrace engagement with military actors and not stigmatize those who do. The WG also acknowledged that currently civil-military engagement is unbalanced as it is overwhelmingly Western oriented and follows a path of least resistance. Military actors who welcome engagement with humanitarians are often from the same Western nations, coalitions, and regional organizations. Significant effort needs to be made to diversify humanitarian civil-military engagement, in staffing, training, and in geographic representation.

Potential Research Agenda

Localization and humanitarian civil-military coordination

What role does localization contribute to securing humanitarian access? What role do communities play in access negotiations? How does gender play into these considerations? How does localization contribute to securing humanitarian access? Are marginalized groups considered in localization

efforts? What is the quality of their access? How does risk acceptance factor into localization? The WG acknowledged that risk should not be transferred to local organizations and governments and that there is generally a lack of clear guidance from UN partners on this issue. Additionally, the WG expressed that often INGOs disenfranchise and undermine local actors, operationally and financially. Research could also explore how the international system could assist in transforming local charities into professional organizations. Examples were cited in Ukraine where local actors engaged as part of the broader humanitarian community and sometimes made decisions that impact broader humanitarian messaging, in several instances requiring distinction between local and NGO efforts.

Private Military Contractors/Private Security Companies (PMCs/PSCs)

With the rise in PMCs and PSCs in humanitarian contexts, research should be pursued in identifying modalities for humanitarian engagement and strategies for working in the same space. What do PMCs/PSCs look like? What do they do operationally within their contexts? How are they different from each other? Some humanitarians – both international and local actors want to use PMCs/PSCs for security, although it can pose a significant risk. Is there a principled way for humanitarians to engage with PMCs/PSCs on security or other issues? What are the potential legal and moral implications of engagement with PMCs/PSCs?

Humanitarian Diplomacy

How do humanitarians engage with political and military actors, especially in large-scale combat operations? Should humanitarians engage in politics to support their response? As this engagement would represent a longer-term, relationship-building issue, how do humanitarians implement a more proactive advocacy stance rather than an exclusively reactionary position? What are the effects of sanctions on Humanitarian Access and can engagement on sanction regimes help mitigate negative effects? Do counter-terrorism contexts pose an existential threat to principled humanitarian operations?

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