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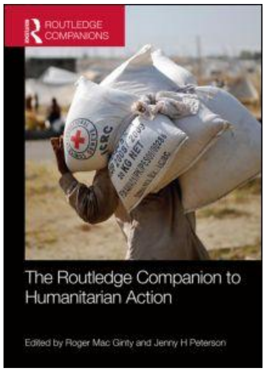

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Regional Humanitarian Organizations

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REGIONAL HUMANITARIAN ORGANIZATIONS

Susanna Campbell and Stephanie Hofmann

Introduction

In the past two decades, regional intergovernmental organizations have become increasingly important humanitarian actors, each in their own way. Each regional organization is developing a type of humanitarianism that aligns with its evolving institutional mandate and capacities. Some regional organizations focus on *humanitarian intervention*, or the deployment of military forces that aim to stabilize or end escalating (internationalized) civil war by defending and protecting affected civilians or providing the security necessary to deliver relief supplies to inaccessible areas.[1] Other regional organizations, or separate units of the same regional organization, focus on the provision and coordination of *humanitarian assistance*, which aims to save lives and rebuild livelihoods through the delivery of goods and services via civilian capacities rather than military ones (Cha 2002).

Humanitarian intervention by regional organizations elicits an image of soldiers deployed in countries ravaged by conflict where the UN did not have the political will or the capacity to intervene. The deployment of multinational peacekeeping forces by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in Liberia (1990, 2003), Sierra Leone (1997) and, most recently, Mali, are examples. The European Union's (EU) *Operation Artemis* in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (2003) and the European Union Force (EUFOR) Chad/Central African Republic (2008) are others. Regional organizations are increasingly embracing this temporary gap filling, war fighting or 'bridgehead' role (ECOWAS 2008: para. 24) in humanitarian intervention.

Humanitarian assistance by regional organizations, on the other hand, ranges from the allocation of humanitarian aid by the world's largest humanitarian donor, the EU (with its member states), to a coordination and information-gathering role focused on disaster preparedness and response. In 2012, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) created the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management (AHA Centre) to monitor indicators of natural disasters and coordinate responses in Southeast Asia, the site of many recent natural disasters such as Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines. The political instability in the wake of 9/11 and the crises in the Middle East and North Africa have also mobilized other regional organizations, such as the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation

(OIC), which has provided humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan, Somalia, Pakistan and other countries with significant Muslim populations.

Because of the diversity of their approaches, it is difficult to provide a concise description of a stereotypical regional humanitarian organization. In this chapter we therefore engage in a discussion of the similarities and differences between regional humanitarian organizations and consider how these are manifest in several concrete organizations. We conclude with a framework for understanding regional humanitarianism based on the differences in these organizations' mandates and capacities.

What is 'humanitarianism'?

Humanitarianism is most simply defined as 'the desire to relieve the suffering of distant strangers' (Barnett 2009: 622).[2] This suffering can be caused by natural disasters, disease epidemics, inter- or intra-state war, other political crises or any combination of the above. International actors usually engage in humanitarianism when the host state alone is not capable of alleviating the suffering of its people or stabilizing the political context. Humanitarianism can be carried out with civilian or military means, each potentially undermining the other (Barnett and Weiss 2011: 74–79). For example, the distribution of relief supplies by civilians in humanitarian crises, when done without attention to how it plays into the local political economy, can exacerbate violent conflict (Terry 2002). At the same time, the intervention of military personnel to halt a violent conflict or mass atrocity can cause significant 'collateral damage' by destroying people's lives and livelihoods. In these ways, humanitarianism is inextricably connected to international security.

As a result, regional organizations' humanitarian role is embedded within the debate about the UN Security Council's predominance in maintaining international peace and security. Regional organizations are one type of actor, among others, that challenge the UN's role as the primary guarantor of international peace and security. The ongoing nature of these debates gives regional organizations the freedom to define their own type of 'humanitarianism', which can generally be classified as humanitarian intervention and/or humanitarian assistance.

Humanitarian intervention is

> the use of force *across state borders* by a state (or group of states) aimed at preventing or ending widespread and grave violations of the fundamental human rights of individuals other than its own citizens, *without the permission of the government of the state within whose territory force is applied*.
>
> *(Holzgrefe and Keohane, 2003: 18; see also Cha 2002; Farer 2003)*[3]

Humanitarian interventions most often respond to suffering caused by political crises. Chapter VII of the UN Charter regulates humanitarian intervention at large, while humanitarian intervention by regional organizations is described in Chapter VIII of the UN Charter.

Humanitarianism may also be understood in terms of humanitarian assistance – to address the human suffering resulting from a political crisis and/or a natural disaster. Some organizations do humanitarian assistance through the provision of short-term relief supplies – temporary shelters, emergency food aid, emergency water, sanitation supplies, etc. – while others aim to address the cause of the suffering by 'transforming the structural conditions that endanger populations' with longer-term interventions (Barnett and Weiss 2008: 3).[4] Barnett (2009: 625) refers to the former category of organization as 'emergency' humanitarian organizations that 'limit their purpose to relief' without trying to prevent suffering from happening again. He describes the latter category as 'alchemic' organizations because they aim to 'eliminate the causes of suffering' through longer-term, more transformative programming (Barnett 2009: 625). Many regional organizations aim to be both 'emergency' and 'alchemic' organizations.

A regional humanitarian organization: Legal and practical aspects

There are both legal and political dimensions to the conceptualization of regional humanitarian organizations. The authors of the UN Charter were aware that organizations that had been active in their respective regions were hesitant to bring their actions under UN command.[5] In an attempt to reduce the possible fragmentation of a global peace and security regime, they wrote Chapter VIII of the Charter.

> Nothing in the present Charter precludes the existence of regional arrangements or agencies for dealing with such matters relating to the maintenance of international peace and security as are appropriate for regional action provided that such arrangements or agencies and their activities are consistent with the Purposes and Principles of the United Nations.
>
> *(UN Charter, Chapter VIII, Article 52)*

Chapter VIII goes on to allow regional organizations to use force with a UN Security Council mandate (UN Charter, Chapter VIII, Article 53). That is, in all military matters, the UN insists on a legal hierarchy in which action can only take place after the UN has authorized it. In practice, there are several exceptions to this rule, including humanitarian interventions by NATO in Kosovo in 1999 or ECOWAS in Liberia in 2003 and Côte D'Ivoire in 2002, which the UN Security Council only authorized after the interventions had taken place (Security Council Report, 18 September 2006, available online at: www.securitycouncilreport.org/update-report/lookup-c-glKWLeMTIsG-b-2071503.php). ECOWAS, in fact, does not defer to the UN Security Council when authorizing humanitarian interventions, but instead promises to 'inform the United Nations of any military intervention undertaken in pursuit of the objectives' of its *Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping, and Security* (ECOWAS Protocol 1999: Chapter 9, Article 52). And, even when a Security Council mandate exists, once the UN has delegated the task to a regional organization, it does not oversee or monitor its implementation.

In matters of humanitarian assistance, Chapter VIII allows regional organizations (or 'arrangements and agencies') to act on their own, without recourse to the Security Council. This type of action by regional organizations is also justified with Articles 55 and 56 of the UN Charter, which call on UN member states to 'take joint and separate action in cooperation with the Organization' to create 'conditions of stability and well-being which are necessary for peaceful and friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples' (UN Charter, Chapter IX, Articles 55 and 56; see also Cha 2002: 138).[6]

While Chapter VIII of the UN Charter defines the UN's relationship with regional organizations, it does not provide a legal definition of these regional 'arrangements and agencies'. It is up to the organizations to decide whether they qualify under Chapter VIII. Consequently, some organizations classify themselves as 'regional arrangements' while others do not identify with the UN's conceptualization of regional organizations (Security Council Report, 18 September 2006, available online at: www.securitycouncilreport.org/update-report/lookup-c-glKWLeMTIsG-b-2071503.php). NATO, for example, chooses not to fall under the UN's definition of regional organizations and instead insists on being an alliance, leading to debate as to whether Chapter VIII applies to it (Henrikson 1996). In practice, these legal debates do not prevent NATO from responding to UN Security Council resolutions that ask regional organizations to take on the task of so-called humanitarian interventions.

While not all potential regional organizations choose to classify themselves as regional arrangements under Chapter VIII, most of them qualify conceptually as regional organizations. Regional organizations are international organizations whose membership – though not necessarily their activities – is constrained to particular regional boundaries. These regional boundaries are not static. They can change as the political and cultural conceptualization of its members and membership is redefined (Katzenstein 2005; Acharya 2007). The EU, for example, has increased its membership over time – redefining the European region in the process (Hofmann and Mérand 2012). The Africa Union (AU), on the other hand, incorporates all African states but Morocco and perceives its membership as more or less fixed. A regional humanitarian organization hence is characterized through its constrained membership and the type of humanitarianism that it pursues – humanitarian assistance and/or intervention.

A regional humanitarian organization: Political aspects

Regional organizations are often more overtly political than many other actors engaged in humanitarian intervention and assistance. As opposed to some humanitarian NGOs, not all regional organizations apply a strict impartiality principle. Instead, they commonly take sides when intervening to save or defend lives – and ideals. This approach differs from actors such as Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) or the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) who insist that impartiality and neutrality are necessary to maintain their access to the most vulnerable populations. Furthermore, regional organizations have not engaged in the same type of soul searching about their humanitarian intervention or assistance as have the UN and many humanitarian organizations. This is partly because some humanitarian NGOs and parts of the UN derive their power and legitimacy from humanitarian ideals, which leads them to insist on a particular definition of humanitarianism that embodies these norms (Barnett and Finnemore 2004: 22).

Regional humanitarian organizations do not have the same type of allegiance to international humanitarian or security norms, nor do they necessarily have to justify their actions in relation to them. Regional organizations are more powerful in the traditional sense of power and can therefore redefine 'humanitarianism' to their liking in a particular crisis situation. In several cases, humanitarian interventions by regional organizations have been criticized for being focused primarily on political goals, and not on the humanitarian aim of alleviating human suffering. When there is violent conflict and/or natural disaster, regional organizations can decide who, if anyone, merits being saved or defended.

Although the UN and states experiencing humanitarian crises have increasingly called for intervention and assistance by regional organizations, and although regional organizations' involvement in humanitarian intervention and assistance has increased over time, not all interventions by regional humanitarian organizations are grounded in the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and operational independence. The UN and states experiencing a humanitarian crisis rely on regional organizations not only because they may have decision-making structures that outpace those of the UN, enabling them to respond quickly to urgent needs (Bellamy and Williams 2005), but also because geographic and/or cultural proximity may give them intricate and comprehensive knowledge of the country that is in need of intervention or assistance (Adebajo 2002: 16; Kenkel 2010; United Nations Secretary General 1992).

This proximity also carries potential liabilities. Member states involved in the intervention may have their own political agenda in the country in which they are intervening, undermining any pretense of political neutrality, impartiality or operational independence (Adebajo 2002: 16), while at the same time using the 'humanitarian' label to justify their intervention. Furthermore, just as geographic proximity may lead to some cultural similarities, it may also result in cultural differences and material rivalries that can be played out in regional organizations and lead to humanitarian intervention for political ends. But, as the ECOWAS case study below illustrates, the geographic proximity of regional humanitarian organizations to a humanitarian crisis can make it much more difficult for these organizations to ignore bubbling crises and can, at times, impel them to respond much more quickly and forcefully than the UN, particularly in the area of international peace and security.

Even regional organizations' responses to crises that are labeled as natural disasters can have important political dimensions. The disaster risk reduction community argues that 'there is no such thing as a natural disaster, only natural hazards': natural hazards have to be managed by effective governance and international response systems.[7] In other words, the ability of national and international actors to prevent natural disaster relies on the strength and resilience of political institutions. In the face of weak political institutions, natural hazards are more likely to turn into natural disasters and elicit humanitarian responses from regional and international actors. Furthermore, as the crises in Sri Lanka and Aceh, Indonesia, show us, political crises can coalesce with natural hazards and spur significant political violence. But, the degree to which regional humanitarian organizations are willing and able to intervene, either in response to natural disasters or political crises, in a way that may compromise the sovereignty of the host state varies greatly from one regional organization to the next, as is demonstrated by the case studies of ECOWAS, the EU, and ASEAN below.

The different faces of humanitarian regional organizations: Institutional mandate and institutional capacity

There is no single manifestation of regional humanitarianism, but its variation can be understood by analysing two core elements of an organization's institutional design: institutional mandate and institutional capacities.[8] Before we explain these two dimensions, however, it is important to note that humanitarian action was not always part of regional organizations' mandates. While most scholars working in the tradition of institutional design focus on member states' preferences and intentions in creating and maintaining a particular institutional design (Keohane 1988; Koremenos et al. 2001), we draw attention to the fact that most regional organizations were not initially designed to be humanitarian actors but have evolved in this direction. They were created to use military means to support state security or to support development and create economic prosperity in particular (sub) regions. But, especially since the end of the Cold War, regional organizations have expanded into the domain of humanitarianism – both via military and civilian capacities. They have evolved and transformed into important humanitarian actors, altering their mandates and building their capacities to save and defend the lives of the innocents threatened either by a natural disaster or civil (internationalized) conflict. The EU, for example, initially began as an organization that aimed to support economic integration, but has become the biggest donor of humanitarian aid and is building an important multinational capacity for rapid military intervention. ECOWAS, on the other hand, was founded to establish a regional economic and monetary union in West Africa, but has made little progress in this area. Instead, ECOWAS has become Africa's most experienced peacekeeper, if still lacking important capacities.

Regional organizations have their own mandates (anchored in their constitutive treaties and practices) and capacities (i.e. budget, troops, equipment and expertise) that help to determine their type of organizational humanitarianism. Table 16.1 describes the variation in regional organizations along these two dimensions. The horizontal axis indicates whether the organization's mandate prioritizes humanitarian intervention or humanitarian assistance. Some organizations (or sub-organizations) insist on humanitarian assistance or aid as the main response to humanitarian crises while others stress the promotion of security and life-saving through military means.

As regional organizations spend more time in the humanitarian business, some of them have built up both civilian and military capacities and are working to integrate these approaches under one common policy, following in the UN's footsteps (Metcalfe et al. 2011; Campbell and Kaspersen 2008). For example, even though the EU initially had a much stronger civilian humanitarian capacity in the form of the European Community Humanitarian Office (Echo), its military approach has grown with the increasing acceptance of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). This focus on an integrated military and civilian approach to humanitarianism raises new issues for regional organizations: how can they ensure that the blurring of civilian and military lines does not put the lives of their staff and their humanitarian assistance mandate at risk?

The vertical axis in Table 16.1 distinguishes between whether the organization has sufficient capacity to engage in its preferred form of humanitarianism or whether it depends on other states or organizations for support. To intervene in a humanitarian crisis, a regional organization must have financial and material resources. Some organizations' member states provide sufficient funding and capacity for both humanitarian assistance and humanitarian intervention. Here, the EU is the most obvious case.[9] Other regional organizations lack financial means and/or material resources to fulfill their humanitarian aims. They rely on wealthier states or regional organizations for the resources necessary to implement their version of humanitarianism.

Some regional organizations' dependence on wealthier states and organizations influences when and how they engage in humanitarian assistance or intervention. The sustainability of these organizations' humanitarianism depends on another organization or on non-member states that might have a different outlook on the crisis in question. For example, the AU asked both the EU and NATO to provide helicopters to fly people in and out of Darfur to support its humanitarian intervention there – the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS II). ECOWAS has depended on external donors to fund approximately 25 per cent of its budget.[10] ASEAN relies on non-member states and other organizations, in addition to its member states, to build the capacity of its new AHA Centre as well as its member state capacity to prevent and respond to natural disasters.[11] As a result, ASEAN's capacity to carry out humanitarian assistance is at least partly dependent on the capacity of non-member states.

The four categories of regional organizations listed in Table 16.1 illustrate the potential variation in their approach to humanitarianism both in conceptual and practical terms. Regional organizations with sufficient capacity to support their humanitarian ambitions can engage in humanitarian intervention within their member states and outside and provide humanitarian

Table 16.1 Categories of regional humanitarian organizations

	Humanitarian intervention	*Humanitarian assistance*
Autarkic	CSDP (EU)	Echo (EU)
Dependent	ECOWAS	ASEAN

assistance globally. Regional organizations with insufficient capacity to fulfill their humanitarian ambitions can do important work in the area of humanitarian intervention and humanitarian assistance, but may have less control over the sustainability or exact form of these efforts. However, regional organizations that receive funding from external donors may be able to use these funds to increase their capacity and that of their member states over the longer term (Matshiqi 2012). Below, we discuss regional organizations' approaches to humanitarianism through the lens of three regional organizations that represent a typical case of each of these approaches.

The European Union

The European Union is a comprehensive regional organization in which European states have come together to work on many different policy domains. What began as an organization of six states has increased to one of 28 (as of July 2013). These states have – with time – included both humanitarian assistance and humanitarian intervention mandates to their institutional design. In addition, the EU has both military and civilian means at its disposal to fulfill such a broad institutional mandate.[12] Different actors within the EU have taken on different humanitarian mandates, which has at times created tension among these actors. While the international community is currently figuring out how to implement integrated approaches to the maintenance of peace and security (including humanitarian action), the EU example shows that, even within one single organization, it is at times hard to create a working relationship between different sections that all claim a particular interpretation of 'humanitarian' based on their capabilities and institutional mandate.[13]

Member states, in conjunction with the European External Action Service (EEAS), initiate and conduct humanitarian interventions via CSDP – an institutional branch of the organization that has been operational since 2003. Under this umbrella, and often with the crucial impetus of powerful member states such as France, the EU has intervened in more than 20 conflict situations, although it has not used military force in all cases. The EU engages in humanitarian intervention both to protect civilians and to secure the delivery of humanitarian assistance (TEU Title V, Chapter 2, Articles 42–46[14]). The EU is autarkic in conducting these small- to medium-sized operations as it has recourse to EU and earmarked national military and police capacities.[15] The EU is hesitant to intervene in acute crisis situations because it does not want battle deaths and is afraid, as a young institution in a new arena, of being framed as a failure (Gross 2009; Kurowska and Tallis 2009).

The EU also delivers humanitarian assistance independent of humanitarian intervention. Here, the European Commission is the main actor. The European Commission has been involved in the humanitarian assistance arena mostly via its Echo since 1992. Echo funds humanitarian action that is implemented through partner relief organizations (NGOs, UN agencies and the ICRC). In doing so, Echo has increasingly protected the 'humanitarian' label as referring only to humanitarian assistance, resulting in the signature of a 'European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid' in December 2007. This consensus is an effort to distinguish EU humanitarian assistance from so-called EU humanitarian interventions by insisting that the two are unrelated and that all EU humanitarian aid is distributed based on the principles of impartiality and neutrality. In other words, Echo aims to avoid the blurring of the lines between humanitarian civilian and military tasks whenever possible. It is too early to say whether we are moving towards a lasting consensus over the humanitarian label within the EU. For now, and as the 'consensus' document demonstrates, the 'humanitarian' label has lost currency among EU member states, replaced by the discussion of the Responsibility to Protect (Badescu and Weiss

2010; Barnett and Weiss 2011: 82–87). As a result, the internal turf wars over who is responsible for humanitarianism have diminished. The European Commission has, for the moment, succeeded in claiming the label more and more for itself. And EU member states as well as the EEAS almost exclusively make reference to 'crisis management', while still interpreting it as being motivated for humanitarian reasons.

ECOWAS

Borne in the wake of decolonization, ECOWAS has become the most active sub-regional organization in Africa. It has repeatedly engaged in humanitarian intervention. ECOWAS has established itself as a robust regional actor in peace operations, able to act quickly when the UN, Western states and even the AU, are not willing or able to do so. Its 2008 *Conflict Prevention Framework* describes ECOWAS's humanitarian interventions as a 'bridgehead for the subsequent deployment of larger UN peacekeeping and international humanitarian missions' (ECOWAS 2008: para. 24). It thereby depends in part on training and financial resources from non-member states and other organizations.

In spite of its acclaimed role in regional peace operations, ECOWAS was not founded as a regional security organization. ECOWAS was created by 15 West African states[16] in 1975 to establish a regional economic and monetary union. But, the outbreak of the first civil war in Liberia in 1989 catapulted ECOWAS toward regional security. In response to the fact that 'thousands of their own nationals were trapped in Liberia and tens of thousands of refugees had fled to neighboring countries' ECOWAS launched its first peace operation in Liberia in August 1990, called the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) (Human Rights Watch 1993). ECOWAS member states indicated that the effect of the Liberian conflict on their own citizens and resources meant that it no longer qualified as an internal conflict (Human Rights Watch 1993). In spite of the continuing lack of formal authorization for intervention in the internal security affairs of its member states, ECOWAS launched a similar operation in Sierra Leone in 1997.

It formalized its institutional mandate to intervene in the affairs of its member states with the signature of the *Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution Peacekeeping, and Security* in December 1999. And it was in part the distrust that ECOWAS member states had in the UN Security Council to respond to their crises that led them to indicate that they would *inform* the UN of its military interventions, in line with Chapters VII and VIII of the UN Charter, but would not await a mandate from the UN Security Council recognizing the authority of these missions (ECOWAS 1999: Article 52; Adebajo and International Peace Academy 2002). Over the subsequent decade, ECOWAS repeatedly demonstrated its willingness to use the military capacity of its member states, and particularly of Nigeria, to intervene in other member states for humanitarian ends. ECOWAS launched subsequent peace operations in Guinea Bissau (2002), Côte d'Ivoire (2002), a second mission in Liberia (2003), and, most recently, in Mali (2013) as the African Led International Support Mission to Mali (AFLISMA).

In 2008, ECOWAS established its *ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework* to enable the transformation of 'the region from an "ECOWAS of States" into an "ECOWAS of the Peoples"' and the prioritization of supranationality over sovereignty and human security over regime security (ECOWAS 2008: para. 4). This new framework also established the ECOWAS Standby Force made up of military, police and civilian units from its member states with a rapid deployment capability that can be on the ground within 14 days.[17] ECOWAS's mandate fills the need that its member states' militaries had some capacity to support (Adebajo and International Peace Academy 2002).

While these institutional capacities are important steps in building up ECOWAS' overall capacity to send soldiers and police to halt the escalation of civil wars in West Africa when no other international actor is willing to do so, it depends on the resources of non-member states and other organizations, such as the EU, to operate and train and equip some of its forces. Its latest operation in Mali is just one example where ECOWAS had to ask the international community, and the EU in particular, for a grant. The EU henceforth granted €76 million to the West African organization while 'ensuring the fund is managed in line with EU procedures'.[18]

In contrast to the area of humanitarian intervention, ECOWAS does not possess a regional comparative advantage in humanitarian assistance. ECOWAS has tried to expand into humanitarian assistance, as part of an overall focus on human, as opposed to state, security. It envisions its increasing focus on human security as a way to bridge its founding aim of supporting the 'economic and social development of the peoples' with its more developed capacity 'to manage and resolve internal and inter-State conflicts' (ECOWAS 2008: para. 36). Nonetheless, ECOWAS possesses relatively little capacity to provide emergency humanitarian assistance, much less engage in more time-consuming post-conflict peacebuilding activities, which Barnett (2009: 625) would classify as transformative humanitarianism. Though member states recently budgeted US$15 million – not least under EU pressure[19] – to provide relief to refugees and internally displaced from the 2012 coup in Mali, ECOWAS's capacity in the area of humanitarian assistance still remains weak compared with its track record in humanitarian intervention.[20] ECOWAS's current capacity and focus emphasize its role as provider of regional security that complements, rather than replaces, humanitarian intervention and assistance by the UN, NGOs, bilateral donors and even regional civil society.

ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management

The 2004 Sumatran tsunami and other recent natural disasters in Southeast Asia as well as the political transformation and civil war taking place in the Middle East and North Africa have spurred a new focus on humanitarian assistance by regional organizations in Asia and the Middle East.[21] For example, in 2012, ASEAN created the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management (AHA Centre). In terms of institutional mandate, the AHA Centre focuses on monitoring early indicators of natural disasters and coordinating concerted responses among member states, the UN and other international organizations and non-governmental organizations.[22] The AHA Centre is mandated to respond only when the country affected by the disaster is unable to respond and directly requests ASEAN's assistance. It plays a relatively confined role that is designed not to challenge the sovereignty or authority of its member states. As a result, it does not have significant institutional capacity of its own but relies on the capacity of its member states and external actors to manage and respond to disasters or other humanitarian crises. ASEAN's dependence on member state capacity may provide part of the explanation for its slow response to the devastation caused by Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines in November 2013. In spite of the fact that the AHA Centre was established to address exactly this type of natural hazard, key member states 'expressed some frustration that ASEAN's response was materializing more slowly than that from extra-regional countries'.[23]

Conclusion

Regional governmental organizations are increasingly active in saving innocent lives and defending humanitarian and human rights principles. Spurred by the growing global demand for humanitarian intervention and assistance (Barnett and Weiss 2011), they have become particularly prominent humanitarian actors over the past two decades. Today, a regional organization, the EU (with its member states), is the biggest donor of humanitarian aid worldwide. Another regional organization, ECOWAS, has become a crucial regional actor in humanitarian intervention in West Africa. ECOWAS has developed important capacity and mechanisms to intervene when and where the UN is not willing or able to deploy a peace operation.

Regional organizations have built their capacity in humanitarian intervention and/or humanitarian assistance, although many of them still rely directly or indirectly on non-member states and other organizations for financial and technical support. On the one hand, this dependence allows regional organizations to increase their capacity with resources from beyond their membership, which in turn strengthen their standing. On the other hand, the reliance on external donors inhibits regional organizations' capacity to define and implement their humanitarian ambitions solely in terms of their member state's preferences and mandate.

Most regional organizations are close to the relevant humanitarian crises, both in terms of geographic location and in terms of cultural attributes that can be essential for successful interventions. Furthermore, they often have smaller decision-making structures, enabling them to deploy more quickly. They do not have the veneer of being neutral humanitarian organizations, nor do they claim to be neutral or impartial. Echo might be an exception to the rule as it is trying to carve out its realm of responsibility independent of the political whims of 28 resource-rich member states. Overall, regional organizations are often more overtly political humanitarian actors – pursuing the specific interests of their member states. Will an increased capacity in both humanitarian assistance and humanitarian intervention soften their political stance?

If regional organizations attempt to build their capacity both for humanitarian assistance and intervention, they will face the same dilemmas of integration that are facing the UN. Humanitarian intervention and assistance do not fit nicely under the same political strategy. In their purest form, one uses military means to enforce a negative peace while the other aims to distinguish itself from military and political concerns so that it can provide impartial life-saving assistance to the most vulnerable humans.

The development of each regional organization's specific approach to humanitarianism also carries inherent risks. Regional governmental organizations share the characteristic that policy is formulated in headquarters with the input from member states and often will little sustained feedback from the ground (Martens et al. 2008; Campbell 2011). In the absence of regular feedback, emphasis on each organization's particular humanitarian template might increase the standardization of the organization's actions, but may reduce the capacity of the regional organization to respond to a rapidly evolving humanitarian context. As regional organizations become more professional humanitarian actors, they need to be attentive to the risks of professionalization. Increased professionalization and corresponding bureaucratization of humanitarian assistance or intervention can remove one of the key advantages held by some regional organizations: their proximity to the humanitarian crisis and supposed ability to respond more quickly, with potentially more sustained involvement, and possibly with greater cultural sensitivity.[24]

Notes

1. We build on the helpful conceptual distinction made by Cha (2002) between humanitarian intervention and humanitarian assistance.
2. For a more general discussion on the definition and conceptualization of humanitarianism see Barnett and Weiss (2011).
3. The term 'humanitarian intervention' has received much criticism throughout its existence. Traditional humanitarian actors such as the ICRC have complained that concepts traditionally associated with humanitarianism such as neutrality and impartiality are not properly implemented. This debate has contributed to the renewed interested in defining and justifying military intervention under Chapter VII. At its current stage, the international community at large is moving away from the term 'humanitarian intervention' towards 'responsibility to protect' (Badescu and Weiss 2010; Barnett and Weiss 2011: 82–87). However, for the purpose of this chapter, we acknowledge the existence of this debate but do not delve into it.
4. These longer-term interventions, in the way that Barnett (2009) and Barnett and Weiss (2008) describe them, are akin to peacebuilding and conflict prevention work that aims to address the potential causes of the conflict or crisis and build infrastructures that can prevent the re-emergence of violent conflict.
5. At the time, Chapter VIII was a concession to Latin American states that saw the validity of their regional arrangements threatened by the UN.
6. Specifically, Article 55 of the UN Charter calls on the United Nations to promote higher standards of living, full employment, and conditions of economic and social progress and development; solutions of international economic, social, health, and related problems; and international cultural and educational cooperation; and universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion.
7. The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR), 'What is Disaster Risk Reduction?' Available online at: www.unisdr.org/who-we-are/what-is-drr (accessed 6 January 2014).
8. Another interesting dimension that distinguishes regional humanitarian organizations is their range of responsibility. Some regional organizations, such as the AU and ECOWAS, intervene in response to humanitarian crises *within* their membership. Others, such as NATO and the EU, respond to humanitarian crises *outside* their membership.
9. Even the EU relied on NATO assets and capabilities for some of its operations in its early years as a military actor (Hofmann 2009).
10. 'ECOWAS Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, Peace-keeping and Security', The Observation and Monitoring Centre, ECOWAS Commission. Available online at: http://aros.trustafrica.org/index.php/ECOWAS_Mechanism_for_Conflict_Prevention,_Management_and_Resolution,_Peace-Keeping_and_Security (accessed 22 July 2013).
11. United States Mission to ASEAN, 'U.S. Supported System Brings a New Era in ASEAN Disaster Management and Response', Press Release, 10 January 2013. Available online at: http://asean.usmission.gov/pr01102013.html (accessed 22 July 2013).
12. NATO has been active in humanitarian intervention before CSDP came into being and hence it was CSDP that encroached on NATO turf. However, it is the EU's elaborate capacities for humanitarian assistance that makes it the more comprehensive humanitarian actor.
13. The EU shares this problem with the UN (Campbell and Kaspersen 2008).
14. Available online at: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/JOHtml.do?uri=OJ:C:2007:306:SOM:EN:HTML.
15. For example, the EU has earmarked five national military headquarters that can be multinatlionalized for EU purposes. In addition, the EU has developed two force structures – the European Rapid Reaction Force and the EU Battle groups – based on which the EU can intervene abroad.
16. Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo.
17. 'Elections and Violence in West Africa: Can ECOWAS Peacekeepers Help?', *Spotlight*, Washington, DC: Stimson Center, 12 May 2011. Available online at: www.stimson.org/spotlight/elections-and-violence-in-west-africa-can-ecowas-peacekeepers-help/ (accessed 22 July 2013); Chris Agbambu, 'ECOWAS Standby Force: Protecting the Sub-region from Self-Destruction', *Nigerian Tribune*, 11 May 2010. Available online at: http://tribune.com.ng/index.php/features/5174--ecowas-standby-force-protecting-the-sub-region-from-self-destruction (accessed 22 July 2013).
18. ECOWAS press release no. 095/2013. Available online at: http://news.ecowas.int/presseshow.php?nb=095&lang=en&annee=2013.

19. ECOWAS press release no. 095/2013. Available online at: http://news.ecowas.int/presseshow.php?nb=095&lang=en&annee=2013.
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21. The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), composed of 57 states in four different continents, is also becoming a player in humanitarian assistance. It is delivering humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan, Somalia, Pakistan and other countries with significant Muslim populations.
22. 'About – AHA Centre: ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management'. Available online at: www.ahacentre.org (accessed 22 July 2013).
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24. Whether or not all regional organizations are more sensitive to cultural particularities is open to debate (and further research).

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