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[−] **Abstract and Keywords**

This chapter focuses on the connection between the international refugee regime and the international humanitarian order. It first looks at the origins of humanitarianism in the late eighteenth century and how it has expanded today to protect more kinds of people affected by forced migration, including those displaced by natural disasters. It then discusses the two major branches of humanitarianism that currently comprise the international order: alchemical humanitarianism and emergency humanitarianism. The first seeks to eliminate all forms of suffering and its causes, whereas the second aims to treat the symptoms of suffering caused by violence and natural disasters. Furthermore, the article examines two distinct phases in the relationship of refugees and humanitarianism: from the late eighteenth century to the end of the First World War I, and from the First World War to the present. It concludes by showing how changes in the global environment and the international humanitarian order prompted the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to be more open to an expansive definition of humanitarianism.

Keywords: humanitarianism, forced migration, natural disasters, alchemical humanitarianism, emergency humanitarianism, refugees, First World War, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Introduction

This chapter examines the intertwined history of the international refugee regime and the international humanitarian order. Both are responses to the inhumane consequences of a world organized around sovereignty. The major blood-soaked events of the last century are milestones for both: the First World War, Second World War, Biafra, Cambodia, Iraq, Bosnia, Somalia, and Rwanda. Those who wanted to protect refugees frequently sound the call of 'humanitarianism' to rally international sympathy, support, and action. The protection of refugees and displaced peoples, in turn, has been a defining element of the international humanitarian order. Over the last century humanitarianism has expanded to protect more kinds of peoples affected by forced migration, and the goal of finding permanent solutions to the plight of displaced peoples and refugees is a force behind the expansion of humanitarianism's scope and ambitions. Over the last decade the refugee regime has become more involved in natural disasters, far outside its original orbit of concern for peoples forcibly displaced because of persecution and war, and inching closer to more orthodox understandings of humanitarianism.

This chapter is organized in the following way. It begins by situating this discussion in the context of an international humanitarian order, and then proceeds to outline the nineteenth-century origins of the two major branches of humanitarianism that currently comprise this order. Following a distinction I introduced in *Empire of Humanity*, these two branches are: alchemical, wanting to eliminate all forms of suffering and its causes; and emergency, wanting to treat the symptoms of suffering caused by violence and natural disasters. Importantly, alchemists have historically been more inclined to address all kinds of suffering experienced by refugees and other displaced peoples, while emergency humanitarians have a more restricted vision.

(p. 242) The chapter then proceeds to discuss two distinct phases in the relationship of refugees and humanitarianism. The first phase begins in the late eighteenth century and ends with the First World War, and is defined by the *lack* of a relationship between refugees and humanitarianism. Specifically, modern humanitarianism dates to the initial attempt by those in the West to organize action on behalf of distant strangers, most dramatically on behalf of the slaves and aboriginal peoples in the global South; however, there was little interest in refugees, per se. The other nineteenth-century milestone in humanitarianism is the establishment of the Geneva Conventions and the International Committee of the Red Cross in 1864. Importantly, the ICRC's protection mandate included soldiers but not civilians or refugees. In short, neither camp paid much attention to refugees, per se. The simplest explanation for this neglect is that refugees were not an urgent 'problem' because states were not as fastidious about controlling their borders; it was possible for displaced peoples to reach safety in another country without slamming up against legal and political barriers.

The second phase begins with the First World War and continues through the present period, and at this moment the relationship between humanitarianism and refugees becomes much more intimate. I make three central points. First, humanitarianism helped to create a global concern for refugees, and refugees helped to create contemporary humanitarianism. Those who wanted to tend to refugees and other displaced people did so under the discursive sanctuary of humanitarianism, and modern humanitarianism includes a concern with refugees and other peoples that are forced to flee their homes because of violence. Second, the needs of refugees were not of equal concern to the alchemist and emergency camps. Specifically, alchemist agencies were much more responsive to the range of needs of refugees and other displaced peoples, while emergency agencies tended to limit their concern to moments of urgency and severe hardship. Third, because of the intimate relationship of humanitarianism and refugees, and because of the global forces that favoured alchemical humanitarianism, humanitarian organizations exhibited an impressive expansion in the kinds of populations of concern, particularly their attention to both the symptoms and causes of refugee flight. In order to illustrate this argument, I look at the humanitarianism of the UNHCR. Specifically, changes in the global environment and the international humanitarian order created the conditions for a UNHCR that was more open to an expansive definition of humanitarianism to go where few emergency agencies would.

Humanitarianism

For centuries there has existed an international humanitarian order dedicated to preserving and protecting human life. It includes: an interlocking set of norms, informal institutions, laws, and discourses that legitimate and compel various kinds of interventions to protect the world's most vulnerable populations; a surfeit of conventions and treaties that are designed to secure the fundamental right of all peoples—the right to life; a multitude of slogans and rallying cries—including 'never again' and the 'humanitarian (p. 243) imperative'—that accompany graphic and heart-wrenching photos of victims of violence; a metropolis of states, international organizations, and non-governmental organizations, some of which are dedicated to the goal of reducing suffering and others that will lend a hand under the right circumstances. These norms, laws, actors, and institutions are nestled in discourses of compassion, responsibility, and care, which, in turn, are attached to claims that the 'international community' has obligations to its weakest members. The international refugee regime, like the international humanitarian order, is comprised of various organizations, laws, and norms, including: the UNHCR and other international agencies like the Organization of International Migration, that are concerned with forced migration; non-governmental organizations such as Catholic Relief Services and Doctors Without Borders that provide relief; advocacy organizations like Human Rights Watch; activists who help to develop international refugee law; and transnational campaigns like World Refugee Year.

Humanitarianism is the attempt to alleviate the suffering of distant strangers. Typically these strangers are not our neighbours or fellow citizens but rather live in other countries. Because humanitarianism attempts to save lives at risk, action is typically urgent. Humanitarianism is also defined by several principles: humanity, the belief that all humans are equal and have inalienable rights; impartiality, the insistence that we help those who are most in need and that we do not play favourites; neutrality, the commitment to action that does not intentionally benefit or hurt one side or another; and independence, the attempt to ensure that the action is not connected to parties who have a stake in the political outcome of the emergency. We know who the humanitarians are because they act according to these principles and fulfil their duties to help distant strangers.

Although humanitarianism can be minimally understood as the attempt to relieve the suffering of distant strangers, in *The Empire of Humanity* I argue that two kinds have dominated the modern history of humanitarianism. The first, emergency humanitarianism, concerns the provision of relief to those in immediate peril, cleaves to the principles of neutrality,

impartiality, and independence, and has a hands-off attitude toward politics. Agencies that fall into this camp, including the ICRC and Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), largely focus on keeping people alive. Their ability to do so, they argue, is dependent on following these aforementioned principles, which not only define their identity but also provide the function of facilitating their access to populations at risk. If aid agencies are perceived by combatants or governments as partial, allied with a rival, or as having a vested interest in the outcome, then they will have difficulty reaching access to those in need, or worse, become enemy combatants. Best of all, these principles generate a 'humanitarian space', a sanctuary for aid workers and victims. By adhering to the minimal goal of saving lives and doing so through these principles, humanitarianism ties itself to ethics and segregates itself from politics. Humanitarianism is and should remain apolitical. One of the implications is that it focuses on the symptoms and not the causes of suffering.

Alchemical humanitarianism, on the other hand, involves saving lives at risk *and* addressing the root causes of suffering. It operates with a less binding set of principles, and treats politics as a necessary and at times even a welcome feature of humanitarian (p. 244) action. Although Henry Dunant and the ICRC are often credited with starting modern humanitarianism in the 1860s, in fact it originated decades before, with various reform movements that wanted to stop unnecessary suffering and give people an opportunity for a fuller and healthier life. These moral visionaries can be credited for the launching the world's first international humanitarian movement—the abolitionists. Today some of the best-known aid organizations, including Oxfam, Catholic Relief Services, and CARE International, reside in the alchemical camp.

Alchemical humanitarians differ from emergency humanitarians in three significant ways. They are interested in reducing immediate suffering *and* tackling the root causes of suffering. What is the point of giving someone medical treatment if, when they leave the clinic, they will starve to death because of a lack of food, or be marked for death by a death squad, a warlord, or the state's internal security services? Alchemical humanitarians want to get at the root causes of suffering and make sure that the sick have access to medicines, that the malnourished have the ability to grow and buy food, that the poor can make a living, that people can leave their houses without fear of their rights being violated or experiencing violence. One consequence of this broader ambition is that alchemical humanitarians are less devoted to the principles of neutrality and independence. In certain circumstances, principles of independence and neutrality do not help the victims of genocide, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity. If aid workers want to reduce the causes of suffering, then neutrality and independence can quickly become obstacles. Although alchemical agencies also value being perceived as apolitical, their interest in removing the causes of suffering invariably leads them to recommend interventions that redistribute power, wealth, and status, which often places them in opposition to local elites. Moreover, resource-starved agencies can and do appeal to states to intervene. Through lobbying, pleading, cajoling, and shaming, humanitarian organizations have, on occasion, persuaded states to respond to the tragedies around the world. Politics, far from being the enemy, can be a brother-in-alms. In general, while emergency and alchemical humanitarianism share a fundamental interest in eliminating unnecessary suffering, their different commitments and effects, generating dueling views of the purpose and principles of humanitarianism.

Emergency and alchemical humanitarianism also have differed in various ways over the years, including determining who, when, and how should they help. Emergency humanitarians tended to jump into action because of war, and slowly expanded their focus from soldiers to include civilians and other populations at risk. Alchemical humanitarians concluded that suffering was suffering, regardless of the cause, and that there was no principled reason to focus on soldiers before anyone else or to prefer humanly-made over natural disasters. Consequently, emergency and alchemical humanitarians have been differently disposed toward refugees. Although both are concerned with forced displacement caused by war, alchemists are more open to looking at the full range of needs required by refugees, both during and after the emergency, as well as the possible solutions to refugee flight. For various reasons global forces favoured a more expansive definition of humanitarianism, one that was closer to the characteristics of alchemical humanitarianism.

(p. 245) Humanitarianism without and with Refugees

For the first hundred years of modern humanitarianism, refugees were largely absent as a source of concern. Prior to the twentieth century states did not exert strict legal, political, and physical controls over their borders and hence for the most part people who were forced to flee their homeland had somewhere to go. Generally some form of sanctuary could be found elsewhere. In addition, because refugee flows were largely settled through ad hoc measures and did not require coordinated or permanent action, there were no international mechanisms for considering or handling refugees. Private voluntary agencies were sometimes organized to assist specific ethnic, national, or religious groups, and

sometimes states cooperated with these groups, but there was no international mechanism for assistance. Consequently, while there were charitable societies that would help specific populations, humanitarian organizations spent most of their time focused on the suffering caused by deprivation and war. The closest humanitarianism got to helping 'displaced peoples' during the nineteenth century was slavery, slave-like conditions, and forced migration in the colonized global South. But no one imagined labelling slavery as an instance of forced displacement or calling slaves 'refugees'.

It was only with the rise of nationalism and the consolidation of national states in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that governments began to introduce immigration laws, passports, and other legal and administrative barriers to entry. These changes made possible and necessary the legal category of refugee since it was only after these changes that individuals forced to flee their homes were unable to obtain citizenship or legal residence in another country.

Emerging state controls on entry set the stage for massive refugee crisis caused by the First World War. The war displaced hundreds of thousands of people, and then the Russian Revolution and the Russian famine of 1921 produced over a million Russian refugees. With millions of people unable to go home but unable to find sanctuary elsewhere, Europe faced a grave humanitarian emergency.

The First World War and its consequences produced several important developments that signalled the growing connection between humanitarianism and refugees. Refugees became a matter of international concern. At issue was not the compassionate desire to relieve the suffering of displaced peoples, but a fear that the mass movements of people was undermining peace and security. This demand to address the refugee flows was couched in terms of humanitarianism. Security-minded states and principled actors increasingly used this siren to demand action. There were various reasons to call such action humanitarian, but one of the immediate benefits was that it helped to depoliticize their assistance. In response to the demand for action and fearful of the destabilizing effects of refugees, states created their first multilateral organization to deal with (p. 246) the situation. The willingness by states to establish an organization dedicated to refugees was a remarkable innovation given the previous pattern of sustained indifference to refugees punctuated by isolated acts of charity.

Although the call to action was primed by the emergency situation of Russian refugees, many of the private voluntary agencies that got involved, and eventually the High Commissioner for Refugees (HCR), exhibited strong traces of alchemical sentiment. The relief organizations were concerned not only with the care of refugees during war but also in post-war reconstruction and providing solutions to the refugee crisis. The pull to do more was particularly evident in the case of the HCR. When states first created the HCR, it limited it to helping Russian refugees and insisted that it be a coordinating and not an operational body. Nevertheless, the first High Commissioner, the renowned Norwegian explorer Fridtjof Nansen, expanded his operations to assist refugees throughout the European region, articulating a set of refugee rights, and offering assistance that would allow refugees certain livelihoods and feel a degree of safety even though they were outside their homeland and were not granted citizenship by their host country. Nansen even went beyond helping refugees manage the long-term consequences of their displacement to try to address the root causes of specific refugee problems. In particular, he helped to oversee the permanent, compulsory, exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey which expelled and resettled nearly 500,000 people. The creation of both the HCR and the structure of the international refugee regime became a defining moment for the international humanitarian order.

The Expanding Orbit of Refugees and Humanitarianism

Beginning with the Second World War, humanitarianism and refugees entered into an increasingly co-dependent relationship. Not only did the discourse of humanitarianism accompany all efforts to manage and mitigate the suffering of refugee flows but the scope and scale of humanitarianism expanded with every new major refugee flow. The growth of humanitarianism, in turn, made it much easier to demand new forms of ministration to more displaced peoples in more circumstances than ever before. This expansion of humanitarianism and concern with refugees and those in refugee-like circumstances was made possible by an alchemical-laced humanitarianism that became more interested in addressing the root causes of suffering.

In response to the refugee crises related to the Second World War, states established a refugee convention and international organization dedicated to the care of refugees. The major powers believed that a convention was necessary in order to provide legal protection and rights for refugees, an act not only of charity but also of survival, because of their anomalous status in international law and their invisibility in national law. Refugees also needed an agency to give a voice for these peoples existing in a transnational limbo. (p. 247) States delivered a convention and agency, but these were

limited by the amputated ethics of states, state sovereignty, and the desire to stay outside of politics and within humanitarianism. These limiting factors were evident in all the key dimensions of the refugee regime. Although there were millions of displaced peoples around the world, refugees would be protected only when they crossed borders and became legally entitled to be called a refugee. And not all those who crossed a border were eligible for refugee status, only those who were fleeing because of persecution. Accordingly, those who fled because of economic hardship, political events such as international and internal wars, famines, and authoritarianism did not count. States christened UNHCR a humanitarian organization, which meant that it was supposed to stay away from politics, and most importantly, the internal affairs of states. In this regard, the UNHCR was well advised to focus on the consequences—and not the causes—of refugee flight. Relatedly, 'protection' became legal protection; UNHCR was mandated to assist refugees by identifying who was eligible, giving them documents and papers, and pushing for greater protections. In other words, because of state sensitivities and sovereignty, UNHCR was supposed to wait on the other side of a border as refugees came to them—and stay out of the internal affairs of states. The limitations of sovereignty and humanitarianism also restricted the UNHCR to the solutions it proposed to refugee flight. UNHCR's statute outlined three solutions—integration into the asylum country, resettlement to a third country, and voluntary repatriation—and UNHCR was strongly encouraged to focus on the first two to the neglect of the third, which would steer it toward the internal affairs of states.

Over the next two decades UNHCR capitalized on world events and used its growing authority to significantly extend its activities, mandate, and working definition of a refugee. Its protection mission expanded from legal assistance to include other forms of assistance, and it began to provide assistance to non-statutory refugees. States sanctioned an organizational expansion that was in their (momentary) interests. But UNHCR was not a passive beneficiary of this process and strove to establish precedents at permissive moments, most famously when it invented new mechanisms such as the 'good offices'. The 'good offices' concept allowed UNHCR to extend protection and assistance to new groups and to transform what might have been a deeply politicized issue into a humanitarian and apolitical matter. This depoliticization benefited not only refugees but also UNHCR, for the concept alerted governments that the agency was apolitical. As a consequence, 'humanitarianism' was not only part of UNHCR's identity, it also proved to be instrumentally useful, a stealth weapon in the service of organizational expansion. States might have tagged UNHCR with a humanitarian mandate as a way of limiting its activities, but UNHCR used the label to insinuate itself into new areas. Refugees were finding a place in the international humanitarian order, and humanitarianism, in turn, was involved in the process of creating new categories of people to be administered and ministered.

While UNHCR was ready to break new ground when the occasion permitted, as far as it was concerned the occasion was never right if the displaced peoples still resided in their home country. Going global did not include walking into the spaces of sovereignty. (p. 248) UNHCR remained an apolitical, emergency agency, honouring state sovereignty, waiting on the other side of the border to provide relief, and avoiding any consideration of the causes of refugee flight. For instance, when a delegation from Biafra went to Geneva in November 1967 to beg for UNHCR's assistance in helping the hundreds of thousands of displaced peoples caused by the civil war, High Commissioner Sadruddin Aga Khan unequivocally rejected any possible involvement on the grounds that Biafra was not a separate state. In a few decades, though, such an answer became nearly unthinkable.

Beginning in the late 1970s, and then accelerating with the end of the Cold War, several global developments led to a closer integration between humanitarianism and the refugee regime, and to UNHCR's more intimate association with alchemical humanitarianism and deeper involvement in the internal affairs of states. Beginning in the late 1970s both Western and Third World states began demonstrating 'refugee fatigue' and demanding that refugees go home as soon as possible. UNHCR had little choice but to play along, but it also believed that repatriation was, in principle, better and potentially more humane than the other options. The growing emphasis on repatriation led to considerable interest in the conditions in the refugee-producing country that represented an obstacle to repatriation and that caused refugee flight. Suddenly, UNHCR was moving into the internal affairs of states. UNHCR began slowly, simply escorting refugees back home to ensure that they had a 'safe and dignified' return. Then it introduced 'quick impact projects', which were designed to make it economically attractive to return and desirable to stay. After that UNHCR began to insinuate itself into the political situation of the refugees, becoming a more forceful spokesperson for the rights of minorities and peoples and keen to get at the 'root causes' of refugee flows.

A second global development was the creation of a more humanity-friendly definition of sovereignty and the rise of human rights. Although still respectful of the principle of non-interference, the emergence of human rights norms and popular sovereignty as a legitimating principle was shaping what states could not do vis-à-vis their populations and when the international community might have a right and duty to protect people at risk. States used to think of sovereignty as an

absolute right and the principle of non-interference as sacrosanct. Increasingly, though, the international community was accepting the idea that sovereignty was conditional on how states treated their populations; if they mistreated their citizens, then their sovereignty could be suspended. The effect of this development was to give the international community both a right and a near duty to get involved; the curtain was now drawn back and the UN and states were increasingly commenting on how governments treated their populations and expecting governments to do better—or else.

Human rights and popular sovereignty were not only about principles, they also were about security, which led to the third global development: a change in the patterns of war and the concern that domestic security was related to international peace and security. By 1990 UNHCR began to legitimate its involvement in the circumstances of the refugee-producing country because of the apparent link between refugee flight and threats to international peace and security.[1] This was not mere conjecture. In an age where internal conflict was leading to massive refugee flows that caused (p. 249) regional instability, and where the displacement of populations was not simply a tragic by-product of war but rather was its intended effect, there were good reasons to see refugee flows as a cause and consequence of domestic and regional turmoil. Specifically, the end of the Cold War shifted the security agenda and the ideological fault lines, and there was growing acceptance of the claim that most wars are internal wars, that internal wars occur almost exclusively occur within illiberal states, and that these internal wars can represent 'threats to international peace and security'. As a result the international community had a reason to become deeply involved in the internal affairs of states. Because of the tight relationship between conflict and refugees, UNHCR became increasingly associated with international peace and security and the new human security agenda; and its interest in reducing the causes of refugee flows, which were frequently attributed to the breakdown of security, led to a growing interest in the internal conditions of states. In addition, UNHCR also became interested in helping refugees and other displaced peoples return to their homes, which, in turn, meant trying to create the conditions for peace and stability within states; UNHCR had become an important partner in the process of post-conflict reconstruction and building legitimate states.

There was one other development that represented a combination of the desire by states to retreat on their previous commitments to the refugee regime and the new patterns of conflict: the rise of the internally displaced people as a category of concern. The post-Cold War wars were causing millions of people to flee, but states were rolling up the welcome mat and refusing to let them cross the border. The consequence was that there were more and more people who were refugees in all but name—they would qualify for refugee status if states honoured their right to seek safety in another country. If states were not going to let UNHCR set up camps to receive these refugees, then it would have to go to them. Beginning with the 1991 Iraq War and then blossoming with Bosnia, UNHCR began to bring relief to displaced peoples instead of waiting for displaced peoples to cross an international border. This also meant that a UNHCR that was already taking care of refugees and those in refugee like circumstances was becoming more open to helping displaced peoples.

As UNHCR was expanding who it wanted to help, how it wanted to help, and where it wanted to help, it was becoming more involved in politics. Consequently, it began to debate whether it could maintain its 'humanitarian' and 'apolitical' standing given its growing involvement in the affairs of the refugee-producing country. UNHCR was long aware that measures might and should be taken to reduce the factors that caused refugee movements, but its 'humanitarian' and 'non-political' character prohibited it from becoming too intrusive. But now there seemed no turning back. According to the High Commissioner, Sadako Ogata, while some championed this activist role others feared that it would compromise its 'humanitarian' work and enmesh it in political disputes. The High Commissioner preferred to find a middle ground, one that defined as 'humanitarian' any action that increased the well-being of the individual while avoiding those controversies that were highly political and best handled by states. As a consequence, humanitarian assistance could include prevention, which was always preferable to the (p. 250) cure, and the attempt to foster respect for human rights, for this would help reduce refugee flows.

This response might have caused a political uproar during the Cold War, but not afterwards. UNHCR suddenly found itself carrying out new 'humanitarian' tasks in highly unstable domestic environments. In 1991 UNHCR's Working Group on International Protection considered whether it could maintain its apolitical credentials alongside its growing involvement in the refugee-producing country. It offered four observations and conclusions. First, 'the evolution of UNHCR's role over the last forty years has demonstrated that the mandate is resilient enough to allow, or indeed require, adaptation by UNHCR to new, unprecedented challenges through new approaches, including in the areas of prevention and in-country protection'. Refugee rights, the document noted, are part and parcel of human rights; thus, UNHCR's role as protector of refugee law legitimates its growing concern for the violations of human rights that lead to refugee flows.

Second, UNHCR's humanitarian expertise and experience has, in fact, been recognized by the General Assembly as an 'appropriate basis for undertaking a range of activities not normally viewed as being within the Office's mandate.'[2] Third, 'the High Commissioner's non-political mandate requires neutrality'; but 'neutrality must be coupled with a thorough understanding of prevailing political and other realities.' Fourth, whereas once humanitarianism meant avoiding the 'political' circumstances within the home country and honouring the principle of non-interference, it soon began to include aspects of the state's internal affairs. UNHCR properly noted that it was not violating state sovereignty because it was operating with the consent of the state (except in those circumstances where there was no state to give consent), but there was little doubt that what was permissible under the 'humanitarian' label had significantly expanded.

Conclusion

When humanitarianism first came into existence in the early nineteenth century, humanitarian action was largely justified to discuss soldiers and others who needed to be saved because of extreme conditions, not refugees (in part because the legal and political category of refugees did not even exist). When refugees became a matter of international concern after the First World War, it was possible to find aid workers in areas without refugees, and refugees that did not trigger the attention of aid workers. After the Second World War states created the UNHCR as a 'humanitarian' organization to handle those populations that were forced to flee and crossed an international boundary, but refugees might be caused by various factors that had nothing to do with the kinds of circumstances that would trigger humanitarian action, i.e. individuals fleeing the Soviet Union for Europe, and there were situations of clear humanitarian (p. 251) urgency that did not grab the attention of officials from refugee agencies, i.e. Biafra in 1968.

Since the end of the Cold War, though, refugees and humanitarianism have become so closely associated that it is nearly impossible to imagine a situation in which one might exist without the other. One reason for this convergence is because of the patterns of conflict and other developments that have occurred since the end of the Cold War. But these 'objective' factors do not capture the crux of the matter: the world now thinks about humanitarianism and refugees in broader terms, and their mutual broadening is largely responsible for their meeting. Humanitarianism, at least according to the International Committee of the Red Cross, used to be limited to soldiers and to times of war; however, the international community now operates with a much broader definition of humanitarianism, including nearly all people who need to be lifted from conditions of immediate and long-term threats to their survival. Part of the reason why the international community decided to widen the definition of humanitarianism was because there were situations of mass displacement that needed attention but that did not quite meet the more narrow definition of humanitarianism. Likewise, the international community used to operate with a fairly narrow definition of refugees, but has since decided that nearly all displaced peoples, regardless of the reasons why they feel the need to leave their homes, should be a subject of international concern. And the international community has used the language of humanitarianism to justify its involvement, and to make it easier to protect these displaced peoples without becoming entangled in politics. Refugees have been good for humanitarianism, and humanitarianism has been good for refugees.

Refugees and humanitarianism are likely to continue to form a mutual aid society, at least if the agendas of the UNHCR and the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) are indicators. The UNHCR is increasingly interested in circumstances that cause mass movement for any reason, and it is nearly impossible to imagine a situation of mass movement that is not caused by events or developments that would not fit a contemporary definition of humanitarianism. UNHCR used to limit itself to those peoples who were forced to flee and cross an international border, but now it involves itself with internally displaced peoples of all kinds and 'people on the move'. UNHCR used to limit itself to situations of violence and persecution, but increasingly is becoming interested in conditions of flight triggered by climate change and natural disasters. UNHCR used to largely work in rural areas and working in large camps, but increasingly it is present in urban areas and working in more scattered surroundings. Although OCHA is just a child when compared to the relatively seasoned UNHCR, it has come a long way since its birth in 1998, and so, too, has a very broad understanding of what counts as a cause for humanitarian action. The UNHCR and OCHA work closely together, and it is increasingly difficult to imagine a situation that might arouse the concern of one but not the other.

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(1) . UNHCR 1990: 7.

(2) . UNHCR 1992: 4.

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