Is Donor State 'Securitisation' a Threat or an Opportunity for Humanitarianism?

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ABSTRACT

Since the end of the Cold War, a significant number of aid workers have been assaulted and killed, projecting humanitarian assistance as a precarious discourse. Given that humanitarian workers find themselves in dangerous environments and the threats they are exposed to, the need for security has become an exigent concern for most aid agencies and workers (Barnett, 2011 and VanBrabant, 2001). In view of this, security has now been implanted in the conceptualization, planning and delivery of aid. Though the Copenhagen School is associated with the theory of securitization which provides a framework for defining security as securitizing objects and referent objects (Watson,2011), different schools have construed securitization in different spheres. Waever, (2014) identifies that it is by labelling something as a security issue that it becomes one (Waever, 2014:13) while Murphy (2007) underscores that securitization is a public process that encompasses social security. Nevertheless, other scholars like Taureck (2006) have maintained that security to be an adaptable concept that is redefined constantly with Vaughn (2009) and Watson (2011) identifying that securitization discourse is promoted with humanitarianism itself. Due to the threats and perilous situations humanitarians are exposed to, governments and humanitarians aid agencies have revised their aid strategies to encompass security concerns often citing the adage "there is no security without development and no development without security"(Duffield, 2007:1). This paper therefore argues that donor state securitization is a threat for humanitarianism.

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Declining humanitarian access is a germane way donor state securitization has caused a threat for humanitarianism. The idea of securitization is that if humans are not protected adequately during humanitarian emergencies they will be able to provide for security needs. In the process of securitization of aid, there are often politicization of the process in the allocation of aid to affected region. In line with this, the humanitarian principles of neutrality, independence and impartiality are often compromised due to different interests of international agencies and interests of national governments. The incorporation of security into aid has engendered denial of humanitarian workers and the ability of these workers to access populations at risk. For instance in 2006 to 2008, the Database for Aid Workers Security maintained that there were 82 withdrawal or suspension including relocation to 15 countries. Also recently, the crisis in Afghanistan, Somalia, Iraq and the DRC is an epitome of humanitarian denial to affected populations (Stoddard et al, 2009). Mostly, in the process of crafting securitization into aid, existential threats are not identified resulting in problems of affected populations unaddressed. The inability of securitized aid to tackle crisis affected regions raises questions about the professionalism and efficient capacity of international agencies. Securitization incidents tend out to be threats to potential beneficiaries of aid and it is in line with Vaughn(2009:271) who maintained that "security incidents have a direct negative impact in an organizations ability to assist the victims of humanitarian emergencies as they typically result in programme closures, suspensions or even withdrawal". In addition to this, donor state securitization leads humanitarianism operations to operate in more risky environments. Securitized aid received by humanitarian organizations drives humanitarian organizations into perilous grounds sometimes with physical insecurity or denial of access by sovereign government causing ravages like death and threaths. The operation of humanitarian organizations on risky areas sometimes leads them to act in political and military interest of state governments which compromises humanitarian principles. A starker case was during civil wars in Burman and Kashmir during which the sovereign government consent had to be sought before access to affected populations which impeded broad humanitarian access. Also, when the ICC indicted President Bashir, Mr. Baskir expelled aid workers from Sudan which is a case of declining humanitarian space. The lack of

humanitarian space in Sudan caused the giving up of aid mostly in areas to bolster the government leading to a loss of impartiality (Seybolt, 1996).

Moreover, donor state securitization of aid has caused a threat for humanitarians due to the upsurge in attacks on humanitarian workers. In recent times, there has been an increase of aid security to humanitarians, however the insecurity of humanitarians continue to rise. Due to the securitization of aid humanitarians have been attracted to work in more dangerous environments. This situation has often led to humanitarians losing their lives or access to affected populations. In the process of securitization aid, the appraisals of local contexts, local customs, languages and culture are not incorporated. In view of this humanitarians who find themselves on the ground take on endeavours ill prepared due to lack of sufficient knowledge and information thereby leading to several ravages on humanitarianisms. Attacks on aid workers has risen as a result of securitization of aid because of rejection from armed opposition groups. This has engendered extortion or diversion of aid to benefit opposition groups challenges humanitarian independence and neutrality. The work by Fiona Terry(2002:40) in Somalia in the 1990s underscored that armed opposition groups diverted food to an unprecedented levels between 20% to 80% of aid was stolen. Also, there were high insecurity of humanitarian workers shrinking humanitarian space in Iraq following the US-led invasion. Furthermore, the report from Overseas Development Institute identifies that "there were high state of violence that there-quarters of aid workers were attacked in six countries with 260 humanitarian aid workers killed, abducted in 2008 which is the highest in 12 years and over the past three years violence was seen in the context of Afghanistan, Somalia and Sudan"(Ray, 2009).When humanitarians are attacked, this undermines principles of humanity. This is because when humanitarians are bedevilled with disaster, aid agencies sometimes downscale or suspend their operations and in the process assistance to affected populations tend to be cut short. The affected populations during conflicts and disasters have their survival dependent on the aid provided and hence delays or cuts in assistance tend to negatively hinge on their survival. The securitization of aid has led to humanitarians being attacked with aid agencies suspending or downscaling their operations which leads to the potential loss of thousand victims whom humanitarian food and medical programs tend to be far from reach (Egeland, 2004).

Furthermore, the securitization of aid has led to decreasing respect for humanitarian law which constitute a threat to humanitarianism. The securitization of aid is often viewed as politicized and skewed towards donor states that donor shave vested interests. For instance in 2008, 20% of all US aid were allocated to countries categorized as war zones such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan with aid stagnating to other conflict affected countries such as Cote d'Ivoire, Chad and Central African Republic. In the process of defeating armed insurgents, securitization of aid may also involve giving out of money to local people to win their hearts and minds for detailed information to help vanquish insurgents. In such issues, the neutrality and impartiality of humanitarians tend to be compromised. Also, in the provision of aid assistance to affected populations, humanitarians sometimes come in contact with dangerous opposition groups which sometimes coerces them to bed humanitarian laws to effectively accomplish their operations. Moreover, in recent times the increase in armed conflicts with a vast majority of victims being civilian populations has led to a declining respect for humanitarian law. Armed conflicts in the 1990's suggest that 90% of the causalities sustained were imputed to civilians (Gleditch et al, 2002). Also, the proliferation of armed non-state groups has led to a declining respect for humanitarian law. The motivations of these armed groups may be in their personal interests than to the acquisition of statehood and hence may decline from placing constraints on their behaviours. Due to the multiple and competing armed groups, there is a possibility of disregard for humanitarian laws in pursuit of groups' interests. The securitization of aid has led to disrespect for humanitarian law as non-state armed groups reveal nothing about objectives of the group or military tactics they might employ and hence reveal little about the prospects of respect for humanitarian law(Human Security Report, 2005).

In addition to this, the securitization of aid is a threat to humanitarianism due to increased security considerations rather than prioritizing poverty or need. In the process of securitizing aid, national security tend to override other priorities mostly with respect to poverty alleviation in conflict zones. The prioritizing

of security over humanitarian goals tend to shift development efforts and divert poverty reduction funds elsewhere. In the process of securitizing aid, terrorism has mostly been cited as not "weapon of the poor" which explains that security used to prevent terrorism will not be beneficial to the affected populations but tend to be recruited by terrorist organizations. For instance Iraq receives the same amount of aid as allocated to Sub-Saharan Africa as a whole yet some affected populations are exacerbated by poverty(Cosgrave, 2004). Also, the aid securitization can also lead to the pursuit of what can be perceived as the strategic objectives of donors which can fuel violence and neglect of duty towards the destitute. For instance, the Millennium Challenge Corporation which ties aid to stringent trade policies and governance stands in sharp contrast to the doubled and unconditional aid allocated to President Musharraf to help contain Al Quaeda and Talisban in regions of Afghanistan. Also, the securitization of aid could prove self-defeating due to aid being diverted from long-term strategies of poverty reduction to short-term objectives of national security which could prevent the aid from achieving its long term objectives. In aid securitization, civilian tasks could be assigned to military personnel's which is likely to fail due to lack of training and preparations for soldiers to promote gender equality or build schools. Also, the securitization of aid could highly lead to aid agencies being partial due to the overburdening of aid agencies with security tasks which could likewise jeopardize the staff of aid agencies due to confrontations with armed groups (Berthelemy, 2006).

CONCLUSION

The rampant aid theft and violence on attacks on humanitarians workers has warranted the securitizations of aid. The idea of securitization has been debated in the literature with several contrasting views from scholars and analysts. Often securitization of aid has been viewed as shifts in political thought which helps to assists humanitarian organizations in securitizing surplus populations. The theoretical underpinnings also maintain that securitization of aid is also part of a securitizing the spread of potentially destabilizing surplus populations. This paper has argued that donor state securitization of aid is a threat to humanitarians. In this paper, donor state securitization constitute a threat to humanitarianism due to declining humanitarian access, upsurge on attacks on humanitarian workers, decreasing respect for humanitarian law as well as aid securitization that has led to increased security considerations rather than prioritizing poverty or need. Donor state securitization of aid should make use of reducing the possibility of targeted attacks by reducing or moving the motivations to attack and in addition focus on the need of affected populations to address it adequately.

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