

---

*Md Kamrul Hassan*

## **INVOLVEMENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY FROM RWANDA TO RAKHINE: DIVERGENCE OF THEORIES AND ITS APPLICABILITY**

### **Abstract**

Should a state or the international community intervene in the domestic affairs of a state in the context of sovereignty and human rights dogma? Lensing through this question, this paper aims to study the involvement of the international community in different humanitarian crises. The connotation of sovereignty and human rights are arguable and well-contested both in theory and practice. For protecting human rights; theories, concepts, and other principles have been developed over the years. However, their application remains a debatable issue. With such a discourse, this paper attempts to focus on whether the inactivity of the international community can be questioned for its dubious role during a humanitarian disaster. If the international community fails to act to protect despite having sufficient time, required evidence and early warning regarding a forthcoming disaster, then the noble intention remains questionable. It is not because of the international community's dearth of operational capability; rather, they are short of political will and noble commitment towards humanity. The crises in Rwanda and Balkan could not be addressed effectively due to the delayed response of the UN and other international organisations. The Iraq invasion (March 2003) by the US-led coalition forces was steered with an allegation that Iraq had been possessing weapons of mass destruction which was found elusive at a later stage. The Rohingya exodus still remains an unresolved problem. With such a backdrop, this paper argues that the core concepts of the doctrines were noble, yet drew criticisms due to flawed and biased application in international politics.

**Keywords:** Humanitarian Intervention, R2P, International Community, International Relations Theory, Rwanda, Rakhine.

### **1. Introduction**

Involvement of the 'international community' is quite appealing as it indicates the moral obligation of supranational authority for discharging noble responsibility. The term 'international community' is typically used in global politics to describe a group of countries or governments of the world. According to the Cambridge Dictionary<sup>1</sup>, the term explains a group of countries or nationalities that act together

---

**Colonel Md Kamrul Hassan**, afwc, psc, Chief Instructor, School of Infantry and Tactics, Bangladesh Army. His email address is: [kamrul568@gmail.com](mailto:kamrul568@gmail.com).

© Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS), 2023.

<sup>1</sup> Cambridge Dictionary, "Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary," Recuperado de, 2008, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/es/diccionario/ingles/blended-learning>.

as a group. One example of such a group is the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) where few countries have been empowered for maintaining international peace and security. Thus, the international community like the UNSC or other such entities usually has been regarded as a community that contributes to benevolent engagement.<sup>2</sup> However, Chomsky<sup>3</sup> observes that such a term has been regularly used to describe certain Western powers along with their allies. Thus, the precise meaning of the international community remains non-inclusive in practice. The term ‘international community’ drew global attention in the year of 1999 when Tony Blair, the then Prime Minister of the United Kingdom (UK), delineated his thought-provoking concept for involving the global community in settling humanitarian crises. His concept was well known as the ‘Doctrine of International Community’ or ‘Blair’s Doctrine’.

The ‘Doctrine of International Community’ echoes the similar norm of ‘Responsibility to Protect (R2P)’ which drew global attention in preceding years. These international norms played an important role in involving the international community in shaping the world order in a noble manner. Over the time, military intervention by a few global powers in the name of implementing the norm of R2P has come across criticism.<sup>4</sup> Criticism of the ‘Doctrine of International Community’ is particularly significant. Referring to this doctrine, Fairclough<sup>5</sup> and Ralph<sup>6</sup> observed it as a biased notion of the doctrine since it was directed at military intervention in Iraq and Afghanistan. According to Dodge<sup>7</sup>, the core concept of the doctrine had been noble, while Whitman<sup>8</sup> viewed this idea as an inner evil as he looked through the lens of ‘Realism’. The world observed limited success in Kosovo due to the swift intervention of the Operational Allied Force (OAF) conducted by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

<sup>2</sup> Tod Lindberg, *Making Sense of the “International Community”* (New York: Council of Foreign Relations, 2014).

<sup>3</sup> Noam Chomsky, “The Crimes of ‘Intcom’,” *Foreign Policy* 132 (2002): 34-35.

<sup>4</sup> Michael Doyle, “International ethics and the responsibility to protect,” *International Studies Review* 13, no. 1 (2011): 72-84.

<sup>5</sup> Norman Fairclough, “Blair’s Contribution to Elaborating a New ‘Doctrine of The International Community’,” *Journal of Language and Politics* 4, no. 1 (2005): 41-63.

<sup>6</sup> Jason Ralph, “After Chilcot: The ‘Doctrine of The International Community and The UK Decision to Invade Iraq,” *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 13, no. 3 (2011): 304-325.

<sup>7</sup> Toby Dodge, “Coming Face to Face with Bloody Reality: Liberal Common Sense and the Ideological Failure of the Bush Doctrine in Iraq,” *International Politics* 46 (2009): 253-275.

<sup>8</sup> Jim Whitman, “The Origins of the British Decision to Go to War: Tony Blair, Humanitarian Intervention, and the “New Doctrine of The International Community”,” in *Intelligence and national security policymaking on Iraq*, eds. James P. Pfiffner and Mark Phythian (Manchester University Press, 2018), 40-56.

However, the international community had experienced a status-quo situation as an un-anonymous resolution could not be approved by the UNSC despite continuous persuasion by the UK and its other allies. Later, Blair's Doctrine dragged the UK and the USA to launch military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. However, questioning the legitimacy of military intervention in Iraq and Afghanistan, Douifi<sup>9</sup> indicates the absence of a 'just cause' approach in those invasions. Subsequently, both Iraq and Afghanistan experienced severe consequences causing the suffering of innocent people. As time passed by, the world experienced violence, atrocities, heinous crimes and other traumatic savagery. The responsibility of the international community to save humanity drew criticisms because of their involvement in different geo-political affairs.<sup>10</sup> The forcibly displaced Myanmar nationals from Rakhine may be considered the most recent example of such viciousness, where the noble gesture of the international community to protect the helpless Rohingya people from Rakhine remains mostly silent and futile.

The noble intention of Blair's Doctrine and the emerging norm of the R2P for protecting humanity remain rather unclear when looking through the lens of the Realist's school of thought within the purview of International Relations (IR) theory<sup>11</sup>. The core concept of Blair's doctrine had been noble.<sup>12</sup> However, Crawford and other Realists have found Blair's quell persuasion of applying the Doctrine as an approach to individual influence and power.<sup>13</sup> 'Realist' senses Morgenthau's<sup>14</sup> 'power over morality' approach in Blair's persuasion that had been prevailing since the time of Thucydides<sup>15</sup>, and exists till today. Likewise, the legacy of protecting affected people from oppression and violence within the purview of R2P remains an obligation of the international community. In reality, protecting humanity by following the authenticity and influence of a humanitarian legacy stands away from theoretical nobility. Thus, the central argument of this paper is: How involvement of the international community diverges from theoretical perception to practice?

<sup>9</sup> Mohamed Douifi, "Blair's Foreign Policy Discourse on Iraq," in *Language and the Complex of Ideology: A Socio-Cognitive Study of Warfare Discourse in Britain* (2018): 105-159.

<sup>10</sup> Marina Henke, "Tony Blair's gamble: The Middle East peace process and British participation in the Iraq 2003 campaign," *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 20, no. 4 (2018): 773-789.

<sup>11</sup> Carlo Focarelli, "The Responsibility to Protect Doctrine and Humanitarian Intervention: Too Many Ambiguities for a Working Doctrine," *Journal of Conflict and Security Law* 13, no. 2 (2008): 191-213.

<sup>12</sup> Judi Atkins, "A New Approach to Humanitarian Intervention? Tony Blair's 'Doctrine of the International Community'," *British Politics* 1 (2006): 274-283.

<sup>13</sup> Robert MA Crawford, *Idealism and Realism in International Relations* (Routledge, 2005).

<sup>14</sup> Hans Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (New York: Alfred A. Kopf, 1948).

<sup>15</sup> Jonathan Monten, "Thucydides and Modern Realism," *International Studies Quarterly* 50, no. 1 (2006): 3-25.

With such theoretical thoughtfulness, this paper argues that the conceptualisation of the ‘Doctrine of International Community’ and R2P have been entrapped between theoretical nobility and flawed application. In delineating such an argument, this paper outlines a brief review of the international community in general and two theories of humanitarian intervention in particular. Thereafter, the involvement of the international community in different humanitarian crises has been highlighted. Finally, a comparative analysis has been drawn to comprehend the involvement of the international community and the divergence from noble perception to flawed application.

This paper is divided into six sections. After the introduction, the methodology has been discussed in the second section. In the third section, theories of humanitarian intervention are explored with the required explanation. The fourth section discusses the involvement of the international community in different humanitarian crises. Section five provides a comparative analysis of the international community’s involvement in different humanitarian crises followed by a conclusion.

## **2. Methodology**

This paper has followed qualitative analysis. In doing so, the study has been conducted on different primary and secondary resources that include documents, policies, and other web-based sources. Interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), case studies, and participant observation have been considered as key techniques while conducting qualitative research. In addition, various social behavior of the target group population has been noted in the form of maintaining a diary. Google and other online search engines have been considered for accessing web-based resources. The author has an opportunity to conduct fieldwork in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) which was related to the involvement of the international community in a conflict-prone society. This persists as valuable evidence of primary analysis which complements incorporating the author’s explanation and arguments.

During the field trip to BiH, three FGDs were organised where people from different walks of life had been considered. These groups included local shopkeepers, university students and university teachers. A total of six policymakers and government officials were interviewed to learn their understanding of the involvement of the international community in the Balkan Crisis and other humanitarian disasters. The author particularly observed the attitude of general people to learn their opinion during the Balkan War. The fieldwork experience of BiH had been particularly beneficial

for gathering knowledge on people's perceptions regarding the involvement of the international community.

### 3. Theories of Humanitarian Intervention

Following the end of the Cold War, conflict and violence further increased between state actors and non-state actors, and among non-state actors, it triggers debates regarding the involvement of the international community in intervening in other state's affairs.<sup>16</sup> In response to such an affair, a central theme of debate prevails regarding the legality, legitimacy and parameter for humanitarian intervention. According to Mamdani<sup>17</sup>, the involvement of the international community in intervening in other states' affairs lack clear legitimacy based on the non-interference principle of the Westphalia System. More so, the definition of 'international community' remained blurred as there is no clear understanding of who exactly constitutes the body of the international community. However, Weigend and other scholars attempted to outline the definition of the international community based on common understanding and noble consensus.<sup>18</sup> But, such outlining is not explicit as has been opined by Medina<sup>19</sup>, Tsilonis and other intellectuals.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, the response of the international community to global crises remains chaotic due to a lack of common consensus, noble will, political interest and universal legitimacy. Such a drawback of the international community hinders demonstrating its firm role to act boldly against evil deeds as Hohlfeld<sup>21</sup> indicates a lack of organisational capability and legal acceptance of the international community as a drawback for discharging responsibility to protect.

As the United Nations (UN) was formed in the year of 1945, the concept of the 'international community' drew increasing attention. The international community is a phrase, which is used in geopolitics and the theory of IR that usually refers to a group of people and governments of the world.<sup>22</sup> It is not inclusive to all nations

---

<sup>16</sup> John Robb, *Brave New War: The Next Stage of Terrorism and the End of Globalization* (John Wiley & Sons, 2007.)

<sup>17</sup> Mahmood Mamdani, *Saviors and Survivors: Darfur, Politics, and the War on Terror* (New York, 2009).

<sup>18</sup> Thomas Weigend, "The Universal Terrorist: The International Community Grappling with a Definition," *Journal of International Criminal Justice* 4, no. 5 (2006): 912-932.

<sup>19</sup> Vicente Medina, *Terrorism as a Toxic Term: Why Definition Matters*, (2019).

<sup>20</sup> Victor Tsilonis, "The Definition of International Crime," *The Jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court* (2019): 1-25.

<sup>21</sup> Hohlfeld, "Saving R2P: Remediating Three Common Mistakes," (2018).

<sup>22</sup> David Ellis, "On the possibility of "International Community"," *International Studies Review* 11, no. 1 (2009): 1-26.

or states, rather typically used to indicate those groups, people, state and non-state actors, politicians and civil society who have a common understanding of specific issues in the world order. The term is commonly used to attain noble consensus on disputed issues. With the advent of conflicting world order, the term has become commonplace for politicians, academia, and other critics to explore theoretical evaluation and practical implementation in manifesting IR theory. The international community can form a unitary body for resolving global issues through international organisations like the UN, the African Union (AU) and other international or regional unitary bodies. However, the condition of forming a meaningful international community remains debatable due to differences of opinion and interest in global commons. Therefore, the role and involvement of the international community is passing through a period of profound change as Alley<sup>23</sup> perceives such a change is imminent in the contemporary global political system.

Throughout the 1990s, international intervention greatly increased, mostly as an appeal to humanitarian intervention. These involvements were propagated by global actors due to the outbreak of humanitarian crises encompassing the Rwandan genocide, the Srebrenica Massacre and most recently the Rohingya expulsion from Myanmar.<sup>24</sup> Humanitarian crises demand more involvement from the international community to save humanity. However, conflict of interest among different actors of the international community lacks legitimacy, authority and credibility to discharge their committed responsibilities. Thus, existing legal and political concepts remain short of serving the purpose of settling conflicting and disputed issues.<sup>25</sup> The concept of humanitarian intervention, within the contextual setting of the state's sovereignty, had raised numerous controversial issues well before Blair gave away his concept or the concept of R2P had been propagated.

### 3.1 *R2P*

The R2P is a consensus-based global commitment that was endorsed at a World Summit in the year of 2005 by the UN. In that Summit, members of the UN anonymously agreed to save humanity from four key concerns: genocide, a war crime, ethnic cleansing and crime against humanity. According to the norm of R2P, saving the innocent and affected by conflict becomes the moral responsibility

---

<sup>23</sup> Roderic Alley, *Internal Conflict and the International Community: Wars Without End?* (Taylor & Francis, 2017).

<sup>24</sup> Thomas Weiss, *Humanitarian Intervention* (John Wiley & Sons, 2016).

<sup>25</sup> Anne Orford, "On international legal method," *London Review of International Law* 1, no. 1 (2013): 166-197.

of the international community.<sup>26</sup> Though the R2P was officially endorsed in 2005, its concept emerged way back in the early 90s in response to the failure of the international community to stop violence in Rwanda and later at Srebrenica. After the Second World War, the establishment of the UN could generate a consensus for preventing conflicts between states. However, intra-state violence remained largely ignored as the UN was more apprehensive about addressing inter-state conflicts.<sup>27</sup> In the case of intra-state violence, citizens of a state get affected by various state apparatus. Though, a state has an obligation to protect its citizens, sometimes such an obligation remains ignored. In other cases, citizens may come under oppression by state or non-state actors. Thus, innocent people of a state remain vulnerable to both external and internal threats. During the 1990s, the world experienced intra-state violence in Rwanda and former Yugoslavia. In both cases, the oppression of innocent people had been conducted by different state organs. Once people in Rwanda and former Yugoslavia were shattered by violence, the global actors remained ill-prepared to address those disputes due to the issue of the limits of national sovereignty.

During the Rwanda Crisis, the UN was deeply divided between those who insisted on humanitarian intervention and those who viewed such an action as a breach of the norm of national sovereignty.<sup>28</sup> During the Kosovo Crisis in 1999, the UNSC could not make a way out to settle the dispute between warring parties which caused disaster to millions of innocent people.<sup>29</sup> As the UNSC had been struggling for an amicable solution in Kosovo, NATO initiated air strafing bypassing the authorisation of the UN.<sup>30</sup> The conceptual development of R2P was in process, yet could not be implemented as global powers were in dilemma on how to intervene in a systematic violation of human rights without the interference of state sovereignty. After the genocide in Rwanda in 1994, global actors felt the obligation of protecting innocent people from atrocity and war crimes. A statutory body was formed in the year 2000 namely the 'International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty' (ICISS). The ICISS was given the responsibility to formulate policy guidelines regarding the modus of intervention by the international community in case of any humanitarian threat to innocent people. Finally, the Report of the ICISS was accepted by the UN Summit in 2005. The Report concluded that sovereignty entailed both

<sup>26</sup> Nicholas Glover, "A Critique of the Theory and Practice of R2P," *E-International Relations* 27 (2011).

<sup>27</sup> Aidan Hehir, "The Responsibility to Protect: 'Sound and Fury Signifying Nothing?'" *International Relations* 24, no. 2 (2010): 218-239.

<sup>28</sup> Michael Barnett, "The UN Security Council, Indifference, and Genocide in Rwanda," *Cultural Anthropology* 12, no. 4 (1997): 551-578.

<sup>29</sup> Mark Webber, "The Kosovo War: A Recapitulation," *International Affairs* 85, no. 3 (2009): 447-459

<sup>30</sup> Bruno Simma, "NATO, the UN and the Use of Force: Legal Aspects," *European Journal of International Law* 10, no. 1 (1999): 1-22.

rights and responsibilities.<sup>31</sup> A state has the right to protect its sovereignty, and at the same time, the state has the responsibility to protect its people from major violence against human rights. The central framework of R2P is based on three main pillars which have been quoted by Chandler<sup>32</sup>:

- **Pillar 1:** Every state has the responsibility to protect its populations from four mass atrocity crimes: genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing;
- **Pillar 2:** The wider international community has the responsibility to encourage and assist individual states in meeting that responsibility; and
- **Pillar 3:** If a state is manifestly failing to protect its populations, the international community must be prepared to take appropriate collective action, in a timely and decisive manner and in accordance with the UN Charter.

### 3.2 *Doctrine According to Blair's Propagation*

Blair pronounced the guiding parameter for the international community in 1999. However, the core concept of humanitarian intervention by the international community had existed much before Blair promoted the doctrine.<sup>33</sup> In the mid-80s, Weinberger described the parameters for humanitarian intervention. While setting down parameters for humanitarian intervention, he suggested that the situation must be evaluated according to specific features.<sup>34</sup> Weinberger pronounced the rationality of humanitarian intervention by mentioning that global responsibility cannot be hamstrung by confusion and indecisiveness. During the Balkan Crisis, the mass killing at Srebrenica in 1995 stunned the world. Similarly, the world experienced traumatic suffering in Afghanistan and Iraq. In both cases, the international community who had the moral obligation to protect innocents from atrocities by using appropriate means could not discharge their responsibility effectively. Even during the Rohingya Crisis in Rakhine, the international community could not intervene effectively either

---

<sup>31</sup> Alex Bellamy, "Realizing the Responsibility to Protect," *International Studies Perspectives* 10, no. 2 (2009): 111-128.

<sup>32</sup> David Chandler, "R2P or not R2P? More state-building, less responsibility," *Global Responsibility to Protect* 2, no. 1 (2010): 161-166.

<sup>33</sup> Cristina Badescu, and Thomas G. Weiss, "Misrepresenting R2P and advancing norms: an alternative spiral?" *International Studies Perspectives* 11, no. 4 (2010): 354-374.

<sup>34</sup> Gail Yoshitani, *Reagan on War: A Reappraisal of the Weinberger Doctrine, 1980-1984* (Texas A&M University Press, 2011).



by diplomatic, humanitarian or other peaceful means.<sup>35</sup> The initial response of the international community had been praiseworthy for protecting innocent civilians. However, many of the Rohingyas had to take shelters in neighboring countries for saving their lives. The Rohingya population could not be protected from mass killings and other forms of violence even though the UN had a clear mandate under Chapters VI and VIII of the UN Charter.<sup>36</sup> The involvement of the international community, involved since the Kosovo Conflict to the Rakhine Crisis, could play a more contributive role to protect innocent people.

The doctrine of the international community had a spill-over impact on the Kosovo Conflict. The doctrine could convince civil society and the international community in changing the socio-political structure of the world in succeeding years. The doctrine drew the attention of civil society and generated the thrived to shape up issues like the humanitarian responsibility of states and communities safeguarding the R2P. In a speech to the UN General Assembly (UNGA) in 1999, the then UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan raised the voice regarding the responsibility of key global actors for saving humanity.<sup>37</sup> Reiterating the dilemmas of humanitarian intervention, he asked the international community for finding a new approach on how to negotiate the conflicting issues to save humanity from the scourge of war. Thus, ICISS was formed in September 2000. This commission brought out significant findings for the protection of the affected population from violence and devastation that developed the insight of R2P that viewed sovereignty as a responsibility where states and the international community have a responsibility to look after the sufferings of the affected population.<sup>38</sup> Over the years, the concept of R2P has occupied a central discourse in the theories of IR.

Blair's doctrine presented the conditions for humanitarian intervention by the global community that had established deciding parameters for any intervention in other states' affairs. The perception had been based on the 'just war theory' that gives the international community a sense of power to protect fundamental human rights not in the Westphalian system but under the world order in the post-Cold War

<sup>35</sup> Kazi Fahmida Farzana, *Memories of Burmese Rohingya Refugees: Contested Identity and Belonging* (Springer, 2017).

<sup>36</sup> Maung Zarni and Alice Cowley, "The slow-burning genocide of Myanmar's Rohingya," *Pac. Rim L. & Pol'y J.* 23 (2014): 683.

<sup>37</sup> Kofi Annan, "Address of the Secretary-General to the UN General Assembly," *GA/9596* (1999).

<sup>38</sup> Alex Bellamy, and Tim Dunne, "R2P in Theory and Practice," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Responsibility to Protect* (2016): 3-17.

era.<sup>39</sup> In the case of deciding on when, where and how to intervene, Blair proposed five major inquiries that had to be taken into account while deciding on any such approach.<sup>40</sup> These five deciding parameters are:

- Are we sure of our case?
- Have we exhausted all diplomatic options?
- Are there military operations we can sensibly and prudently undertake?
- Are we prepared for the long term?
- Do we have national interests involved?

According to Blair, a detailed assessment is required before involving in any humanitarian intervention. The international community needs to ask all the five questions that have been mentioned by Blair as ‘deciding parameters’, and affirmative answers to those five questions would create a strong urge for the international community for launching an intervention. Such perception of Blair supports Weinberger’s doctrine which advocates the compulsion of intervention within the ‘choice’ and ‘necessity’ test model.<sup>41</sup> Weinberger’s statement, regarding the humanitarian intervention by the international community, had been pronounced just before the preceding year of Blair’s Chicago Speech. Like Blair, Weinberger had also opted for five major questions for evaluating the validity of the international community while planning for any humanitarian intervention. This evaluation needs to be made, according to Weinberger, based on a 5-question test. Surprisingly, these five questions are almost similar to what Blair preferred for validation through five questions before involving in any humanitarian intervention. Like Blair’s first question, Weinberger preferred to seek a definite political objective that needs to be clearly defined. In the case of the second one, Weinberger opted for nonviolent negotiation before any military intervention. Weinberger’s third and fourth questions were related to cost-benefit assessment for applying military forces and gain-risk analysis for total involvement. The last question of Weinberger, related to a futuristic assessment, had a little variation from Blair’s one. Weinberger did not prefer the involvement of national interest as had been determined by Blair. Instead, Weinberger choose a contingency plan if the initial plan had failed. However, in the succeeding years, Blair’s concept got more focus from the international

---

<sup>39</sup> Neta Crawford, “Just war theory and the US counterterror war,” *Perspectives on Politics* 1, no. 1 (2003): 5-25.

<sup>40</sup> Tony Blair, “A global alliance for global values.”

<sup>41</sup> Kenneth Campbell, “Once burned, twice cautious: explaining the Weinberger-Powell doctrine,” *Armed Forces & Society* 24, no. 3 (1998): 357-374.

community than Weinberger's one (both Blair's Doctrine and R2P have already been described in detail).

#### **4. Involvement of the International Community in Practice**

##### **4.1 *Involvement of International Community***

Blair propagated his concept of international intervention at a critical time when the global actors were in dilemma for addressing humanitarian tragedies. At that time, the situation in Kosovo was on the verge of a massive military campaign that affected thousands of innocent people. Specifying the crisis of Kosovo in particular and the sufferings of innocent people across the globe in general, Blair stressed that the international community would have been involved in settling problematic issues on the basis of international cooperation. Blair's doctrine or the doctrine of the international community further reiterated the moral responsibility of the international community for involving in any humanitarian intervention where threats can be perceived against international peace and security. Blair's propagation is particularly significant in the sense that his philosophical speech could convince the international community to get involved in the Kosovo Crisis for saving innocent people.<sup>42</sup> In the preceding years, the world experienced war crimes in Rwanda and Balkan where the response of the international community was either delayed or less effective.<sup>43</sup> In succeeding years, the world had seen more involvement of the international community in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and elsewhere for settling disputes. Thus, Blair's doctrine remains significant before and after its propagation for the involvement of the international community in world politics.<sup>44</sup>

The Rwanda Crisis in 1994 left behind close to a million people dead and other heinous crimes. The international community could not stop the violence and war crimes on innocent people possessing the dilemma of violating the norm of sovereignty in the process of intervention. In the Balkan Crisis during 1992-1995, the international community could not come to a common consensus on how to intervene in a situation of ethnic conflict. Having the mandate and authority to save innocent people, the international community could not repel the Srebrenica Massacre. Such an

<sup>42</sup> Oliver Daddow, "'Tony's war'? Blair, Kosovo and the Interventionist Impulse in British Foreign Policy," *International Affairs* 85, no. 3 (2009): 547-560.

<sup>43</sup> Ariye, "A Bystander to Genocidal: Revisiting UN Failure in the Balkans and Rwanda," *European Scientific Journal* 11, no. 11 (2015).

<sup>44</sup> Andrew Dorman, *Blair's successful war: British military intervention in Sierra Leone* (Ashgate Publishing, 2013).

impasse of the international community has been defined by Vassilev<sup>45</sup> as a limitation due to the conflict of interest among the actors involved in the Balkan Conflict. According to Honig<sup>46</sup>, some of the peacekeeping forces, responsible for protecting the affected community could not adequately role-play as they preferred to save their forces than the victims.<sup>47</sup>

As Blair pursued convincing other global actors for intervening in Kosovo and elsewhere, the international community still had a dilemma on how to make a fine balance between humanitarian intervention and state-sovereignty dogma. However, NATO was successful in launching a military campaign even without the required approval of the UNSC.<sup>48</sup> Global actors in the UNSC had been in a debate on whether to get involved in a military campaign or further persuasion through diplomatic channels. Therefore, NATO's intervention appeared a time-worthy measure in a more appropriate manner. However, the same notion of nobility was not demonstrated once the UK-US Allied Forces launched a military campaign in Iraq against the consent of the world community. In succeeding years, once the policy guideline of the R2P was approved by the UN, the world observed atrocities, war crimes and crimes against humanity. The status quo of the global community in resolving the Rohingya problem is one such a case. Having the authenticity to save innocent people, the international community is yet to resolve the Rohingya issue amicably. Therefore, the involvement of the international community seems to remain in theory than in practice.

## **4.2 *Involvement of the International Community in Different Humanitarian Crises***

### **4.2.1 *Rwanda Genocide***

In 1994, Rwanda experienced a brutal massacre that took place due to an ethnic clash between the Hutu and the Tutsi. Within a time of approximately 100 days, from 7th April to 15th July, as many as 800,000 people, mostly of the Tutsi minority, were killed and more than two million refugees, mostly Hutu, fled Rwanda resulting in one of the most disastrous humanitarian crises of modern

<sup>45</sup> Boyko Vassilev, "Balkan Eye: Conflicts of Interests," *Transitions Online* 07/20 (2010).

<sup>46</sup> Jan Willem Honig, "Peacekeeping and the Utility of Force: General Sir Michael Rose," *Ways Out of War: Peacemakers in the Middle East and Balkans* (2012): 163-186.

<sup>47</sup> Robert Siekmann, "The fall of Srebrenica and the attitude of Dutch bat from an international legal perspective" *Yearbook of International Humanitarian Law* 1 (1998): 301-312.

<sup>48</sup> Sean Kay, "NATO, the Kosovo war and neoliberal theory," *Contemporary Security Policy* 25, no. 2 (2004): 252-279.

history. During the genocide in Rwanda, the international community had been criticised for ignoring the posture of a forthcoming humanitarian crisis, and later for the delayed response to the genocide.<sup>49</sup> Amid heated political instability in Rwanda, the UNSC withdrew most of the peacekeepers of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) just a few days before the genocide. Later, the UNSC authorised a robust force of 5000 troops. However, the UN peacekeeping force arrived in Rwanda after the genocide was over and could do little for the purpose the force was mobilised. The French intervention was initiated by the French government separately in July 1994. However, French involvement had been alleged to be pursuing its national interest.<sup>50</sup> According to Moore<sup>51</sup>, the French government had been more concerned about their national interest which was mentioned as the ‘fifth parameter’ of Blair’s Doctrine. However, the French forces launched a military operation, with the assistance of the UN and Belgian forces to evacuate expatriates from Rwanda. In late June, the French troops launched another military operation to create a safe area for displaced persons.

#### 4.2.2 *Balkan Conflicts*

The former Yugoslav Federation fell into a deep political and economic crisis after the death of its autocratic ruler Josip Broz Tito in 1980. After the continuation of decade-long political resentment, in the backdrop of nationalistic issues, violent armed conflict spilled over Yugoslavia’s six constituent republics. Later, in 1998, resentment erupted in Kosovo which had been a Serbian province, and later emerged as an independent state. The involvement of the international community during the Balkan Conflicts can be characterised in two broad categories: reluctant response in the case of Bosnian atrocity and prompt reaction in the case of The Kosovo Conflict. During the 1992–95 Bosnian War, thousands of people were killed and millions of people were displaced due to the violent ethnic conflict. The Bosnian War was further labeled for the Srebrenica Massacre, the longest seizure of Sarajevo city and the conduct of other heinous war crimes.

---

<sup>49</sup> Joanne Davis, “Mobilizing transnational gender politics in post-genocide Rwanda” *African Affairs* 116, no. 465 (2017): 725-726.

<sup>50</sup> Catherine Gegout, “Realism, Neocolonialism and European Military Intervention in Africa,” *Fear and Uncertainty in Europe: The Return to Realism?* (2019): 265-288.

<sup>51</sup> Jina Moore, “Rwanda Accuses France of Complicity in 1994 Genocide,” *The New York Times* 13 (2017).

**Figure 1: Yugoslavia's Six Republics—Slovenia, Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia, Montenegro and Macedonia.<sup>52</sup>**



The war witnessed a broad swing in the international community and its response to stop ethnic cleansing, avert sexual abasement, and prevent war crimes. The Srebrenica Massacre, in the presence of the UN peacekeepers, raised the question of the ability, and commitment of the international community in regard to R2P. Though the Bosnian Conflict ended in 1995 following the Dayton Peace Agreement, the Crises erupted again in 1998 as the pro-independent ethnic Albanian rebels stood against Serbia's Armed Forces. While the Bosnian Conflict experienced the confusing stance of the international community, the Kosovo Crisis drew a quick response. As a result, the Kosovo Crisis ended in 1998 after 11 weeks of bombing campaign by the US-led NATO forces. The posture of the international community's involvement differs in the case of Kosovo from Bosnia. The UK-initiated and the US-led intervention had been successful in Kosovo, while the international community struggled to reach to an explicit consensus for Bosnia. Henriksen viewed such a dual posture of the international community as a 'power (the Lion)' and 'deception (the Fox)' approach of Machiavellian philosophical dogma.<sup>53</sup>

---

<sup>52</sup> BBC Archive: Europe.

<sup>53</sup> Dag Henriksen, *NATO's Gamble: Combining Diplomacy and Airpower in the Kosovo Crisis, 1998-1999* (Naval Institute Press, 2013).

### 4.2.3 *Iraq War*

The US-led coalition forces, primarily from the UK, initiated the war on Iraq on 19 March 2003. In the case of the Iraq invasion, the international community could not reach a common consensus on the use of force against a sovereign country.<sup>54</sup> No broad coalition was formed to oust Saddam. Public opinion in Europe and the Middle East was against the war. Many Arab states decried the allied occupation as an invasion of Arab soil by foreign intruders. Yet, the military operation was launched with the allied allegation that Iraq had been possessing Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD). As Iraq's possession of WMD became elusive, the allied forces allegedly representing the international community had been justifying the use of force to remove Saddam Hussein on a humanitarian rationale.<sup>55</sup> The US intelligence services were accused of providing incorrect reports regarding Iraq's possession of WMD after failing to find any weapon of such kind. Later on, the US Government admitted that they did not find any sign of WMD in Iraq.<sup>56</sup> According to Butt<sup>57</sup>, the Bush Administration deliberately misled the world with falsified information that is viewed by Rogers (2017) as a 'Conspiracy Theory' approach for trading power politics in exchange for noble R2P.

### 4.2.4 *Rohingya Crisis*

The Rohingya expulsion from Myanmar is a classic example of forced migration that caused a traumatic effect in the Rakhine Province.<sup>58</sup> Hundreds of thousands of Rohingyas fled from Rakhine to Bangladesh in the late 1970s. In the recent influx of Rohingya exodus, close to a million crossed the Myanmar border to quell the persuasion of reaching a safe place. Over the decades, the Rohingya community has undergone deprivation and marginalisation. They have been denied citizenship under the 1982 Citizenship Law, which placed them as one of the largest stateless populations in the world. As the Rohingyas have been facing both identity and existence crises, Khan and Ahmed argue that the international community's interest-based approach has caused a status-quo situation for solving the Rohingya problem

---

<sup>54</sup> James DeFronzo, *The Iraq War: Origins and Consequences* (Routledge, 2018).

<sup>55</sup> Charles Duelfer, "WMD elimination in Iraq, 2003," *The Non-proliferation Review* 23, no. 1-2 (2016): 163-184.

<sup>56</sup> Tenzin Nakdon, and Chimat Ladol, "America's Occupation of Iraq and its Implications," *RESEARCH REVIEW International Journal of Multidisciplinary* 8, no. 5 (2023): 101-108.

<sup>57</sup> Ahsan Butt, "Why Did the United States Invade Iraq in 2003?" *Security Studies* 28, no. 2 (2019): 250-285.

<sup>58</sup> Azeem Ibrahim, *The Rohingyas: Inside Myanmar's Genocide* (Oxford University Press, 2018).



amicably.<sup>59</sup> However, the UN fact-finding mission recommended that the UNSC should impose an arms embargo and other sanctions on the top officials of Myanmar despite relentless resistance from some UNSC members. Though the international community extended assistance in providing aid to the helpless Rohingya community, yet, repatriation of Rohingya still remains an unsettled issue due to the differences of opinion and indecisiveness among the world actors. Despite such confusion, resistance and indecisiveness of the international community, Gambia filed the first international lawsuit in 2019 against Myanmar at the International Court of Justice (ICJ).<sup>60</sup> However, the Rohingya Crisis remains in the status quo situation due to the differences in understanding among and within the international community.

The Rohingya exodus has a spillover effect on local, regional and global perspectives. Locally, Bangladesh is facing challenges from both environmental and socio-economical viewpoints. Providing shelter for more than a million Rohingyas has caused widespread deforestation which has created an ecological imbalance in surrounding areas. The huge influx of Rohingyas has also instigated non-traditional security threats to Bangladesh and its neighbouring countries. Human trafficking, drug trafficking and arms smuggling pose a security threat regionally. Bangladesh and its neighboring countries like India and China are also affected by the deterioration of security dynamics due to the emergence of militant and terrorist groups. Being the regional powers, India and China need to take the initiative for settling this Rohingya crisis.

## **5. Involvement of the International Community: A Comparative Analysis**

The core concept of the R2P and Blair's doctrine is noble. Yet, in some cases, its application remains flawed. As a result, overall nobility to save innocent people collapses into the realist frame as the core concept provides a timely reminder of the important role of the international community through theoretic considerations in constraining realistic thinking in the moral assessment of the war.<sup>61</sup> Blair's approach was taken as the persuasion of his concept to convince the world community for timely involvement of world power or international community so that humanitarian disasters can be handled

---

<sup>59</sup> Mohammad Tanzimuddin Khan and Saima Ahmed, "Dealing with the Rohingya crisis: The relevance of the general assembly and R2P," *Asian Journal of Comparative Politics* 5, no. 2 (2020): 121-143.

<sup>60</sup> Kerstin Carlson and Line Engbo Gissel, "Why the Gambia's Plea for the Rohingya Matters for International Justice," (2020).

<sup>61</sup> Judi Atkins, "A New Approach to Humanitarian Intervention? Tony Blair's 'Doctrine of the International Community'," *British Politics* 1 (2006): 274-283.



well in advance.<sup>62</sup> Blair was quite successful to convince the NATO forces for conducting air strafing. NATO's success in Kosovo encouraged Blair to take further audacious steps against Iraq. In the case of military intervention in Kosovo, Blair's initiative was praised by the international community. However, his role in launching military forces in Iraq was criticised with a plea for gaining political dominance in world politics.<sup>63</sup> Therefore, the fact remains: Blair could convince the international community for military intervention in both Iraq and Kosovo for saving the distressed population. With such a consensus, he could attain a kind of ethical legitimacy for military intervention against those states who appeared to be threats to the world's peace and security. However, Blair's Doctrine has contributed to the emergence of a new dimension for the involvement of the international community where theoretical perception and its application depend on different geo-political hegemony.

During the Rwanda Genocide, the response of the French Government reiterates the Theory of Realism which denotes that states will only risk resources for self-interest. The French troops were deployed on humanitarian grounds. However, their humanitarian intervention had been overtaken by French national interest that appeared to be the primary focus of French political leaders if not the boots on the ground.<sup>64</sup> The response of the international community in the pre-genocide stage had been observed as an ignored posture, whereas, their involvement in the post-genocide stage was seen as a reluctant attitude.<sup>65</sup> The French intervention was launched within a few days after the French Government decided for deploying troops in Rwanda. On the other hand, the UN took months to redeploy peacekeepers in Rwanda, and by the time the UN placed its boot on the ground, the atrocities were over. This signifies that the international community had a means for the rapid deployment of an operational force to tackle a humanitarian crisis. Yet, their interests and motives may overtake the operational capability once the cause for protecting humanity comes forward. From the military point of view, the French intervention was justified on humanitarian grounds. However, the intervention was politically directed to retain French influence than that of saving humanity in Rwanda. According to Stanton<sup>66</sup>,

<sup>62</sup> Colin Tyler, and Colin Tyler, "Blair's Legacy: 'International Community', Domestic (In) security and the Continuing Erosion of Civil Liberties," *Common Good Politics: British Idealism and Social Justice in the Contemporary World* (2017): 261-291.

<sup>63</sup> Oliver Daddow, "'Tony's war'? Blair, Kosovo and the interventionist impulse in British foreign policy" *International Affairs* 85, no. 3 (2009): 547-560.

<sup>64</sup> Philip Hammond, "Framing post-Cold War conflicts: The media and international intervention," In *Framing post-Cold War conflicts* (Manchester University Press, 2018).

<sup>65</sup> Agnes Callamard, "French policy in Rwanda," in *The Path of a Genocide*, (Routledge, 2017), 157-184.

<sup>66</sup> Gregory Stanton, "Could the Rwandan genocide have been prevented?" *Journal of Genocide Research* 6, no. 2 (2004): 211-228.

some actors of the international community did not dwindle to act for protecting the lives, they choose not to protect due to the conflict of respective interests. For that, the international community in total should not be made responsible, rather the vested actors to be made responsible.

NATO's intervention in Serbia and Kosovo had been recognised as largely positive from the argument that the Kosovo issue could be solved amicably if the international community could come to a common consensus well before. Success in Kosovo gave more recognition to Blair and as a result, Blair was encouraged to take more audacious decisions in subsequent years. Out of the UK, Blair could convince the USA to use force in Iraq in the form of military intervention. However, the US-led military intervention in Iraq was different than Rwanda, Kosovo and Rohingya issues as the self-proclaimed legacy by the UK and USA had been the main driving force for the Iraq invasion. The use of humanitarian arguments to justify the invasion of Iraq posed a crucial challenge to the involvement of the international community.

In the case of the Rohingya Crisis, the international community had been praised for delivering humanitarian aid to the affected community. However, the role of the international community appears non-decisive in the case of repatriating the affected community as has been highlighted by Ahsan.<sup>67</sup> The international community has been struggling in resolving this issue amicably. The Rohingya issue has not been properly addressed due to various geopolitical dynamics. The involvement of international actors may be dictated by their national interests and geo political standpoints. Regional and global powers have their own interests which refrain them from reaching a common consensus in resolving this crisis. However, within the framework of R2P, international actors have the obligation to stop the ethnic cleansing in Rakhine State and the mass exodus of Rohingya to Bangladesh. According to Blair's Doctrine, the international community has noble responsibility for protecting humanity and saving innocent people from oppression. The Rohingya Crisis appears to be a home-grown issue in Bangladesh and Myanmar. But it has a spillover effect on different security issues. This is not a humanitarian issue only, rather, it has complex security dynamics from regional and global perspectives. Therefore, this issue needs to be considered from both a noble and realist point of view.

---

<sup>67</sup> Syed Badrul Ahsan, "The Rohingya Crisis: Why the World must Act Decisively," *Asian Affairs* 49, no. 4 (2018): 571-581.

## 6. Conclusion

Past humanitarian disasters were a painful reminder for the international community for failing to act and protect. In the past, despite having robust military capability, the international community did little to protect the affected community. In many cases, influential powers called out dialogue with a reason for not complying with their national interests. Others, involved, looked for their interests at the time of necessity, or responded reluctantly due to confusing signals from the international community. This pattern was captured during the international community's involvement in Rwanda, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Iraq. In the case of the Rohingya issue, the international community has been criticised either for not doing enough for humanity or remaining in an indecisive posture.

In the case of the Bosnian War, the international community was criticised for its reactive posture. However, the crisis could be addressed due to the strong involvement of the USA and other European countries after the Srebrenica Massacre took place. Therefore, parties to the conflict were compelled to sit for negotiation and the 'Dayton Peace Agreement' was promulgated. There is a criticism regarding the effective implementation of the agreement, yet the world did not experience another Srebrenica in the Balkan region. For Kosovo, the involvement of the international community was delayed. Yet, that could stop the warring parties from escalating to further violence. In the case of the Rohingya Crisis, the involvement of the international community was neither even effectively delayed nor reactive. More than a million people had been displaced from the Rakhine State and the world could not stop their forced migration to another country. The displaced people could not return to their homes for decades and the international community could not create a favourable environment for their safe return. In previous cases, the world had witnessed humanitarian intervention by the international community to protect innocent people from further oppression. The displaced Rohingya community is still waiting to witness such a role from the regional and global actors. Thus, the hope of the displaced Rohingya community of the Rakhine State remains entrapped between the nobility of humanitarian commitment and the reality of geopolitics in the name of national interest.

In case of any humanitarian intervention, state sovereignty and human rights appear in opposing viewpoints. In such opposing viewpoints, the involvement of the international community remains blurred. Because, according to Article 2 of the UN Charter, state sovereignty and territorial integrity of a state should be respected

while interference in other states' internal affairs is discouraged. In such a case, Blair's doctrine loses its legitimacy for the humanitarian intervention that took place in Iraq. However, Blair's Doctrine also argues that the application of the doctrine is obligatory in the context of the realist world order. Therefore, the international community has a moral obligation to protect the affected community, and for this purpose, the exception to the customary norms may not be always viewed as a breach of the UN Charter. As such, for the sake of safeguarding humanity, the international community may have to apply the necessary means. Political approach, diplomatic dialogue or use of military power—all these are inclusive to the necessary means.

The core concept of Blair's Doctrine along with the R2P has been found noble, yet these doctrines produced a great deal of controversy, hindering its universal acceptance and implementation. Blair's Doctrine was propagated indicating the drawbacks of the Westphalia concept. State sovereignty is not only demonstrating power but also showing the notion of responsibility which is for both domestic and international purposes. As a state has a moral obligation to protect its citizens from odds, it also has the responsibility to safeguard world humanity from the scourge of immoral practices. Besides the state's responsibility, the international community is committed to maintaining peace and security in the world. And for the sake of maintaining, the international community may have to interfere with other states' affairs which are not supported by the Westphalia concept but remains an obligation by the humane norm. From the theoretical aspect, Blair's Doctrine has nobleness, yet remains under criticisms due to its biased application in Iraq. Blair's Doctrine has attenuated the noble practice of humanitarianism through the application of its biased and abusive use of power. Therefore, scholars and practitioners feared that the core concept of the R2P and the 'Doctrine of International Community' outside the UNSC might be used to justify abusive use in humanitarian intervention.<sup>68</sup>

---

<sup>68</sup> Alex Bellamy, "Responsibility to protect or Trojan horse? The crisis in Darfur and humanitarian intervention after Iraq," *Ethics & International Affairs* 19, no. 2 (2005): 31-54.