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Helpdesk Research Report

The impact of integrated missions on humanitarian operations

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Question

What is the evidence about the impact of integrated UN missions on the conduct of humanitarian operations? Specifically look at impact on the protection of civilians, humanitarian access and the security of humanitarian agencies, and the perception of humanitarian organisations by warring parties.

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1. Overview

Integrated UN missions have been contentious ever since they were proposed in the 1990s (Barakat, Deely, & Zyck, 2010; Harmer, 2008; Metcalfe, Giffen, & Elhawary, 2012)[1]. Their discussion forms a part of fierce debates in the humanitarian field about the effects of changing relations between civil and military actors, and between political and humanitarian mandates. However, specific evidence about the impact of integrated missions on humanitarian operations remains scarce and problematic.

The impact of integrated missions on specific aspects of humanitarian operations remains **very contested**, with no general agreement. Areas about which there is at least limited agreement are:

[1] Definitions of integrated UN missions vary (Glad, 2012; Metcalfe et al., 2012). In general, integrated missions put military, humanitarian and political action by the UN into one single framework at country level in contexts of violent conflicts. Humanitarian action is placed under the umbrella of political and peacekeeping missions.

- Integration has had **both negative and positive** effects on humanitarian operations. **Effects vary** by individual actor, type of actor (UN agencies are more affected) and contexts (mission, country, point in time).
- **Protection of civilians**:
  - Possible positive impacts under the right circumstances: shared objectives among humanitarian, political and military actors, leading to action (such as in the DRC); successful advocacy for the protection of civilians (e.g. in cases in Afghanistan, Somalia, the DRC, Liberia, Central African Republic).
  - Negative impacts: UN reluctance to speak out and weak advocacy, due to UN proximity to some perpetrators of violence (e.g. Somalia, the DRC, Afghanistan); jeopardised information-sharing on protection due to the risk posed by misuses by political and military actors.
- **Access** is context- and agency-specific. Integration has sometimes facilitated access through logistics and military security (e.g. in Afghanistan, the DRC, Somalia). However, often, integration seems to have impeded access, especially where international actors are aligned with one side in a violent conflict (e.g. Iraq, Pakistan, Somalia, Darfur, Afghanistan). UN security management also creates major hurdles.
- **Humanitarian security** does not appear to be directly affected by integration. Apparent correlations vary from country to country (Ferreiro, 2012). In general, it seems contexts where the UN takes political or military sides are high-risk for humanitarian security (e.g. Afghanistan, the DRC, Somalia). UN security management can also create problems, by not relying enough on acceptance as a security strategy. On a few occasions (in the DRC, Darfur and Liberia), integration benefited humanitarian security.
- **Local perceptions of humanitarian operations**: where the UN supports the state, peace agreements or elections which have little local credibility, integration may undermine local perceptions of humanitarian actors associated with the UN as neutral and impartial (e.g. the DRC, Afghanistan).
- Both **positive and negatives impacts at macro and meso levels** can be identified on international humanitarian policy, the humanitarian system, and country-level dynamics.

Additional approaches to considering impact include learning from longer-term history of missions that associate military, political and humanitarian operations; humanitarian actors taking responsibility for their chosen positioning in relation to integration and its consequence; and enhancing the understanding of impact through an analysis of additional variables that shape the impact of integrated missions.

2. State of the evidence

The nature of the evidence

There is a **very small and problematic evidence base** on the impact of integrated missions on humanitarian operations:

- All of the literature reviewed during the preparation of this report emphasises that there is **very little evidence** available on the impact of integrated missions on humanitarian operations. Most of the available evidence is either anecdotal or limited in scope.

- Integrated UN missions, specifically, are relatively recent. Recent works and evidence syntheses are few.
- Evidence on integrated UN missions remains **uneven in geographic coverage**. A few cases, foremost Somalia, Haiti and the Democratic Republic of Congo, make up the bulk of studies.
- Understandings of how humanitarian operations work is still subject to **strong debates**, on theories and facts, in general and in specific cases. For instance, there is no consensus among academics, practitioners and policy-makers on whether humanitarian access has been shrinking over the past decade (Brassard-Boudreau & Hubert, 2010; Ferreiro, 2012), or on what determines protection, access, security and perceptions. This is due in part to gaps in knowledge, and in part to disagreements on what the evidence means (Fast, 2010). This is striking in relation to the **2012 UN-commissioned report by Metcalfe, Giffen, & Elhawary**, one of the few references that directly examines the impact of UN integration[2]. The report, a prominent work on the issue, has been challenged by humanitarian actors, such as InterAction (2011) and the Norwegian refugee Council (Glad, 2012), and by experts (one calls it 'much diluted'; expert comment).
- **Measures of impact** are very difficult to establish and to use. In a lot of contexts, direct and precise measures are impossible to apply (Ferreiro, 2012). Many references use proxy indicators that reflect impacts imperfectly. For example, a number of assessments rely on humanitarian actors' perceptions of their action, with little independent data and few assessments by local populations. Appraisals that could be used across time, space and actors are largely missing.

Difficulties with the evidence

- In addition, all references emphasize the **variety of definitions and practices** under study. While integrated missions are well-defined in theory, their implementation has differed across time and space, making comparisons and conclusions moot (Barakat et al., 2010; Metcalfe et al., 2012). Integration-type missions also appear under terms such as coherence, civil-military coordination and stabilisation (Barakat, Deely, & Zyck, 2010). Regarding effects, some key, widely used notions, such as 'humanitarian space' or access, receive a range of definitions and describe a variety of different practices. Likewise, actors define the core principles of humanitarianism (humanity, impartiality, independence and neutrality) in different, sometimes incompatible, ways (Brassard-Boudreau & Hubert, 2010; Metcalfe et al., 2012, 4; expert comment). This variety in definitions and practices severely complicate assessments of impact.
- There are major issues with regard to **causalities**. The complex and multiple causalities at play also make it difficult to isolate integrated missions as one variable and to then determine their specific impact on humanitarian operations (Ferreiro, 2012). Numerous significant factors affect humanitarian operations beyond integration, from the context of violent conflict to economic, criminal and political causes, and individual and organisational factors (Glad, 2012, 4; Metcalfe et al., 2012, 2). Ferreiro (2012) points to the question of 'whether any causal effect can ever be estimated with statistical validity, taking into account the many confounding variables, the small sample size, and the absence of a counterfactual'. Indeed, a fundamental problem is the impossibility of having counter-factual perspectives: no one can truly know what would have

[2] The report draws on qualitative and quantitative field and desk research. It focuses on three main case studies (Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Somalia), complemented by a desk review of the Central African Republic, Darfur (Sudan) and Liberia.

happened to humanitarian operations, had a UN mission not been integrated in a given country at a given time (expert comment). Different authors interpret connections as mere correlation, as implication or as demonstrable consequence. Finally, Fast (2010) points to the neglect of micro dynamics, as opposed to global factors, in analyses of impact.

- No author offers systematic evidence, due to existing **knowledge gaps** on the issue (Ferreiro, 2012). Fast (2010) points to an 'epistemic gap' between one empirical stream that focuses on documenting violence against aid workers (proximate cause) and another that proposes explanations (deep causes), often without corresponding evidence. Moreover, the latter emphasizes external, global conditions and neglects other possible micro and internal explanations. The **variety of impacts** noted, sometimes contradictory from one mission to another, suggests case-by-case examinations of dynamics and their comparison may provide the most accurate answers (Metcalfe et al., 2012; expert comments).

3. Issue-specific impact

Areas such as protection, access, engagement with non-state armed actors, security and perceptions are closely inter-connected; impact in one area affects the others. Overall, Metcalfe et al. found that UN integration has had **both positive and negative impacts** on these areas. The impacts have been stronger on UN than non-UN actors. UN entities, due to their status and mandates, cannot be neutral and independent in the manner of the ICRC, for example. For other humanitarian actors that are not part of the UN system *per se*, impacts are less pronounced (Metcalfe et al., 2012, 1-2, 47).

Protection of civilians

Metcalfe et al. (2012, 4) argue that the **benefits** of UN integration for humanitarian actors 'are most evident in relation to shared objectives between humanitarian, political and peacekeeping components, such as the protection of civilians and support to durable solutions for displaced populations'. This common platform helps build confidence, and integration can assist in identifying UN actors' respective contributions. Glad (2012, 2) confirms that even NGOs critical of integration would welcome increased UN advocacy for humanitarian space.

- For example, a 2008 study by the Feinstein International Center, cited in Brassard-Boudreau & Hubert (2010), argued that the UN mission in the DRC was a 'convincing example of the rationale for coherence between political/peacekeeping agendas and humanitarian/human rights agendas'. The approach resulted in the MONUC addressing protection issues. There is no evidence 'that a non-integrated approach would have been more successful in addressing humanitarian needs'.
- Metcalfe et al. (2012, 35, 47) state that Afghanistan, Somalia, the DRC, Liberia and the Central African Republic offer promising examples of advocacy in integrated missions. They demonstrate that, 'with a degree of trust and confidence, good leadership and effective processes and frameworks in place, such efforts can be highly effective'. Humanitarian experience and leadership skills are also crucial to this, as are capacity, knowledge and leverage within and external to the mission for key staff (Special Representatives of the Secretary General, Resident Coordinators, Humanitarian Coordinators).

Negative impacts have also been noted:

- The UN mission leadership, in Somalia, the DRC and Afghanistan, has sometimes been **reluctant to speak out** on humanitarian issues, even on serious problems that required a more senior UN response, or 'where they had additional leverage with the target audience' (Metcalfe et al., 2012, 36). In addition, there have been instances of individual mission leaders who sought to restrict humanitarian actors from voicing concerns, such as on protection (e.g. in Somalia) (*ibidem*). Glad (2012, 9) documents two such cases where the situation on the ground and protection concerns were downplayed. In the DRC, the protection cluster demanded an official explanation from the Special Representative of the Secretary General in 2009 for a report, because it presented a lower number on displacement than the OCHA-provided figure, and human rights violations against civilians committed by the Congolese army were given less importance than abuses committed by armed opposition groups. In Somalia, NGO representatives expressed similar concerns: violations by the Transitional Federal Government and The African Union Forces, supported by the UN, had been downplayed.
- Uncertainties about how **information** is shared among humanitarian, human rights, political and military actors in integrated missions on the other could jeopardise the information-sharing fundamental to effective humanitarian response. Some NGOs are concerned that protection-sensitive information provided to clusters may be passed on to political and military components, or abused to further the non-humanitarian objectives of the mission. For example, in the DRC and in Afghanistan, staff from the political and military branches of the mission participated in humanitarian coordination, something that many NGOs are opposed to. In the DRC, the comprehensive protection strategy – which includes peacekeeping, political and humanitarian components – has exacerbated these concerns, particularly because the strategy is largely focused on threats posed by only one of the armed groups. Eroding information sharing on protection might result in less coordination, weaken the humanitarian response and weaken the UN's ability to play its role in addressing protection with host governments (Glad, 2012, 6).

Access

Based on a review of extant literature, Ferreiro (2012) concludes that 'there does not seem to be a general trend in access that fits all contexts'. Impact 'is very much **context-specific** and, perhaps most importantly, **agency-specific**'. It is not just driven by external factors beyond organisations' control, but also by their choices and practices as well as by their own mandate. For example, in Afghanistan, in the period 2005-2011, most humanitarian actors were forced to reduce their activities and the presence of expatriates. Yet the ICRC sustained and later expanded its operations without a significant increase in security incidents.

- In Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Somalia, there are some cases where integration has 'supported i**ncreased access** for UN and some non-UN humanitarian actors by facilitating the use of mission logistical assets, the provision of area security by UN peacekeeping forces and the use of UN military escorts' (Metcalfe et al., 2012, 2). For example, in the eastern DRC, OCHA facilitated interaction between the humanitarian community and armed opposition groups simply by providing contact information, which was highly appreciated by many NGOs (Glad, 2012, 9).
- However, Ferreiro's review of a number of case studies (2012) notes that several studies show how UN integration and coherence agendas have **hindered access** to vulnerable groups and forced agencies to conduct much of their work through third parties. This is the case in countries where the UN and international actors are perceived as aligned with one side in a violent conflict, alienating the other side: Iraq, Pakistan, Somalia, Darfur and Afghanistan (see Donini, 2011 as well). For most humanitarian organisations, access and operational space are 'almost

nonexistent' in many parts of these countries, reportedly because aid agencies are seen as adjuncts to international armed forces.

- Humanitarian organisations remain concerned about 'the **use of UN military** assets becoming the default option rather than a last resort' in violent conflicts (Metcalfe et al., 2012, 2; see also Glad, 2012).
- There are also concerns that certain arrangements, related to more **risk-averse** UN operational security management, impacts upon access for UN humanitarian actors and their partners (Glad, 2012; Metcalfe et al., 2012, 2). The extent of this relationship is unclear (Metcalfe et al., 2012, 2).
- UN **advocacy** for access can also be conducted in problematic ways. For example, Glad (2012, 8) mentions that several NGOs delivering assistance in South Central Somalia express reservations about public advocacy for access done by the Humanitarian Coordinator and the Emergency Relief Coordinator on behalf of the humanitarian community. In the context of Somalia, these NGOs view association with the UN as potentially compromising access and security of staff; hence public association to the UN is avoided.

Humanitarian security

Metcalfe et al. (2012, 2) found **no clear evidence of a direct link** between UN integration and attacks on humanitarian workers in the cases reviewed. Brassard-Boudreau & Hubert (2010) also state there are good reasons to believe that the challenges of security and access 'are driven by factors other than a lack of respect for humanitarian principles due to the blurring of boundaries' (but rather, among other causes, by poor security practices by some humanitarian actors). In a broad review of literature about violence against aid workers, Fast (2010) also cites a 2006 empirical study by ODI/CIC on deep causation that demonstrated that UN integrated missions had no significant impact on this type of violence (371).
Ferreiro (2012) presents statistical data and charts about the number major violent incidents against aid workers and possible relations to integration in three countries from 1998 to 2010:

- Afghanistan. The number of major violent incidents against aid workers over time is poorly correlated with the weight of the humanitarian response, but strongly linked with other variables that can be considered proxies to the international political and military intervention' (US expenditures for overall stabilization, development and military expenditures there). Barely 12% of the variation of the number of attacks could be explained by the variation of humanitarian aid expenditure, but roughly 90% by the variation of the other variables. These results do not prove causality, since they do not control for omitted variable bias or for reverse causality. Nevertheless, they suggest that, beyond mere aid, something in the international response may strongly influence security.
- Sudan and Somalia. There is a high correlation between humanitarian operations or development and violence against aid workers. This may be mainly because more than half of development aid is spent in humanitarian operations, which implies a strong correlation between both variables. In Sudan, about 90% of the variation in security incidents can be explained by the variation of either development or humanitarian expenditure. The size of the humanitarian enterprise may be the main explanatory variable. In Somalia, the predictive power of both variables is roughly 60%. Other confounding factors with significant impact seem to be at play.

General conclusions appear to be as follows:

- In particular environments, the association of humanitarian actors with political actors can create additional risk (Metcalfe et al., 2012, 2, 47). Association is especially problematic in **high-risk** environments, where the UN is implementing a political mandate opposed or contested by some

conflict parties, and where those parties are willing and able to distinguish between international actors (Donini, 2011; Ferreiro, 2012; Glad, 2012, 4; Metcalfe et al., 2012, 2, 47). Brassard-Boudreau & Hubert (2010) add: 'When donors are occupiers and combatants, security and access will be compromised', e.g. in Iraq and Afghanistan. Counter-insurgency does militarize and politicize humanitarian operations, and security and access will be reduced (*idem*).

- This was the case in DRC when MONUC became a party to the conflict, and in Afghanistan and Somalia, where the UN mission mandate and activities are strongly contested by one or more of the conflict parties. In these contexts, highly visible integration may blur the distinction and pose an additional risk (Donini, 2011; Ferreiro, 2012; Metcalfe et al., 2012, 2, 47).
- The connection could also be **indirect**: some analysts suggest that international agencies have become more exposed to risks in conflicts, as many have moved 'from the periphery to the center of conflicts', operating in more dangerous places and thus affecting the interests of belligerents who used to see them as non-threatening (Brassard-Boudreau & Hubert, 2010; Ferreiro, 2012). This increased exposure has a lot to do with blurred mandates, as most development agencies now claim to act on humanitarian grounds and there is competition for outreach in areas of high insecurity (Ferreiro, 2012).
- Moreover, Glad (2012, 10-11) states that the UN's **integrated security** management, led by the UN Department of Safety and Security, 'is seen to have the most direct negative impact on UN-NGO coordination and joint response', and thereby on humanitarian operations. The UN field staff interviewed said the UN security system was still more focused on preventing incidents than 'on enabling UN agencies to carry out their humanitarian mandates in relative safety'. The default reliance on deterrence and protective measures (e.g. high fences, use of armoured vehicles, armed guards and escorts) 'has shifted focus away from acceptance strategies normally used by humanitarian actors'. This has exacerbated security problems in contexts where armed escorts are provided by forces involved in combat, such as AMISOM in Somalia. Using such forces increases the risk of being targeted, by being perceived as associated with military actors or by becoming a casualty if the escort is targeted. This sort of UN security strategy has led to greater difficulties in conducting joint UN-NGO assessments, the 'bunkerization' of the UN, alignment onto UN security advice by NGOs (leading to increasingly limited geographical coverage of aid) (10-11). Donini (2011, 154-155) confirms all these effects in contemporary Afghanistan. Ferreiro (2012) notes complaints about UN bunkerization in Chad, Sudan and Afghanistan, which limits staff's movement and capabilities to negotiate with local stakeholders.
- There are a number of indications at a **micro level** that integration can have a problematic impact on security, access and perception. For example, Glad (2012) states that OCHA's physical co-location with UN missions in Afghanistan 'causes discomfort' among NGOs. Attending meetings in the UN compound is a risk in terms of perception and security. UN compounds have been attacked in Afghanistan; in Kabul, they are often located close to international military compounds. Cars are often required to wait outside the compound, placing drivers at risk. Tight security measures at the compound also make it difficult for NGOs – particularly national NGOs – to access OCHA (8).
- At the same time, integration can offer some security **benefits**. In the DRC, certain integrated practices and coordination have 'facilitated the use of mission assets to enhance the protection of UN, and to a degree non-UN, humanitarian staff'. In Darfur, the DRC and Liberia, UN humanitarian actors and some of their NGO partners benefited from area security patrolling and transportation provided by the mission. In various cases studied, there were also positive

examples of technical cooperation on security assessments and analysis (Metcalfe et al., 2012, 2, 47).

Local perceptions

There is consensus in the literature that very little is known about the perceptions of humanitarian operations and actors by local actors (civilians and warring parties), let alone about how integrated missions affect such local perceptions (e.g. Glad, 2012, 5). In addition, proving changes in perceptions in relation to integration or a lack thereof would require having a baseline, which is generally absent in contexts of humanitarian operations. As a result, studies largely rely on humanitarian actors' own understanding of local perceptions, as a proxy indication (Glad, 2012, 5).

Metcalfe et al. (2012, 2-3) investigated the impact of integrated mission on humanitarian operations based on the views of **national and international respondents** interviewed for their study and on available secondary information. They found that:

- How UN humanitarian actors are perceived is influenced by how the UN political or peacekeeping component is perceived. This requires 'an informed understanding of how political, peacekeeping and humanitarian actors are perceived, and what influence UN integration arrangements may have in this regard', which is lacking so far.
- Highly visible integration arrangements in particular contexts may exacerbate the perception that they are associated.
- In contexts where the UN is mandated to support the state, peace agreements or elections which have limited credibility amongst national stakeholders, integration may make it 'more difficult for UN humanitarian actors and their partners to maintain perceptions of neutrality and impartiality' (Metcalfe et al., 2012, 3-4).

In addition, based on interviews with staff from UN missions, UN agencies, donor governments and NGOs working in Afghanistan, DRC and Somalia, and on consultations with other NGOs at field and headquarters levels, Glad (2012, 5) argues that 'more **NGOs** increasingly perceive the UN family as politicized and are therefore reassessing their relationship with the UN', which impacts on the conduct of humanitarian operations. Moreover, UN agency staff in both DRC and Afghanistan 'considered it problematic to be seen as too closely linked with the mission', as altered perceptions would limit their acceptance by local actors, and thus limit access and increase insecurity for their staff. Similarly, staff from UN agencies in Afghanistan stated that being linked to the upcoming transition (international to national military control, and military to civilian control) would be a risk to their acceptance.

However, **humanitarians' perceptions may not be accurate**. For instance, Ferreiro (2012) distinguishes the direct targeting of humanitarian workers (attacks motivated by workers' humanitarian status and action) and 'associative targeting' (where a warring party perceives that the humanitarian agency is backing its foe). In Afghanistan, beliefs widely held by humanitarian NGOs are that attacks on humanitarian agencies are not the policy of armed opposition groups, but rather a result of criminality, mistaken identity or local decisions. Yet quantitative data about such attacks suggests that, as conflict expands, armed opposition groups increasingly target both civilians and the agencies that aid them. There may be 'wishful thinking from a humanitarian community that takes more comfort in the idea of being targets by association than in becoming direct targets'.

Even evidence based on **local perceptions** remains contradictory.

- In one of the few studies available on local perceptions, Doctors without Borders explored how people in crises perceive humanitarian aid and MSF, through a quantitative and qualitative comparison of 12 countries (Abu Sada, 2012)[3]. Though the book does not address integration specifically, it does provide some qualitative evidence from the field that close association of humanitarian actors with military and political actors can change local populations' perceptions. For example, in the DRC (Ituri), MSF used to have white cars, but this led the local population to confuse them with UN cars. As the UN started conducting a military operation in the area, these cars would get pelted with rocks. MSF re-painted their cars fuchsia (a colour not associated with any of the parties to the conflict, including MONUC); from then on, MSF cars were not pelted with stones any more. This sort of distantiation then enabled MSF to get access and deliver medical care (idem, 10-11; expert comment).
- Yet, Harmer (2008, 532) mentions a 2005 report for MSF that points to a different conclusion. This study found that belligerents in the DRC and Afghanistan did not viewed humanitarian agencies as neutral or impartial, but that there was little evidence that this was attributable to integrated missions. Rather, 'this perception was generated by the actions of the agencies themselves'.

4. Macro- and meso-level impacts

Policy and systems

UN integration has had differing impacts on humanitarian operations at macro levels:

- Many in the UN political and peacekeeping community highlight **positive experiences**, particularly in DRC and Liberia, and the significant progress made in policy, along with the continued need for enhanced coherence (Metcalfe et al., 2012, 1, 45).
- Some UN humanitarian staff, and many staff in non-UN humanitarian organisations, remain deeply sceptical of integration as a policy (e.g. Ferreiro, 2012; Glad, 2012). They emphasise **negative experiences** such as Somalia and Afghanistan. Many are opposed on principle, arguing that integration blurs the distinction between humanitarian, military and political action, subordinates humanitarian priorities to political decision-making and places humanitarian action at significant risk (Ferreiro, 2012; Glad, 2012; Metcalfe et al., 2012, 1, 45). However, writing on humanitarian security, Fast (2010) notes that, while the reasoning that integration increases incidents is intuitively compelling, the evidence beyond anecdotes may not be.
- This opposition itself has had a **ripple effect** on humanitarian operations: as some humanitarian actors refuse to participate in integration, disengage from it or limit their involvement, this affects capacities and partnerships in UN humanitarian operations (Glad, 2012; Metcalfe et al., 2012, 4; expert comment). This has already happened, to various degrees, in Afghanistan, the DRC and Somalia, where some NGOs have withdrawn from joint assessments with UN agencies, from implementing projects funded through the UN, from information sharing and from joint communication initiatives (Glad, 2012, 6).

Actors critical of integration also raise a series of issues that are partly grounded in field experiences, and partly grounded in logical argumentation about the **contradiction** of humanitarianism within political-military missions (Ferreiro, 2012; Glad, 2012, 6; InterAction, 2011; expert comments):

[3] The countries studied were the DRC, Sudan (Darfur), Iraq, Somalia, Chad, Myanmar ('unstable' contexts), as well as Cameroon, Kyrgyzstan, Kenya, Guatemala, Liberia and Niger (more 'stable' contexts).

- Many argue that there are inherent contradictions in integration policies that make their impact, both already observed and expected, generally negative for humanitarian operations. InterAction (2011, 1) summarises thus: integration 'is about aligning UN entities to achieve political ends, whereas humanitarian action should never be either political or partisan'. It argues that any discussion 'must start by examining the practical implications of this fundamental contradiction'.
- One key example is politicisation: in integrated missions, the same UN individuals or structures take a stance in the internal politics or military situation (such as a pro-government stance) while also defending humanitarian principles of impartiality and neutrality. For example, the UN took on a leading role in the 2010 Afghan elections, in which key armed opposition groups were not represented politically, while it was tasked with upholding humanitarian principles. Similarly, the UN was expected to reconcile humanitarian principles with leading a mission that assisted the Congolese government in military operations against one armed opposition group. Critics argue this position is simply untenable and the contradiction can end up being resolved with a loss of humanitarian space (Glad, 2012, 6; expert comments).

National level

The issue of advocacy for humanitarian space also presents a contrasted picture:

- In a number of cases, integration has **facilitated humanitarian advocacy** on behalf of populations in need. It enabled complementary advocacy amongst UN humanitarian and UN peacekeeping and political actors. In a number of instances, these efforts have effectively influenced external stakeholders on key issues such as the protection of civilians and humanitarian access. In some instances, UN integration also strengthened the influence of humanitarian considerations in decision-making within the UN integrated presence (Metcalfe et al., 2012, 3).
- However, there are examples where UN mission leadership or senior staff 'sought to **limit humanitarian advocacy** when it was deemed to have a negative impact on political priorities'. These cases mainly related to individual UN staff, this was not a widespread practice (Metcalfe et al., 2012, 3).

Ferreiro (2012) also notes that **OCHA** has become 'cornered almost to irrelevance' because of integration. As of writing, there was no OCHA office in Iraq; the Afghanistan OCHA office, dismantled when integration was launched in 2002, was reestablished seven years later only after strong pressure from international NGOs (on OCHA in Afghanistan, Donini, 2011, 151-152). With the advent of integration, OCHA has been abolished altogether, left under-funded, or relegated to a diminished role without influence to further humanitarian action within the UN. Donini (2011) notes that integration in the UN mission in Afghanistan after 2002 marginalised humanitarian action 'and subordinated it to a partisan political agenda' (149).

'Comprehensive strategies' in integrated missions can also lead to questionable outcomes (Ferreiro, 2012; Glad, 2012, 10). Both MONUSCO (DRC) and UNAMA (Afghanistan) have engaged in stabilisation activities aimed at expanding state authority and showing communities a 'peace dividend'. This has brought the mission very close to the government, one of the parties to the conflict. The close relation between **assistance and counter-insurgency** has made it difficult for actors engaged in relief to maintain an independent identity. Insurgents are also 'tempted to undermine their political foes by targeting aid workers', the easiest targets of integrated missions (Ferreiro, 2012).

Likewise, comprehensive protection strategies have been problematic. In the DRC and Somalia, the UN mission's involvement has shifted the focus 'from a civilian-based methodology to a **military physical**

protection strategy aimed at reducing the threat to the civilian population by armed opposition groups'. Other concerns, particularly those linked to abuses committed by government-related actors, are, according to NGO field staff, given less attention owing to the political affiliation of the UN mission with the government (Glad, 2012, 10).

5. Approaches to assessing impact

Learning from history

In light of problems with evidence, which make assessing the impact of integrated missions difficult, **taking the longer historical view** can provide insights. Perceptions of the novelty of contemporary post-crisis issues are rooted in a 'tradition of forgetting' among international actors (J.J. Carafano, cited in Barakat, Deely, & Zyck, 2010). Barakat et al. (2010) look at stabilisation missions from such a perspective. These operations share many characteristics with integrated missions, the core being the collaboration of civilian and military actors during and after violent conflicts for the stated purpose of bringing peace and relief. Barakat et al. review experiences in the Philippines (1898–1902), Algeria (1956–62), Vietnam (1967–75) and El Salvador (1980–92).

Stabilisation is 'a long-standing concept and practice that has consistently engaged with and, at times, conflicted with varied understandings of humanitarianism' (S301). Contemporary stabilisation keeps **'reinventing the broken wheel'**: it builds on and repeats mistakes of the past, particularly the securitisation of aid and the perception that humanitarian actors can purchase security effectively. Current stabilisation, especially after 11 September 2001, uses models, strategies, tactics and methods that are 'near-identical replications of earlier models'. Examples include Provincial Reconstruction Teams, the localised approach and territorial division of districts (akin to French '*quadrillage*' in Algeria), quick-impact projects, and national programmes meant to support 'local development while overcoming centre–periphery divisions and legitimating mistrusted governmental authorities' (S310-S312).

Underlying all these approaches is the assumption that 'quasi-humanitarian or development-orientated stabilisation assistance can mitigate insecurity by making local populations more inclined to support external actors and mistrusted domestic political authorities'. Yet across time and space, such an approach has proven to be incomplete and rooted in unfounded assumptions. In addition, linking quasi-humanitarian assistance and counter-insurgency creates 'perverse incentives' and belongs to a century-old failed logic of 'aid-for-acquiescence' (S310-S312).

Where current stabilisation differs from past practices, the implications are 'troubling if not outright disastrous': the introduction of the private sector, with effects on the political economy and structure of incentives of missions; and the incorporation of humanitarian operations into war strategies. The allocation of resources based on political and military objectives rather than need distorts aid (abstract, S313-S314).

History shows there have been 'many failures and few, if any, successes' in stabilisation missions (abstract). It is likely that changes are needed not only in design, implementation, means or personalities, but possibly in the concept of stabilisation. The belief that peace, security and stability may be achieved most effectively when paired with humanitarianism, reconstruction and development does not 'seem to be supported by the available evidence'. NGOs tasked with assistance as a form of 'force protection' have been rendered less effective (e.g. when assistance is provided to areas based on troop engagements

rather than relevance). The resulting ineffective reconstruction and development produces 'meagre results, disappointment and resentment' (S314-315).

Taking responsibility for choices

The choices underlying different orientations in humanitarian action are fundamentally **political and ethical** in nature. This has several implications for assessing impact of integrated missions.

- What some actors will deem positive developments, others will deem problematic. Different preferences and yardsticks lead to different conclusions. For example, humanitarian actors can broadly be divided between Dunant-inspired and Wilson-inspired actors (Barakat et al., 2010, S300; expert comment). Stabilisation-type practices may be antithetical to the Dunantists, who focus on aid to those in most in need, but may be welcomed by Wilsonians, who view larger goals such as peace-making as part of their mandate (*idem*; Ferreiro, 2012).
- One expert suggests that the impossibility of establishing conclusive evidence on the impact of integrated missions means that humanitarian actors should just take responsibility for the choices they make, their implications and their impact (expert comment). Similarly, several sources mentioned by Ferreiro (2012), including the ICRC, argue that humanitarian actors that have embraced proximity to integrated missions on the promise of good impact need to take responsibility for their negative effects too.

Enhancing the understanding of impact

The impact of integrated missions on humanitarian operations is affected by **intermediate variables**. Metcalfe et al. suggest that key contextual factors are: the conflict and political environment; the historical role and mandate of the UN; and the way the humanitarian system itself operates (2012, 3-4). In fact, the primary risks to humanitarian space are contextual: 'the status and nature of the conflict, the nature of armed actors, the behaviour of host governments', the policies of other member states (including on funding and comprehensive approaches), and the characteristics of the humanitarian community, 'such as adherence to humanitarian principles and the lack of collective and coherent responses' to the challenges to humanitarian space. The positive and negative impacts of integration should be understood 'in relation to these broader characteristics, which differ in each context' (*idem*, 47).

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- CRASH (MSF research centre): http://www.msf-crash.org/en
- DARA – Humanitarian Response Index: http://daraint.org/humanitarian-response-index/humanitarian-response-index-2011/
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