THE EU AND HUMANITARIAN ACTION: BREAKING DOWN BOUNDARIES!

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Abstract

This paper explores EU processes of integrating humanitarian institutions, organizations and actors across Europe; their impact on humanitarian space and actors outside the Union, and the dynamics of such on EU states such as Ireland. With the creation of the EEC/EU it has consistently promoted eradication of internal boundaries, and fostered dynamics of building EU relationships with third party states; reinventing maps of Europe and perceptions. Programs and projects have been established that aim at strategically influencing various contexts outside EU territory in which the Union seeks to be involved as an entity; for instance in the sphere of humanitarian space with ECHO (European Commission Humanitarian Office) and EUROPEAID. New interconnections between inner and outer spheres of the Union have been built impacting on people and places. This is creating and reinforcing transnational partnerships at various levels, including EU and national administrations, associations, NGOs and citizens. Geographers are contributing to these processes.

Keywords: Humanitarian, Action, EU, ECHO.

1. INTRODUCTION

Analysing human-physical environmental relationships, Geography is fundamental to humanitarian space and action. The main categories of humanitarian disasters include: Natural, Human-made, Technological, and Complex, with the latter being combinations of the former three. A major problematic is how perspectives on humanitarian action must be made more explicit in Geography in education, training and media.

In order to analyse EU processes of integrating humanitarian institutions, organizations and actors across Europe and their impact on humanitarian space and actors outside the Union, along with the dynamics of such on EU states such as Ireland, cogniscence must be taken of processes that the EU has promoted in eradicating internal boundaries and fostering relationships with third party states outside EU territory. Essentially, the conceptual framework of this paper defines humanitarian action and crises; the humanitarian action responses of governments, agencies and citizens as exemplified by EU/ECHO; EU dynamics in relation to centripetal - centrifugal forces integrating humanitarian institutions, organizations and actors; contrastive case study material for a donor state like Ireland and recipient country, Haiti; and possible geographical and map networks.

1.1 Basic concepts

Humanitarianism is a belief in the duty to help human beings, a philosophical belief holding that it is a human being's duty to improve the lives of others. A humanitarian crisis or disaster is an event or series of events, which represents a critical threat to the health, safety, security, or wellbeing of a community or other large group of people, usually over a wide area. Armed conflict, epidemics, famine, and natural and technological disasters and other major emergencies may all involve or lead to a humanitarian crisis. Humanitarian assistance is action taken by governments, agencies or citizens aimed at saving lives, alleviating suffering and maintaining human dignity of people in need. This is driven by principles of humanitarianism, impartiality, neutrality and independence. It covers both humanitarian action and assistance, the former being the protection of civilians and provision of vital services by aid agencies during and after disasters, while the latter pertains to the provision of funding or in-kind services (including logistics or transport) in response to humanitarian crises usually through humanitarian agencies or government of the affected country.

1.2 Categorizing humanitarian crises

There is no simple categorization of humanitarian crises. Different communities and agencies tend to have definitions related to the concrete situations they face. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) list categories which include different types of natural disasters, technological disasters (i.e. hazardous material spills, Chernobyl-type of nuclear accidents, chemical explosions) and long-term man-made disasters related to civil strife, civil war and international war. Internationally, the humanitarian response sector has tended to distinguish between natural disasters and complex emergencies, which are related to armed conflict and wars. Examples of humanitarian crises range from the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake (Asian tsunami) to Hurricane Katrina that hit New Orleans (2005), the Rwanda genocide (1994), and ongoing Syrian civil war which started in 2011 (See http://www.ifrc.org/index.asp?navid=01).

In summary, the main categories of humanitarian disasters include:

(a) Natural e.g. earthquakes in the Pacific Rim, Himalayas region, and Haiti; droughts in the Sahel states including Mali, Niger, Chad, and Sudan; floods in Bangladesh, Burma, and Angola; tsunami affecting Japan and Sri Lanka. Here emphasis is on physical geographical and ecological processes (Rahman et al., 2011; Alam et al., 2010; Middleton, 2013).

(b) Human-made e.g. political and war including inter-state and civil wars, and combinations thereof as in Africa's Great Lakes Region over the past 20 years; corrupt regimes and massive human rights abuses as in the DRC and Sudan. The salient analytical conceptual tool here is political geography and geopolitics (MacGinty et al., 2009, Collins, 2010; Alamgir et al., 2009; Middleton, 2013).

(c) Technological disasters include nuclear accidents such as that in Chernobyl in Ukraine (1986) and chemical explosions as happened at the Union Carbide Plant in Bhopal, India (1984). In this category, economic geography and planning are key factors.

(d) Complex: (a + b) natural and human-made disasters e.g. longstanding armed conflict in Aceh, Indonesia and in Sri Lanka coinciding with the Indian Ocean tsunami (2004); massive flooding in Burma and the non-cooperation of the dictatorial regime there refusing international aid in 2008; (a + c) a combination of natural and technological as with the earthquake, resultant tsunami and impact on the Fukushima nuclear power plant in Japan in 2011; (a + b + c) Nuclear weapons, developing countries, non-democratic regimes, and the location factor and possible future humanitarian scenarios in North Korea, Iran and Pakistan.

The level of humanitarian crisis is dependent on the specific hazard, the level of vulnerability of the population and the specific risks involved (Fordham et al., 2009). The impact of any humanitarian disaster is directly proportional to level of vulnerability of population concerned. Using contrastive UN HDI (Human Development Index) figures for the USA, Japan, Italy, Turkey, Chile, Bangladesh, Burma, Somalia we can see the very different levels of response in each of these countries to the humanitarian

disasters which have occurred there in the past 20 years e.g. the impact of Hurricane Sandy on the USA including New York and responses to the emergency (2012), in contrast to the effects on states such as Haiti (Collins, 2009 (a)). Over 80% of humanitarian disasters take place in developing countries, the vast majority of which are former European colonies. In 1975 there were 78 recorded disasters in world, in contrast to 385 in 2012, with some 70-80 million people being threatened each year.

In order to get snapshots of how the industrialized states are placed in relation to countries most affected by humanitarian disasters it is useful to use comparative data from the UN HDI (UNDP, 2013) which is based on life expectancy, education and income indices - levels of human development for 192 countries: Norway: 1, USA: 3, Ireland: 7, France: 20 and UK: 26 in contrast to Mali: 182 and Niger: 186. Concerning the Democracy Index compiled by the EIU which uses 60 indicators grouped into 5 categories, North America comes in at 8.6, EU/Europe at 8.4, Latin America and Caribbean at 6.4. This contrasts with Sub-Saharan Africa = 4.3 and MENA (Middle East North Africa) at 3.7 (2012). With reference to the Corruption Perception Index (re: Transparency International), in its 2012 index of 176 countries, with a rank rage of 1 to 100, the cleanest were Denmark, Finland, New Zealand, with Ireland in 25th place and the lowest being Afghanistan, North Korea and Somalia.

2. WHAT ARE THE RESPONSES TO HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCIES?

Humanitarian work aims to save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain human dignity. Humanitarian action strives to protect people's livelihoods and help affected communities and countries cope with refugees and displaced people. Responding effectively requires expert analysis of the situation, and the ability to work with all the necessary partners (local, national and international) to ensure aid is delivered to those most in need (Collins, 2009 (c)).

Humanitarian action is based on the principles of humanitarianism, impartiality, neutrality and independence, with the action for the protection of civilians, and provision of vital services by agencies; assistance comes in the form of funding and in-kind services via humanitarian agencies or host government.

2.1 The Sphere Project

The Sphere Project Charter was launched in 1997 by a group of humanitarian NGOs and the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement. Sphere is based on two core beliefs: first, that all possible steps should be taken to alleviate human suffering arising out of calamity and conflict, and second, that those affected by disaster have a right to life with dignity and therefore a right to assistance (http://www.sphereproject.org/component/option,com_frontpage/Itemid,200/lang,english/). Concerning disaster management, the IFRC (International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies) plays a crucial role (see http://www.ifrc.org/what/disasters/index.asp).

Responses come from community and group organisations at local, regional and national scales as well as those at international levels. Governments, agencies and citizens are involved. These include top-down or governmental organisations range from the government ministries of India to Ireland's Department of Foreign Affairs with Irish Aid, the UK – DIFD, and USAID, to inter-governmental organisations such as the UNHCR – UN High Commission for Refugees, and OCHA - UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, and the Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department of the European Commission (ECHO), formerly known as the European Community Humanitarian Aid Office, is the European Commission's department for overseas humanitarian aid and civil protection. The bottom-up or non-governmental organisations include NGOs such as ICRC (Red Cross/Crescent), Save the Children, Trocaire, Oxfam, Concern, Goal, MSF.

2.2 ECHO – Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection DG

The EU as a whole is the world's largest donor to humanitarian aid and emergency action. The EU member states and institutions contribute over 50% of official global humanitarian aid. ECHO was founded in 1992 and has provided €14 billion to victims of conflict and disasters in 140 countries. In 2010, ECHO got its first dedicated EU Commissioner for international cooperation, humanitarian aid and crisis response appointed.

ECHO has been active in supporting & financing humanitarian assistance to populations in Italy, Greece & Turkey struck by natural disasters over the past two decades. Concerning ECHO activities, it has more than 300 people working in its HQ in Brussels and over 400 in 44 field offices in 38 countries. ECHO works on a needs-based approach and cooperates with over 200 partners including 14 UN agencies, 191 NGOs and international organisations along with the ICRC and International Organisation for Migration (ECHO, 2012). The principal objective of ECHO is to provide an integrated rapid response in emergency situations. In order to help ensure this ECHO maintains a database with its lists of experts in all areas ranging from logistics, to public health, geopolitics/geography, anthropology, humanitarian international law, education and so forth. With reference to humanitarian action education, ECHO has supported the NOHA Network Faculty as model for European research with seven EU inter-university joint Master and Doctoral degrees programmes linked to six Erasmus Mundus partner HEIs and over 100 NGOs. Among the obligatory module in the NOHA master's programme is Geopolitics, while Geography stands as an optional module, and surprising GIS and its application to humanitarian emergencies is not include in the prescribed syllabus (see http://ec.europa.eu/echo/index_en.htm and Shiroshita, et al., 2009).

In a 2012 Report based on the Eurobarometer survey of European citizens attitudes to humanitarian action the following issues were addressed: (1) an awareness of humanitarian aid, (2) the importance of EU humanitarian aid, (3) support for EU funding humanitarian aid despite the economic crisis, (4) common or national approaches to humanitarian aid, (5) knowledge and information on EU humanitarian aid and (6) attitudes towards a European voluntary aid corps. The main results were that 88% of those surveyed considered it important for EU to fund humanitarian action in comparison to 79% in 2010 and 84% agreed that the EU should continue to fund humanitarian aid in spite of the economic crisis. Additionally 71% believed humanitarian aid provided by EU is more efficient than when provided by each Member State separately action in comparison to 58% in 2010.

Based on its collective and multilateral principles, ECHO works closely with UN institutions and has been a leading voice in relation to the evolution of a people-centred international humanitarian law especially since the 1990s, and the evolving principle of the Responsibility to Protect commonly referred to as the R2P. According to the UN Charter, Chapter 1 upholds the non-interference in the internal affairs of sovereign states by other states; whereas Chapter 7 states that there is a responsibility to intervene in the internal affairs of a state if there is a risk of destabilization of other countries due to what is happening in the affected state e.g. civil strife spilling over into neighbouring states. During the Cold War era (1947-91) emphasis in international was framed in the context of inter-state strife, while as of the end of the Superpower Cold War conflict was found more within rather than between states, especially in terms of humanitarian abuse as witnessed with the Yugoslav Wars in the 1990s.

Dictatorial and non-democratic regimes responsible for massive human rights abuses against their own citizens were finding it more difficult to hide behind the principles enshrined in UN Charter Chapter 1, without the complicity of the once Superpowers who protected them within the respective discourses of Cold War narratives as witnessed with the Apartheid regime in South Africa, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Chile, Venezuela, Burma and so forth. Simultaneously, with increasing globalization the concepts of good global governance and International Humanitarian Law adapting became very much part of the international discourse and agenda.

The EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) has been constantly promoting centripetal forces among EU member states, but with more limited success than other EU integration policies. CFSP decisions require unanimity among member states, but once agreed, certain aspects can be further decided by qualified majority voting. Here it must be noted that there are currently five neutral states within the

EU – Austria, Finland, Ireland, Malta and Sweden whose populations closely monitor CFSP which could impact on their neutrality. In reality, the CFSP sees NATO as responsible for the territorial defence of Europe and peace-making. However, since 1999, the EU is responsible for implementing missions, such as peace-keeping and policing of treaties. This NATO-EU relationship has become somewhat blurred since the Balkan wars of the 1990s, and especially that of Kosovo and the NATO bombing in 1998, which brought the war there to an end. Supporters of this action presented this NATO intervention as a Humanitarian War.

UN and also NATO activities such as that in Kosovo help illustrate that the collective security principle has often failed as witnessed in the Syrian Civil War which started in 2011. A central problem in the UN system is that the UN power structures suitable in 1945 were developed within the geopolitical parameters of that era by the victors of World War Two; in the UN Security Council, the Permanent 5 (USA, Russia and China, France and UK) have the power of veto – meaning that whatever resolutions the UN General assembly put to the Council, this can be prevented from becoming international law by any one of the Permanent 5, and of course by the very nature of geopolitics, states vote for what is in their own best interests. In contrast to the Security Council, approximately 115 states in the General Assembly are former colonies very defensive of their sovereign rights due to their varying colonial experiences. Due to the increase in the number of failed states such as Somalia since 1991, there is an increasing trend for regional state interventions as in Africa where the UN and EU have supported African Union states in humanitarian interventions in West African and Great Lake countries. This UN - EU experience was most evident during the Libyan Revolution (2011) and removal of the Gaddafi Regime, in contrast to the lack of a clear EU policy in relation to the Syria Civil war (2011 onwards).

Due to the inherent nature of the EU and European construction project, EU member state governments are obliged to juxtapose international geopolitics, the mandate of their citizens for humanitarian action but also the power of their electorates in supporting some humanitarian operations and not others, and the effects that this may have on re-election in democracies. As a result of the increasing role of live media in humanitarian crises, and the digital revolution as witnessed with the Arab Spring, the EU's ECHO faces multiple layers of centrifugal forces. While everyone agrees that 'something must be done in humanitarian emergencies' – there is less agreement on how this should be done. Populations affected by humanitarian disasters literally do not have the time for the delay in ECHO responses.

3. THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM OF STATE SOVEREIGNTY AND R2P

The state system is based on the concept of sovereignty or supreme political authority within a territory. From a historical perspective this can be understood along three dimensions: the holder of sovereignty, the absoluteness of sovereignty, and the internal and external dimensions of sovereignty. The state is the political institution in which sovereignty is embodied. This construct has its origins in the Treaty of Westphalia (1648) giving rise to the modern state system throughout the world. Historically states have had to share aspects of their sovereignty in order to achieve good relations with other states, avoid conflict, develop trade and so forth. This is exemplified with the creation of the UN in 1945, and the European integration project starting in 1951, enabling the growth and strengthening of laws and practices, including those relating to the protection of human rights[1].

According to the UN Secretary General: "*every sovereign government … 'responsibility to protect' its citizens and those within its jurisdiction from genocide, mass killing, and massive and sustained human rights violations.*" – UNSG *Report (*2005).

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[1] See for example http://geography.about.com/cs/politicalgeog/a/statenation.htm and
http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/sovereignty/

It is the responsibility to protect people from genocide, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. According to the UN Secretary General: *"This responsibility lies, first and foremost, with each individual State, whose primary raison d'être and duty is to protect its population. But if national authorities are unable or unwilling to protect their citizens, then the responsibility shifts to the international community to use diplomatic, humanitarian and other methods to help protect the human rights and well-being of civilian populations. When such methods appear insufficient, the Security Council may out of necessity decide to take action under the Charter of the United Nations, including enforcement action, if so required."* (UN Report of Secretary general: *In Larger Freedom*, IV. Freedom to live in dignity, Sep. 2005).

The UN Secretary General called for the following to be addressed:

i)   The rule of law: The international community should embrace the "responsibility to protect", as a basis for collective action against genocide, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. All treaties relating to the protection of civilians should be ratified and implemented. Steps should be taken to strengthen cooperation with the International Criminal Court and other international or mixed war crimes tribunals, and to strengthen the International Court of Justice. The Secretary-General also intends to strengthen the Secretariat's capacity to assist national efforts to re-establish the rule of law in conflict and post-conflict societies.

ii) Human rights: The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights should be strengthened with more resources and staff, and should play a more active role in the deliberations of the Security Council and of the proposed Peace-building Commission. The human rights treaty bodies of the UN system should also be rendered more effective and responsive and

iii) Democracy: A Democracy Fund should be created at the UN to provide assistance to countries seeking to establish or strengthen their democracy[2].

In 2006, during the evolution of the R2P concept as a principle, possibly becoming law in the future, the UN Security Council formalized their support for the R2P and in 2009, the UN Secretary-General released a report called *Implementing the Responsibility to Protect* providing the General Assembly with an impetus for the R2P debate; some 94 member states spoke and most supported the R2P principle. The debate highlighted the i) need for regional organizations like the African Union to play a strong role in implementing R2P; ii) the need for stronger early warning mechanisms in the UN; and necessity to clarify the roles UN bodies would play in implementing R2P. The first resolution referencing R2P was then adopted by the UN General Assembly (A/RES/63/308). While the R2P has proved controversial in several human-made disasters such as it being invoked by Russia in relation to Georgia in 2008 (without the consent of the UN Security Council) and the US and UK after their invasion of Iraq (2003), the issue of natural disasters and R2P came to the forefront in 2008 when France wanted the R2P principle to be applied in Burma when Cyclone Nargis devastated areas of the country, and the military junta there refused access to foreign aid workers. Due to the controversy generated, many states have rejected that the R2P be applicable to natural disasters.

4. HOW DOES IRELAND RESPOND TO HUMANITARIAN ACTION?

The Irish state responds to humanitarian aid and action through bilateral and multilateral programs, and NGOs through Irish Aid, ECHO and the UN. Irish Aid is active in over 40 countries, and has direct

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[2] See for instance http://www.un.org/largerfreedom/summary.html; http://www.un.org/largerfreedom/sg-statement.html and http://www.un.org/largerfreedom/chap4.htm.

partner state programs in Ethiopia, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Timor Leste, Vietnam and others (Irish Aid, 2012). As a neutral state, Ireland also uses its defense forces in relation to UN and multilateral R2P missions. Since 1958 Ireland has been involved in over 51 UN Peacekeeping missions. In 1993, a UNTSI (UN Training School was established in Ireland based with the Irish Defense Forces. This became more significant with the EU Treaty of Amsterdam and CFSP (1997), and the 1999 NATO PfP (Partnership for Peace) and Petersberg Tasks, where humanitarian aid and a role for the military was being promoted by the centripetal forces generated by the EU and ECHO.

According to the Irish Defence White Paper (2000): *"Humanitarian aid tasks go hand-in-hand with military tasks in many crisis situations……"*& with the creation of the EU battle groups (2006), government sources stated that these were: "*to stop … unrest in many locations … deteriorating into … crises… Irish soldiers may be ordered to participate in HA missions.*" Also Irish Defence Force officers have been seconded to the UN Relief and Works Agency and NGOs including Goal, Concern and ICRC.

Over the past 20 years there has been a certain merging of Defence Force and humanitarian roles as also witnessed in many EU states like Ireland, Poland, Netherlands and Sweden. Most Defence Force policies in Ireland now contain reference to humanitarian aid, and with the Defence Forces '*cooperating*' with military other organizations including those of the EU and NATO; legitimating their actions with reference to humanitarian action. Strong arguments are made for Defence Force/NGO synergy in order to enhance humanitarian aid delivery. Irish defence forces deliver humanitarian aid in multilateral contexts in Afghanistan and Iraq; the use of Irish forces abroad is governed by the Triple lock system whereby defence force involvement abroad requires authorization of the upper and lower houses of Government and that of the UN Security Council, but notably not that of any EU institution. This is different to leader states in the EU such as France and the UK with different military traditions and their constitutional regulation.

Dóchas is an umbrella organization for 35 Irish NGOs and receives funding from the Irish public and government exchequer. Among the most known NGOs are Trócaire, which supports the R2P within the UN/multilateral mandate context only. Concern whose mandate is to respond "*to extreme poverty … due to disaster or long-term economic and social factors*" also supports the R2P in a more restricted manner, and GOAL with over 150 staff alongside 2,000 local staff in humanitarian aid in fourteen countries, Goal's mandate states that their *"Programs (are) aimed at the poor and those suffering effects of war &/or natural disaster."*

The Irish state through direct funding and personnel, and through UN organs and ECHO, and NGOs has supported Haiti over the past years, the most recent disaster being the 2010 earthquake, flooding and cholera outbreak. With a population of just over 10 million and an area of 27,750 sq. km, Ireland holds certain identification with smaller states. Haiti's vulnerability is evident by looking at its UN HDI, 161st out of 187 countries. Some 50% of deaths in Haiti are HIV/AIDS related with estimates of infection being 2.2% for the adult population (WHO 2012). In Haiti's 200-year history, it has witnessed 32 coups. Indexes suggest that corrupt is high, and democracy low and the literacy rate is 49% of the population.

The EU/ECHO Responses to the Haiti disaster are illustrated by an evaluation of ECHO's global response to the situation[3]. Here there is an astonishing top-down / bottom-up plethora of humanitarian aid networks illustrating that ECHO is linked to all scales, NGOs (e.g. Haitian and Irish), and UN institutions (e.g. WHO, FAO). Concerning the use of GIS and ESRI input into relief for Haiti[4].

5. CONCLUSIONS

[3] see http://www.urd.org/Evaluation-of-DG-ECHO-s-response and
http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/media/publications/annual_report/2012/AR2013_geo_fiche_Haiti.pdf

[4] see http://www.esri.com/industries/aid-development/~/media/Files/Pdfs/library/casestudies/haiti-relief.pdf

Since the inception of the European construction project in the 1950s, EU authorities and institutions have faced the challenge of creating sustainable centripetal forces binding different states and nations together, and drawing on their existing capacities and cultures. In the context of development experiences, this has been very varied between EU states, while in relation to promoting development in the Less Developed Countries and in delivering humanitarian action, the historical records and cultures vary greatly ranging from the former colonial maritime states of Belgium, France, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, and UK, and land empires such as Germany and Austria to colonies such as Ireland, Czech Republic and Slovakia. These multiple experiences were compounded by the ideological parameters and narratives of the Soviet perspectives that imbued Central and East European states, in contrast to that of the liberal democracies in the Western countries of the Union. Of course due to economic, geopolitical, linguistic and cultural shared historical heritage, the former colonial states in the Union had developed special economic and political relationships with their former colonies in the wake of national independence.

With the implosion of the Soviet empire (1991), the post Cold War responses to geopolitical contexts and humanitarian spaces changed rapidly within the EU, and outside Europe. The global power system was now left with only one Superpower, the USA, and the EU was afforded greater economic and political opportunities in the former Soviet satellite states due to their geographical contiguity, and wider possibilities for presenting itself and its image on the world stage as a unified global leader. Significantly the EU created ECHO in 1992, and in 2010 the first dedicated EU Commissioner for international cooperation, humanitarian aid and crisis response was appointed. The problematic for the Commissioner lies is in balancing the centripetal and centrifugal forces in integrating humanitarian institutions, organizations and actors within the Union, and the Union's relationships with third party countries, institutions, organizations and actors.

The EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) created in 1997, while constantly promoting centripetal forces among EU member states, has had more limited success than other EU integration policies as was evidenced during the Balkan wars of the 1990s. Since 1999, the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) has become a significant part of the CFSP. The EU itself has limited military capability, member states are responsible for their own territorial defence and a majority of EU members are also members of NATO, which is responsible for the defence of Europe. In this context, nonetheless all EU states closely liaise on security issues. In relation to external humanmade humanitarian crises, greater meaningful unified EU action is needed on the global stage as witnessed in the prolonged Syrian War (2011-). Issues of peace enforcement became more significant with the EU Treaty of Amsterdam and CFSP (1997), and the 1999 NATO PfP (Partnership for Peace) and Petersburg Tasks, and creation of EU Battle Groups for humanitarian aid and action, and protection of civilian humanitarian workers. All this must be interpreted alongside the evolving principle of the UN Responsibility to Protect (R2P) which may become international humanitarian law within the next decade along with globalization forces.

EU initiated processes in relation to shared humanitarian actions among its member states have been illustrated by the case study of Ireland above which may well exemplify the ECHO centripetal processes to greater advantage than the narratives of more powerful EU states such as the UK and France, the former having a history of promoting the relationship with the USA and Atlanticism in the international arena, in contrast to France and more European perspectives. Similarly, the Haiti case study was used to illustrate the humanitarian reach of the EU states and ECHO in a globalising humanitarian space.

While most people agree that development aid and humanitarian action in crisis situations is imperative, where dispute arises is in the type of aid and action, the financing of this and the interpretations of the geopolitical contexts. This is exemplified in its approaches to humanitarian action by the UN and especially the Security Council's five permanent members. The contrasting approaches and use of the veto power by Russia and China is often in sharp contrast to EU member states UK and France, and the USA, despite the ending of the Cold War over two decades ago. This has been sharply witnessed during the humanitarian disasters in Darfur - Sudan (2003-2010) and Syria (2011-).

Future research in relation to ECHO time-space integrating processes, and humanitarian space, assistance, and networks is imperative in order for ECHO to fulfil its objectives and mandate in promoting the European construction project and the EU's role on the international stage. With specific

reference to humanitarian assistance, the holistic range of the geographers' competencies and skills need to be further enhanced by the possibilities offered by digital media and GIS, as too often technicians lack the geographical competencies vital in the sphere of humanitarian assistance (Smith, 2013; Verjee, 2007).

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