

Responsibility to Protect: Humanitarian Intervention in Ethiopia's Northern Armed Conflict: Nostrum or Venom?

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Abstract

Sates have a duty to protect their own people from harms, lives of citizens and promotions of their welfare. The failure to protect them from chronic insecurities of hunger, disease, inadequate shelter, and crime may necessitate the involvement of humanitarian intervention. The incumbent government, the Prosperity Party, has had a strained relationship with the TPLF since assuming federal power, so it is known that they went to war despite pledging ways to avoid it. As a result, the exigency of great powers to humanitarian assistance came to the fore. While unquenchable to the situation; however, there is a dearth of evidence about the mis/use of power in the name of humanitarian intervention. This research thus looks into the underlying epistemological and ontological explanations for the Northern Armed Conflict in Ethiopia since 2020. Furthermore, it investigates the responsibility to protect and its competing debates both in academic and non-academic circles concerning humanitarian objectives, grounds for intervention, means and results of intervention in the conflict. To achieve the objectives, primary and secondary sources were used. The paper argued that the incumbent government of Ethiopia has failed the internal responsibility to protect thus; exigencies of great powers would be viable for reinvigorating the state capacity to discharge their responsibility; however, the intervention is challenged by impure motives, grounds, means, and results of the intervention. The maneuverability of the element was found to be disproportional to the chance of everyone. It is thus recommended that humanitarian intervention must be based up on certain discretionary legal bounds. Moreover, the fear of unilateral intervention and subjective regulatory frame work could possibly be resolved by the invitation of more super powers.

Keywords: Responsibility to protect, Humanitarian intervention, Ethiopia's northern armed conflict

1. Introduction

Sates have a duty to protect their own people from harms, lives of citizens and promotions of their welfare. The failure to protect them from chronic insecurities of hunger, disease, inadequate shelter, and crime may necessitate the involvement of humanitarian intervention. The Responsibility to Protect (R2P or R to P) is a global political commitment which was endorsed by all member states of the United Nations at the 2005 World Summit in order to address its four key concerns to prevent genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. Despite the fact that responsibility to protect may mean to refer to other measures

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as economic coercion and use of force to protect human rights, my paper focuses on the narrower sense of humanitarian aid cum its motive, ground, objective and result. Thus, responsibility to protect involves humanitarian aid which refers to providing resources and logistical support to those in need. It usually only lasts until long-term assistance from the government and other institutions takes its place. Homeless persons, refugees, and those who have lost loved ones to starvation, war, or natural calamities are some of the needy. Humanitarian assistance efforts are provided for humanitarian causes and encompass natural calamities and man-made disasters. Humanitarian aid's major goals are to save lives, relieve suffering, and uphold dignity for all.

Humanitarian aid is believed to have started during the Crimean War in 1854, when Florence Nightingale, the founder of modern nursing, organized care for wounded soldiers in Constantinople. She worked to improve hygiene, nutrition and water, and decreased mortality rate from 42.5% to 2.2 %. But it was William Edward Hall who first used the term "humanitarian intervention" in his 1880 book entitled "A Treatise on International Law" albeit the definition of humanitarian action at the time Hall was considerably different from what we have stated above. Moreover, the beginning of formalized humanitarian aid is also inclined to Henri Dunant, a Swiss businessman and social activist who abandoned his plans and started a relief effort after witnessing the utter devastation and inhumane abandonment of wounded soldiers from the Battle of Solferino in June 1859. Despite having little to no medical training, Dunant worked with local volunteers to help the wounded soldiers from all warring parties, including Aus. His book A Memory of Solferino, which contained a graphic portrayal of the enormous suffering he saw, became a key reference for contemporary humanitarianism. Modern concept of humanitarian intervention however flourished due to Nation-states' need for greater cooperation and an institutional framework to govern international relations after the Second World War. The founding of the United Nations Organization (UNO) in 1945 was one of the most important events during this time. Since 1945, the United Nations has endeavored to uphold and respect the sovereignty of its member states. But in the 1990s, a wave of massive atrocities shook the world's conscience. The United Nations repeatedly failed or refused to intervene as a series of wars resulted in widespread human rights abuses and massive loss of life in Rwanda and former Yugoslavia. Recognizing that giving a country absolute sovereignty within its borders can lead to atrocities such as genocide and ethnic cleansing, scholars and diplomats need to protect the holiness and human rights of the country's sovereignty. (*The Rise and Fall of the Responsibility to Protect* | World101, 2022)

The United Nations launched the R2P doctrine in 2011 after Libya's longtime dictator Mu'ammarGadafi used extreme violence in response to local protests. Fearing the slaughter, the United Nations has approved NATO to violate Libya's sovereignty to protect civilians from Kadafi's army. The mission was intended to be narrow, but soon turned into an unstable regime change operation. In the end, the Gaddafi administration was overthrown, but the civil war is still intensifying in Libya, and Libya is arguably more unstable and violent than ever. As a result, countries already suspected of R2P, such as China and Russia, are unlikely to give a green light to future humanitarian intervention (Palmieri, 2019).

Humanitarian intervention has rapidly been the prevalent means of delivering protection and aid at a worldwide level. Yet alongside its success concerns have been voiced that humanitarianism has increasingly become an economic venture and a political weapon for controlling regions and directing international relations. This can be discerned from to ambivalent issues; it was generally agreed that in times of war and other disasters, humanitarian aid is crucial to saving lives, reducing suffering, and upholding human dignity as it focuses on giving individuals in need logistical support and material relief (such as food, water, and clothing) (e.g., providing shelters, safe transportation). Sadly however, battling parties started to frequently reject or block humanitarian aid in contemporary armed conflicts across the world in Asia, Africa, Europe, the Middle East, and Latin America. Equally worrisome was that modern challenges have been present throughout

history, as seen by the difficulties in providing humanitarian aid, the risk to the safety of aid workers in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the administrative barriers and direct attacks in Kosovo. Humanitarian organizations also had difficulty reaching vulnerable communities in Myanmar due to administrative restrictions, shifting policies, and rules. However, in some situations when direct attacks and other security issues pose a risk for humanitarian personnel, the predominance of political interest and conflict dynamics has impeded the free mobility of humanitarian operations. On the other hand, nevertheless, the predominately western intellectual standing as well as its policy externalities prioritizes intervention policies and/or their interests over all others. Hence, according to several Global South thinkers, the present ideology of humanitarian intervention is so tinged with the predominantly Western-centered shenanigans that caused the ongoing political crisis in the world that they could not bring about a viable solution to it.

The incumbent government of Ethiopia, the Prosperity Party, has had a strained relationship with the TPLF since assuming federal power, so it is known that they went to war despite pledging ways to avoid it. Both warring parties failed to bring peace due to insincere efforts whose effectiveness is more often disputed. As a result, the exigency of great powers to humanitarian assistance came to the fore. While unquenchable to the situation; however, there is a dearth of evidence about the mis/use of power in the name of humanitarian intervention. This research thus looks into the underlying epistemological and ontological explanations for the Northern Armed Conflict in Ethiopia since 2020. Furthermore, it investigates the responsibility to protect and its competing debates both in academic and non-academic circles concerning humanitarian objectives, grounds for intervention, means and results of intervention in the conflict.

Accordingly, this paper tries to answer the following research questions:

- ✓ What are the objectives of the humanitarian aid in Ethiopia during the Northern Armed Conflict?
- ✓ What are the motives and grounds of the humanitarian intervention in the conflict?
- ✓ What are the consequences of the intervention to the people in need?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Clarification

Humanitarian Aid

Any action that seeks to safeguard or advance the welfare and security of a people in danger is referred to as humanitarian (eg. humanitarian aid). Hence, a humanitarian intervention is the act of interfering (either militarily or otherwise) in the internal affairs of a state in order to preserve human lives there. It is also an ideal that the International Committee of Red Cross and Many NGOs promote a neutral, impartial and non-coercive alleviation of human suffering according to need.

Responsibility to Protect

The Responsibility to Protect (R2P or RtoP) is a global political commitment which was endorsed by all member states of the United Nations at the 2005 World Summit in order to address its four key concerns to prevent genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. The doctrine is regarded as a unanimous and well established international norm over the past two decades. The principle of the Responsibility to Protect is based upon the underlying premise that sovereignty entails a responsibility to protect all populations from mass atrocity crimes and human rights violations. The principle is based on a respect for the norms and principles of international law, especially the underlying principles of law relating to sovereignty, peace and security, human rights, and armed conflict.

Goals

The R2P has three pillars: one is the protection responsibilities of the state. It is stated that each individual state has the responsibility to protect its population from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity. The other one is international assistance and capacity-building in which states pledge to assist each other in their protection responsibilities while the third pillar involves timely and decisive collective response that is if any state is "manifestly failing" in its protection responsibilities, then states should take collective action to protect the population (Palmieri, 2019).

Motives

Motive may hinge up on the intention, especially positive, to end suffering that is based on altruistic goals, or otherwise of the interests under the guise of humanitarian intervention that may range from changing a government to assaulting and/ or assisting rebel forces.

Grounds

Grounds are conditions by which we analyze and elucidate the reasons whether there are sufficient legal and/or moral standing point(s) to justify the humanitarian intervention. Accordingly, the unlawful detention of people, deportation of civilians from one place to another, recruitment of children in armed forces, pillages and most importantly starvation are among the sufficient reasons to consider humanitarian intervention justifiable.

Results or Consequence

On one hand, humanitarian intervention may have a destabilizing effect and may be its purpose is a regime-change. For instance, in Libya, the intervention was regarded to be detrimental and the operation have once again led world leaders to debate the delicate—and divisive—balancing act between respecting sovereignty and protecting human rights (The Rise and Fall of the Responsibility to Protect | World101, 2022). Thus, result refers to the extent to which delivering, protection and aid at a worldwide level is successful.

2.2 Debates on the Goals, Motives, Grounds and Results for Humanitarian Intervention

This paper theoretically falls in to the integrated theories of Realism and Liberalism in order to elucidate the different debates posed. It is due to the inherent limitations that each theory exhibits and the objective of the study I attempt to achieve. The development of the humanitarian principle was a direct response to former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's challenge to the international community to learn from the lessons of past failures and prioritize the prevention of another Rwanda or Srebrenica, and was articulated in the form of a strong commitment by all member states to preventing and responding to atrocity crimes in the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document.

Classical liberals hold that humans have intrinsic natural rights to liberty, which include the freedom to do whatever they see proper to protect themselves, as long as they do not infringe on the equal liberty of others until their own survival is threatened. People also have the right "to be considered as ethical subjects, not just objects or means," as well as the need to treat others as ethical subjects (*A Theoretical Assessment of Humanitarian Intervention and R2P*, 2022). Another important tenet of liberalism is that states can work together for mutual benefit. While liberals recognize that each person or state pursues personal benefit, they think that people share common interests that can lead to local and international cooperation. Liberals use the rise of multinational institutions such as the United Nations to bolster this viewpoint.

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Kosovar Albanians established their own governing structure and conducted a series of non-violent protests against Milosevic. The Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) conducted systematic attacks against Yugoslav police in 1997. NATO without Security Council authorization initiated an air campaign against Yugoslavia in March 1999. There is much room for skepticism when it comes to the motives of interveners. The Clinton administration had mixed motivations for the NATO action in Kosovo. With media images of humanitarian disaster creating a public groundswell in support of "doing something" in the Balkans, many U.S. policymakers viewed humanitarianism as legitimate. (234. *Humanitarian Intervention Reconsidered: Lessons from Kosovo* / Wilson Center, 2022) Intervention that promotes central principles of the UN Charter is permissible within certain parameters. Humanitarian intervention promotes the maintenance of international peace and security. The UN Charter not only permits intervention in cases of gross and systemic human rights abuses against civilians who are members of minority groups, it requires it. Some argue that there were substantial grounds for humanitarian intervention in Kosovo. By October 1998, Serbs had driven 300,000 Kosovar Albanians from their homes. Any solution would have had to contain a strong military option that would have been objectionable to Milosevic. (*From Kosovo to Syria – Why R2P Is of No Use If the UN Security Council Is Unable to Act Together – Verfassungsblog*, 2022)

On the other hand, critics of R2P point to inconsistency and the likelihood of economic rather than humanitarian reasons underpinning the application of R2P. And its proponents point to the fact that the principle stands for more than intervention. It is, they argue, a reminder to states they have a responsibility to protect their populations, rather than slaughter them. And it is a reminder to the international community that it has a responsibility to help states fulfill their obligations. All humans have an innate desire to gain more power. Statesmen compete for power over other states as a result of human nature's desire for power. "Politics is a struggle for power over men," Morgenthau contends, "and the forms of obtaining, keeping, and exhibiting it constitute the style of political action." States are always concerned about national interests such as security and riches in international politics. Intervention may be necessary to protect their interests. Morgenthau contends that we must intervene where our national interests demand it and our authority allows us to succeed. The timing of these events will be determined...by a careful assessment of the interests at stake and the power at hand. "The degree to which one is successful," says Morgenthau (*A Theoretical Assessment of Humanitarian Intervention and R2P*, 2022). To this theory, the Libyan intervention is a specimen and even seen as a violation of the responsibility to protect and an effort to overthrow a regime unfavorable to western interests under the guise of humanitarian intervention. Both American and European companies stood to benefit from a "more pro-western" Libyan administration. Another point of cynicism is that there could be illegitimate interventionism as it was happened in different parts of the world. This has a lot to do with alignment, patron client relationship between the super power projecting the responsibility to protect and the ones receiving it. In addition, the gap between the promise and the reality also creates pessimism. Therefore, NATO's incomplete and politically driven protection for civilians in Libya not only contradicted the explicit goals of responsibility to protect intervention, but it looked shockingly similar to an atrocity that responsibility-to- protect rebuilding efforts should work to prevent - "reverse ethnic cleansing (Bellamy, 2010).

In general, arguments put forth in favor of humanitarian intervention assert that it is emancipator in its effects of freeing individuals from political violence and its normative focus on the "human needs and rights of

those seeking protection or assistance” (ICISS, 2001). Hence, this rationale will constitute an assessment of competing conceptions of ‘emancipation’, in the context of the theory and practice of R2P and international relations per se. While the counter claim asserts that the international community was confronted by a situation in which human rights violations were occurring in a particularly weak state they incline to carry out and in powerful state, the international community may be unable or unwilling to intervene.

3. Materials and Methods

The study employed qualitative approach under interpretive paradigm, which states that the social world should be studied in its natural setting through the standpoint of the participant. This study employed both primary and secondary sources of data. The primary data were collected through key informant interview from expertise and scholars. While selecting purposefully the researchers tried to consider their proximity to the issue, experience, and other factors. A pattern matching analysis was used. While testing, the researchers developed a series of theories-based assertions and contrast them with the results that are empirically observed. Campbell(1975) proposed the concept of pattern matching, arguing that a single case study design could provide strong evidence for a theory if the expectations derived from it can hold true in that particular situation. By comparing a pattern of observed results to another pattern of expected values deriving from the theory under test (Campbell, 1975; Hyde, 2000; Sinkovics, 2017; Trochim, 1985), the researchers connect the data from this study with the propositions that articulate the theory the researchers are trying to prove (Bitektine, 2008).

4. Discussions

This section deals with the main findings of the research by taking in to account variables in humanitarian intervention. The researcher thus analyzed the northern armed conflict of Ethiopia through thematizing four factors; goals, motives, grounds and results of the humanitarian intervention in the Northern Armed conflict. And lastly, we made a conclusion based on the discussions.

Though both sides initially accused the other instigating it, fighting between Tigrayan security forces and the federal government began on November 3, 2020, when Tigrayan security forces attacked the ENDF Northern Command bases and headquarters in the Tigray Region. In Tigray, the ENDF launched counterattacks that Prime Minister Abiy described as "law enforcement operations." On November 28, federal allied forces captured Mekelle, the capital of the Tigray Region, and Prime Minister Abiy declared the Tigray operation over. The Tigray government stated in late November that it would fight until the invaders were defeated, and the Tigray Defense Forces retook Mekelle on June 28, 2021, and advanced into the Amhara and Afar regions in July.

The Responsibility to Protect was unanimously adopted in 2005 at the UN World Summit, the largest gathering of Heads of State and Government in history. It is articulated in paragraphs 138 and 139 of the World Summit Outcome Document (Haslett, 2014). More so, Paragraph 138 reads “Each individual State has the responsibility to protect its populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. This responsibility entails the prevention of such crimes, including their incitement, through appropriate and necessary means. We accept that responsibility and will act in accordance with it. The international community should, as appropriate, encourage and help States to exercise this responsibility and support the United Nations in establishing an early warning capability”. While 139 explains that the international community, through the United Nations, also has the responsibility to use appropriate diplomatic, humanitarian and other peaceful means, in accordance with Chapters VI and VIII of the Charter, to help to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. In this context, we are prepared to take collective action, in a timely and decisive manner, through the Security

Council, in accordance with the Charter, including Chapter VII, on a case-by-case basis and in cooperation with relevant regional organizations as appropriate, should peaceful means be inadequate and national authorities are manifestly failing to protect their populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity (Haslett, 2014).

The motive of humanitarian intervention in the above mentioned case studies have been precarious and so has been in Ethiopia. Since 1991, there were grave violations of human rights, unlawful detention of people because of their ethnicity, deportation of civilians from one place to another, pillages and most importantly starvation in different parts of the region.

And these breaches of international laws were sufficed to consider humanitarian intervention in Ethiopia, however; no great power had ever urged to stop these bad moves. The interviewee revealed the following key things as to how the exigencies of great powers would only exacerbate the conflict:

Despite the dovish intent to humanitarian assistance, I cast a doubt that the U.S. government's intentions may not be completely pure, and nearly all believe that intervention in Ethiopia seems a government change than a sincere aid. During the Northern Ethiopian conflict, only the TPLF who have long been serving USA were protected, given food aids and even condolences to amplify.

Another element to address is whether there are sufficient legal and/or moral grounds to justify the humanitarian intervention. When it comes to Ethiopia, the unlawful detention of people of Tigray, deportation of civilians from one place to another, recruitment of children in armed forces, pillages and most importantly starvation in different parts of the region seem suffice to consider that humanitarian intervention in Ethiopia was legal. Rome Statue of International Criminal Court, Article 8 considers this occurrence as grave violation of human rights thus it was a justifiable intervention.

To ensure credibility, the implications of intervention must be consistent with the international law. That is, the element used should be important for a true blue target, proportional to the real military outcome, distinguishing between civilian and non-civilian targets, and the maneuverability of the element should be proportional to the chance of everyone. Interventions that do not meet these criteria are not illegal, but they are corrupt.

Another interviewee stated his experience as follows;

There was a clear misuse of power in the name of humanitarian intervention. During the war between the Ethiopian government and TPLF rebel forces, Vehicles, Lorries, even four wheel drives UN personnel used for transportation had been used as a battle drives. I am afraid great powers did not come to help but get TPLF on the crown once again. (Interview 3)

Regions	People in need	Food delivered	Fund (In Dollars)	Number of Convoy	Health Partners
Afar	1.2 Million	1000 Metric tone	13 M\$	-	Null
Amhara	4 Million	2000 MT	12 M\$	-	Null
Tigray	4.5 Million	8460 MT	45 M\$	150-200	11

Sources: A. Northern Ethiopia - Humanitarian Update | Situation Reports, 7 May 2022
 B. Emergency Food security Assessment (2020)

More so, World Food Program report has shown that 13 humanitarian convoys had arrived in Tigray region since December 2021 while little or no convoy has been sent to war prone areas such as Amhara and Afar regions of Ethiopia and this clearly shows how much the uneven distribution of aid has fettered the legitimacy of the intervention. Recent government reports even show that the average household food insecurity gap had even increased in Tigray region and convoys have not been reaching to the people in need rather to the militias.

Northern Ethiopia - Humanitarian Update | Situation Reports, 7 May 2022 reported the following;

Not more than 11,000 displaced people and returnees received emergency shelter and non-food items in Amhara during the reporting period. More than 28,000 people were reached with different health services in Tigray during the reporting week. 11 health partners are operating in 26 of the 88 woredas across six zones.

The relief supplies have been dispatched within the region to priority areas for onward distribution, and fuel supplies moved into Tigray in recent weeks are also enabling critical operations to be expanded geographically. More specifically on food delivery, around 4,460 MT of food has been brought into Tigray by the main food partners through the four humanitarian convoys (*Northern Ethiopia - Humanitarian Update | Situation Reports, 2022*)

One of the FGD participants said;

In northern Ethiopia, logistical troubles along with loss of authorization through events to the war for humanitarian convoys, equipment, etc., tensions with nearby communities, and ever-changing regulations, have created large demanding situations for operations. In addition, looting of useful resource supplies/assets, vandalization of humanitarian facilities, violence, harassment, arrests, and expulsions of useful resource people had been reported.

This has been annoyed through unfounded accusations and ongoing suspicions towards useful resource groups and a robust anti UN/INGO sentiment throughout the country, compromising the protection and safety of humanitarian actors and limiting get entry to human beings in need.

5. Conclusion

In lights of the finding of the study based on the analysis of collected data from the respondents as well as documents illustrated so far, the researcher concludes the following statements and recommendations as well. The finding of the study revealed that the Ethiopia's ethnic-based federal system has led to widespread claims of ethnic favor. Many groups felt alienated under the former TPLF-controlled coalition that had dominated the government for 27 years and so do they even since Prime Minister Abby came to power in 2018. The history of immunity from past human rights abuses by security forces has also deepened distrust among ethnic groups. This history, coupled with the development of political and social polarization, could lead to further ethnic violence throughout Ethiopia. The Ethiopian government seemed to fail to protect its citizens, regardless of ethnicity. This is manifested by the increment of death toll since 2018, ethnic cleansing and targeted attack on unarmed citizens in different parts of the country, inter-communal violence and regional border disputes, impotence to address the question of people in urgent need of aid in Amhara, Afar and Tigray regions; thus, the exigency of great powers to humanitarian assistance is unquenchable. Humanitarian intervention in Ethiopia was found to be fruitful since it was carried out by nonmilitary intervention by which the role of outside parties in Ethiopia is to mediate a ceasefire agreement for the

purpose of organizing domestic dialogue and allow unlimited humanitarian access to Amhara, Afar and Tigray evenly.

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