Draft

The Politics of Humanitarianism: Some Considerations

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Humanitarianism and its political derivate, humanitarian intervention exploded on to the scene a decade back. The concept of humanitarian intervention was justified as a manifest improvement over the Agenda for Peace approach to global peacekeeping to a more muscular way that sought to protect people from violence across the world and thereby advance the idea of human rights as an ethical imperative or a moral trump over several other competing ideas predicated on claims of juridical sovereignty. This study makes three claims concerning this rather unprecedented dilation of humanitarianism in international politics. First, it wishes to explain how the idea of protection is central humanitarianism and its derivative governemenatism in the form of modern population politics. It seeks to show how protection becomes the clog in the humanitarian contraption. It would also trace how the idea of protection is liberated as a form of charity to an inalienable right, the right to save immortal souls more than the perishable bodies. Secondly, and as a logical corollary to the first, this study would discuss Foucault's idea of biopower and biopolitics, understood as a politics of life, and Derrida's ideas of hospitality, gift and forgiveness to understand the challengesthe politics of protection. Foucault's work is particularly important in tracing how the internal technologies of care and protection evolved through the 18th and 19th centuries producing the familiar argument of rescuing and protecting the human being in distress. The paper would then analyse the different meanings of the politics of life and interrogate the literature that seeks to understand why some lives are prioritized over other in all humanitarian contexts. In a nutshell,the paper argues that the modern form of humanitarianism is a product of modern neo-liberal capitalism rather than a form of altruism or love for humanity.While feelings and emotions of affect, generosity, aiding the distressed and compassion are certainly found in all human societies, the enormous surge in humanitarian protection, and a set of ideas, discourses and practices crystallized around it, cannot be understood without connecting it to concrete economic and political realities that are expressed through the complex technologies of governance. Hence, the paper holds that humanitarian protection is a form of biopolitical governmentality, and, therefore, all contexts of humanitarian protection would show limits and prioritization of lives.

1. Protection and humanitarianism

The idea of humanitarianism is a widely reflected and analysed phenomenon though the bulk of the literature in international relations has approached the concept either through the prism of human rights or problems of security. However, this has often tended to obfuscate issues and prevented researchers from asking more fundamental questions. Instead of looking at humanitarianism through rights or security concerns, it is necessary to position how the idea of protection or hospitality has emerged as a key component of humanitarianism or humanitarian government. In simplest of terms, it is necessary to locate humanitarian practices as a part of population politics. The notions of humanitarian protection and care are inextricably intertwined with both the techniques of governance and the imperatives of the

neoliberal political economy. In this section we will trace how the idea of protection came to configure the modern practices of humanitarianism. While Foucault's path-breaking work on population politics and governmentality is pivotal to this analysis, engaging with Derrida's idea of hospitality is also necessary to understand the inescapable dilemmas that afflict us.

The idea of protection is central to humanitarianism. The historical roots of the idea goes back into the long past with both Christianity and Islam calling for charity and care of the distressed. In the words of Christ, "I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me. I was naked and you gave me clothing. I was sick and you took care of me. I was in prison and you visited me." (Matthew 25: 35-36). The idea of pastoral care is central to Christianity and the pastor becomes the agent to care for the weak, the troubled, the alienated and all those in need for personal welfare. The idea of pastoral care is also likened to that of shepherding the needy and the distressed, which, incidentally, went into Foucault's analysis of power, biopolitics and governmentality. In fact, the missionary activities of the Christian Churches were undoubtedly the most important careers and protagonists of early humanitarianism. Similarly, Islam also stressed the role of charityas a central aspect of its faith. Islamic teaching distinguished between zakat (obligatory charity) and sadaqa (voluntary contribution) and instructed believers of their duty to help their brethren in need. The Koran and the Hadith mentions different forms of charity related to helping the needy, protection from calamity, and debt relief and organized Islamic churches have engaged in aid and relief throughout medieval and modern histories. Other religious traditions also make similar pledges. Religion, in brief, constituted the first moment of humanitarian protection. However, organized religion and religious bodies could not become the chief vectors of humanitarianism for many reasons that may not detain us here. The gradual secularization of political authority in the west, the increasing salience of the state as the primary institution of collective life, and a gradual emergence of a rights-based discourse to humanitarianism put paid to the efforts of the religious bodies all over the world.

Another significant source of modern humanitarianism is laws of war. While rudimentary regulations to combats are as old as human civilization itself, there were rapid moves to codification of principles from the 18th century onward. Domains such as protections of civilians, prisoners of war; conduct of hostilities, naval combat, enemy property, military necessity, care for the wounded, among others, gradually came under the purview of international legal regulations and many rules were made to make the conduct of warfare more humane. The Hague Convention of 1907 and the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 created the framework for the emergence of modern humanitarian law. The limited efficacy of these instrumentalities notwithstanding, the customary laws and statutes have powerfully driven home the idea that wars needed to be fought within acceptable codes of conduct as agreed upon by the states.[1]

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[1] According to a study, "Laws of war or limits on the acceptable conduct of war were adopted in ancient Greece and Rome; articulated in The Art of War ascribed to Sun Tzu in Warring States China; promoted by Saladin in the Middle East in the 1100s; taught to Swedish soldiers by Gustavus

The existing literature on the history of humanitarianism has mostly indicated three periods or moments that espouse different structures of feelings. Barnett and Weiss's widely cited work mentioned 'an imperial humanitarianism, from the early nineteenth century through World War II; a neo-humanitarianism from World War II through the end of the Cold War; and a liberal humanitarianism, from the end of the Cold War to the present' (Barnett, 2011: 29). Walker and Maxwell (2009) likewise describes the rather urgent moments of the two World Wars, the Cold War period of 'mercy and manipulation' and the 1990s yielding an epoch of 'globalization of humanitarianism'. Randolph Kent (1987: 36) draws attention to the pivotal time of the Second World War when the vastly upended scale of mass atrocities and the devastation wrought by protracted battles with unprecedented casualties due to massive developments in war fighting technologies forced states to recognize interventionist humanitarian action as an unavoidable responsibility. (Davey, Borton, and Foley 2013: 5). The period was certainly not one of altruism and universal brotherhood; rather, states were motivated to act out of rather drastic alterations in the material basis for warfare whereby distances and information time collapsed as never before. Both the scale of human fatality and the quick dissemination of these figures and narratives tied the hand of governments that feared mass disaffection of troops and alienation of public support from war efforts unless credible efforts were undertaken to ameliorate victims of war in a principled way. The science of death has paradoxically generated the science of care for the nation-state.

Humanitarianism, moreover, became a rallying point for a large number of civil societal action that stemmed from advances in military medicine, advocacy practices and evidence-based action, and philanthropic associations of various kinds. Two broad patterns emerged out of this. Many of these bodies were local and their activities were limited within their borders. They were also often motivated by the racial cause of their respective nation-states. In contrast, the activities of organizations like the International Red Cross were distinctly internationalist in orientation as it harped on standing international legal agreements as constitutive of the framework of action that would not differentiate between citizens of nations as all were deserving of care, protection, resuscitation, and recovery.

Advocacy has also been a pivotal form of humanitarian action and Florence Nightingale's manifold contributions vastly strengthened the case to look beyond all contingencies in cases of health emergencies. While she did not directly take part in advocacy, nevertheless, her practices and actions largely contributed to the success of advocacy as a model of care, nursing and humanitarian action for the diseased. In the words of Selanders and Cranes, "Nightingale was a singular force in advocating for as opposed to with individuals, groups, and the nursing profession." (Selanders, L., Crane, P., (January 31, 2012) "The Voice of Florence Nightingale on Advocacy" OJIN: The Online Journal of Issues in Nursing, Vol. 17, No. 1, Manuscript 1, p. 3). She articulated not only an unconditional case for nursing support for the ill and the wounded all over the world, the nature of the political order and social systems notwithstanding, but began to draw attention to the gendered practices around the

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Adolphus in the 1600s;" (Davey, Eleanor, John Borton, and Matthew Foley. A history of the humanitarian system: Western origins and foundations. Overseas Development Institute Humanitarian Policy Group, 2013. p. 6).

then prevalent norms of humanitarian action that privileged the rights of men and devalued that of the female nurses and caregivers, in addition to describe humanitarianism not as act of charity but as a matter of our inalienable right.[2]

This narrative, though persuasive and empirically reliable, tends to make humanitarianism an exogenous phenomenon, which seemed to have a life of its own, and was driven primarily by calamities both human and natural. In contrast, it may be argued that humanitarianism is as much a part of the technologies of power of the modern state as are all other general forms of public amenities and services. There are two contrasting interpretations here to boot. The first sees humanitarian governance as a technology needed to make sense of the state's categorization of the various groups of people who were deserving of protection, who could be trusted in protecting and who could be not, whose life mattered more or less, and what justificatory discourses may be offered towards this end. The emphasis here is on the politics of race and nationalism, the modes of otherisation that would separate citizens from outsiders, or make a group of citizens worthier than others, to deny the right to have rights to outsiders and groups that are perceived as hostile to the national wellbeing, and provide the state the justificatory grounds to manage humanitarian tasks in a fiscally responsible way. The second reading only adds that humanitarian governance is not initiated only to keep others at bay or limit the right to protection to the acceptable groups but also to care for the emotional health of the domestic population who require guarantees of sanity in their compulsive practice of limits. However, both these ideas are based on conceptual resources drawn from Foucault and Derrida to which we now turn to in the next section.

II. Biopower, governmentality, hospitality and forgiveness

Foucault saw modern power as a mechanism to administer life along two distinctive axes. One targeted to work on and disciplining the human body: 'the body as a machine: its disciplining, the optimisation of its capabilities, and the extortion of its forces'. (Michel Foucault, Society Must Be Defended (London: Penguin Books, 2003: 245). Foucault termed it the 'anatamopolitics of the human body'. The second axis consisted of the collective or the population at large, which he called biopolitics. According to Foucault, "By this I mean a number of phenomena that seem to me to be quite significant, namely, the set of mechanisms through which the basic biological features of the human species became the object of a political strategy, of a general strategy of power, or, in other words, how, starting from the eighteenth century, modern western societies took on board the fundamental biological fact that human beings are a species. This is roughly what I have called biopower." (Michel Foucault, Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977 78 Edited by Michel Senellart. Translated by Graham Burchell. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007: 16). Foucault elaborated that biopower emerged later and "focused on the species body, the

[2] In Nightingale's frustration, she wrote the lengthy essay Cassandra (1859/1979), named after the tragic Greek mythological figure, whose powers of clairvoyance did not win her dignity, a sense of power or trust among men. Nightingale wrote, "Now, why is it more ridiculous for a man than a woman to do worsted work and drive out every day in a carriage? ...Is man's time more valuable than woman's? or is it the difference between man and woman this, that woman has confessedly nothing to do?" (Nightingale, 1859a/1979, p. 32).

body imbued with the mechanics of life and serving as the basis of the biological processes: propagation, births and mortality, the level of health, life expectancy and longevity, with all the conditions that can cause these to vary. Their supervision was effected through an entire series of interventions and regulatory controls: a biopolitics of the population." (Italics in original). (Foucault, Michel. The History of Sexuality: 1: The Will to Knowledge. Penguin UK, 2019: 139). He described it as a political problem as well as science problem, for a problem of biology was also a political problem and power's problem. (Foucault, Society Must Be Defended (London: Penguin Books, 2003: 24).

While biopolitics is quintessentially modern, it is anticipated nonetheless by the Church that only kept records of life and death but also was the chief dispenser of care for the needy and the distressed. The state administers biopower as a politics of life, for regulating and improving the health of the population, to bring welfare benefits to the poor, and create an infrastructure of territorial security for a named population. Biopoitics, therefore, is not the traditional coercive force of the government. Rather, it arises out of an active interest in the life of the people whose welfare requires disciplining, monitoring, classification, surveillance, and whole paraphernalia of institutions and scientific practices needed for the care of the body and the soul of the demographics. Like Gramsci and Althusser, Foucault also grants the existence of the sovereign power at the margins or limits of biopower.[3] Coercion is needed when regulations fails, disciplining falters, the state must use violence as its sovereign signature. However, this is not how the modern state rules. Power is no longer a matter of negative sanction; it is about positively creating a disciplined and regulated body. If sovereign power is about the politics of death, biopolitics is about the politics of life. The manifest tension between the two forms of power and politics requires the 'biopolitical border' between lives to be cared for and those who can be left uncared for, between the politics of care and the politics of indifference, which is not expressed by the territorial borders separating states but in the peculiar construct of the 'state racism' separating the lives that matter and those that can be subjected to the threats of death.

If biopolitics produces 'population', a statistically generated social collective, governmentality, another concept that Foucault uses to explain the configurations and workings of modern power, is about the production of capillary power at various social sites, like in classrooms, prisons, institutions of mental health, that produce disciplined bodies. Foucault, in fact, provides a categorical understanding of the concept, which is worth recounting.

> By this word "governmentality" I mean three things. First, by "governmentality" I understand the ensemble formed by institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections,

[3] In "Society Must Be Defended" Foucault says quite explicitly that "juridical systems, no matter whether they were theories or codes, allowed the democratization of sovereignty, and the establishment of a public right articulated with collective sovereignty, at the very time when [in the nineteenth century], to the extent that, and because the democratization of sovereignty was heavily ballasted by the mechanisms of disciplinary coercion." (p. 37). Quoted in Chatterjee, Partha. *I Am the People* (Ruth Benedict Book Series) . Columbia University Press. Kindle Edition.

> calculations, and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific, albeit very complex, power that has the population as its target, political economy as its major form of knowledge, and apparatuses of security as its essential technical instrument. Second, by "governmentality" I understand the tendency, the line of force, that for a long time, and throughout the West, has constantly led towards the pre-eminence over all other types of power – sovereignty, discipline, and so on – of the type of power that we can call "government" and which has led to the development of a series of specific governmental apparatuses (appareils) on the one hand, [and, on the other]† to the development of a series of knowledges (savoirs). Finally, by "governmentality" I think we should understand the process, or rather, the result of the process by which the state of justice of the Middle Ages became the administrative state in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and was gradually "governmentalized." (Foucault, STP: 144).

While there is an overlap of the ideas of biopower, biopolitics and governmentality, Foucault makes it clear that governmentality is about the making of political rationalities that are not limited to the state. Conceived as a technology of discipline, Foucault argues that governmentality in its most recent phase has taken a new form, which he calls 'neo-liberalism', which he distinguishes form the political liberalism of the 18th century. This neo-liberalism is not about the state keeping the market free and competitive but the market taking over and controlling the state. Moreover, its basis for governance is not the regulation for the protection of individual freedom required by the economic or rational man. Rather, under neo-liberalism, the basis of regulation shifts to what Lemke described as "in the entrepreneurial and competitive behaviour of economic-rational individuals." (Lemke 2001: 200). (Thomas Lemke, 'The birth of bio-politics': Michel Foucault's lecture at the Collège de France on neo-liberal governmentality", *Economy and Society*, Volume 30, Number 2, May 2001: 190–207.)

My argument here is that humanitarianism is a discourse of protection of life and death that invariably carries the imprimatur of the Foucaultian ideas of biopower and governmentality. I would develop this theme in the next section. However, the idea of protection requires more reflection at this stage for although Foucault explains why the physical and mental health of a given population becomes central to the state's politics of care and its attendant limits, one still requires an understanding of why our commitment to protect is always paradoxical in effect. This paradox can be explained in a myriad of ways. But, in a pithy form, the central idea is that our capacity to give and protect seems limited as is our powers of forgiveness without which care is always conditional. It is the conditionality of care that is also the limits of humanitarianism. Derrida's reflections on hospitality and forgiveness help us understand both the nature and the causes of these limits.

Derrida makes it clear that there are palpable limits of hospitality, since the host can hardly be unconditionally caring and proving towards the guest. First, hospitality requires a power to offer aid, a certain capacity for action, ownership of resources, and a power of decidability over deciding. Hospitality also means that the host also exercises a degree of control over the guests since the hosted may have unconditional urges and may make demands that might go

both against the material capacity of the host and also compromise the host's sense of identity and ownership. Hence hospitality is never unconditional. Hence, hospitality seems controlled at best, so that the line of distinction between the host and the hosted remains in place all the time, and exclusions may be required on grounds of languages, national identity, race, ethnicity so that the host can exercise control in the act of caring for the other, be they refugees, political exiles, victims of natural disasters, conflicts, or guest workers seeking refuge and support.

Derrida's account of hospitality builds on his understanding of gift and forgiveness. Derrida complicates gift giving as conventionally understood to be misleading as he finds in the act of gifting utilitarian considerations of expectation, reciprocity, and a desire for recognition of generosity. The grant of the gift, therefore, is ethically circumspect since generosity is conditional. In the words of Clive Barnett, "In reiterative readings of the theme of hospitality in literature, policy, and theology, Derrida finds that hospitality is ordinarily represented as a gift in the conventional sense, offered in exchange for something (for example, for good conduct, or respect for the law). Hospitality is therefore offered conditionally, out of a secure sense of self-possession. Just as with the deconstruction of the gift, Derrida's reading of what he calls the 'laws of hospitality' finds them to be premised on a logic of un-relinquished mastery over one's own space." (10) (Barnett, Clive (2005). Ways of Relating: Hospitality and the acknowledgement of otherness. Progress in Human Geography, 29(1) pp. 5–21.). In his text called On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness, Derrida argues, mirroring his take on gifts, that true forgiving is only possible if it amounts to forgiving of an 'unforgivable' misdemeanour or indiscretion. Conditional forgiving tantamount to amnesty, reconciliation, arbitration, or compromise, and is, therefore, not a genuine act of kindness. In the words of Simon Critchley and Richard Kearney, "Derrida argues that true forgiveness consists in forgiving the unforgivable: a contradiction all the more acute in this century of war crimes (from the Holocaust, to Algeria, to Kosovo) and reconciliation tribunals, such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa. If forgiveness forgave only the forgivable, then, Derrida claims, the very idea of forgiveness would disappear. It has to consist in the attempt to forgive the unforgivable: whether the murderousness of Apartheid or the Shoah (Derrida, 2001: vii-viii).. (Jaques Derrida, On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness. Translated by Mark Dooley and Michael Hughes with a preface by Simon Critchley and Richard Kearney, Routledge, London and New York, 2001.).[4]

This lays the ground for Derrida's contrast of conditional and unconditional hospitality, the latter being an impossible act of ethical conduct while the former though pragmatic is never enough as an ethical standard. Derrida thus sets up a paradox of the possible impossibility, or

[4] As Derrida pits it in *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness,* ""It is important to analyse at its base the tension at the heart of a heritage between, on the one side, the idea which is also a demand for the unconditioned, gracious, infinite, an economic forgiveness granted to the guilty as guilty, without counterpart, even to those who do not repent or ask forgiveness, and on the other side, as a great number of texts testify through many semantic refinements and difficulties, a conditional forgiveness proportionate to the recognition of the fault, to repentance, to the transformation of the sinner who then explicitly asks for forgiveness." (xi)

vice versa, thereby problematizing the very ethical basis of the idea of protection underlying humanitarianism. For Derrida, the unwelcome guest is a challenge for the host as the visitor questions the self-identity and subjectivity of the provider. While the paradox of the ethically short charged possible tolerance (conditional hospitality) and the impossibility of the unconditional hospitality is indeed paralysing as an ethical stance, it does reflect on the superficiality of the prevailing models of protection by exposing their putative ethical basis as either indicative of our limits of generosity to outsiders or pure tactical compromises to habilitate alterity in life. This is the reason why Derrida both sanctions an ideal cosmopolitanism that would admit everyone unconditionally at simultaneously denies it as a possibility as limitations on rights of residence become mandatory in all the cases. Hosting, gifting and forgiving are never settled and their possibilities remain open ended as the philosophy of deconstruction demands.

The idea of protection that has come to embody the contemporary politics of humanitarianism is, therefore, a conditional idea at best and a result of practices deciding what it takes to be a living being and how lives worth protecting are to be regulated. In the following section, I discuss the motivations behind and the meanings of such regimes of protection that marks the topography of modern humanitarianism.

III . Humanitarianism, capitalism and politics

Humanitarianism is both biopolitics and a politics of caring for life. As the path-breaking work of Didier Fassin has shown, it involves all the institutional paraphernalia of biopolitics, such as setting up camps and dwelling centers, identifying and registering the people to be hosted, deciding on the nature of care to be disbursed, allocating money and resources, setting up surveillance so that the state knows who are cared for, what their credentials are, how safe they are for the localities, to what extent their movement must be checked and their interactions with the citizens allowed, the processes of application that must be meticulously followed, the exceptions to be tolerated, and to guarantee a certain measure of health and wellbeing of the protected so that they become evidence of generosity rather than a cause for shame. Yet, it is also a politics of life since it makes the vital choice of which lives to be saved, the reasons for such prioritization, the careful representation of causes that qualify to legitimise the grant of protection, and the conscious articulation of the discourses of victimhood without which even conditional hospitality would not be possible.

In every site of humanitarian action there is a delicate balance between lives to be saved and the lives to be risked. This is indeed a complex ethical conundrum. When a crisis is within a state where the lives of a large number of people are threatened, the state has a dual responsibility to perform, one toward the suffering victims of a tragedy and the other towards the people who must risk their lives to save, care for and protect them. When it comes to refugees and guest workers under distress and in need for care, the choice is less stark as the distinction in the quality of the two lives can be racially resolved through an exclusionary drawing of a biopolitical boundary. As Fassin explains, "Physically, there is no difference between them; philosophically, they are worlds apart. They illustrate the dualism that Giorgio

Agamben derives from Aristotle's Politics, between the bare life that is to be assisted and the political life that is freely risked, between the zoe of "populations" who can only passively await the bombs and the aid workers and the bios of the "citizens of the world," the humanitarians who come to render them assistance." (Fassin).

The conventional literature on humanitarianism contrasts the cruelty of the realist politics of death that causes mass displacement, death, and indignity to the politics of life engendered by the humanitarian actors whose perspective see the problem from the vantage point of the victim. (Fassin) Though the political motivation behind this politics of life may either source in the rights of the displaced or more restrictive generosity, the ethical imperative is configured in the language of victimhood that recognizes the sacrifices of the humanitarian actors and the moral motivation of protection despite the distinction it necessarily makes between the bare and the political lives.

However, such a reading tends to create the impression that the politics of life only acts at the level of the population as a whole and is concerned about the health of an undifferentiated collective. Yet, Foucault's analysis of biopower shows us that the caring of and for the self and the wellbeing of the population are inseparably intertwined. The idea of pastoral power, where the shepherd cares for the horde of sheep is also about looking closely at the quality of the individual sheep, so that it does not compromise the health of the whole lot, or challenges the codes of discipline that are prescribed for them. The sacrifice of an errand sheep is the duty of the shepherd, justified in the interests of the health of the population as a whole. In other words, the distinction to be made of the life to be saved and the life to be risked or sacrificed cannot be understood by only looking at biopolitics and ignoring the technologies that work on individual lives. In the context of humanitarian crises, this distinction is vital. The conventional accounts by scholars like Fassin play out this contrast by the common strategy that hosts adopt to separate the vulnerable lives that deserve protection from those that do not qualify – the lives of children separated from parents, women raped by the perpetrators, the old deserted by the able bodies, and men who are crippled, injured, and pulverized against the able bodied who would risk everything for safe passage and a quest for a better life. The conventional account renders the able bodied as risk-taking and desperate, whose motives are uncertain and allegiance untrustworthy, which becomes a source of danger for the host. The host may not control and subjugate these men or women and, therefore, it is better to keep them at a harm's way, even if this seriously compromises their chances of survival. Harshness and exclusivity are justified so that these people may act reasonably and not risk lives that need not be risked in the first place.

This politics of deterrence by dividing victims by a differential ethic of protection, which often takes a racialized form since the language of trust is coded in religious and ethnic terms, draws attention to the host's concern for the 'health' of the uninvited guests seeking care in standard humanitarian crises scenarios. Mavelli, however, argues that the motivation portrayed in these accounts is misplaced for the real concern is not about the life of the incomers to be saved but the emotional health of the hosts. For Mavelli," Crucial for the development of these arguments has been a 'differentialist' understanding of biopolitical

racism, which highlighted how the 'border' that separates 'superior' and 'inferior races' is a tool of the biopolitical governmentality of population, rather than what delimitates its space of action. This border can be redrawn to include 'valuable' lives, that is, lives deemed instrumental to promote and enhance the biological and emotional life of the population." (Mavelli). Hence, he argues, "humanitarian government should be understood not just as the government and care of disenfranchised collectivities such as refugees, but also, and possibly more importantly, as the biopolitical governmentality and care of host populations through the humanitarian government of refugees." (Mavelli). What emerges from such a reading is that the justifications of exclusion and conditionalities are not limited to the character of the people seeking refuge, care and protection. As part of biopolitical governmentality, the moral and emotional health of the host is perhaps a stronger motivation in fashioning an appropriate response to a humanitarian crisis and in the attendant characterization of victimhood without which the politics of life, its priorities and limits notwithstanding, will not be possible in the first instance.

While the arguments of the health of the host society as a possible explanation of the limits of humanitarianism are indeed crucial, I argue that the limits of protection conceived as a form of biopolitical governmentality is the result of two factors that require independent probing. The first of these relate to the linkages between contemporary capitalism and humanitarian interventionism, and the second involves the idea of nationalism. I shall not pursue the second argument here since it demands a detailed and granular analysis since the ingredients vary from one society to another and it does not help generalizing across board.

There is a rich body of historical work that has shown how the anti-slavery movement in Europe and the anti-abolitionist movement in the United States were triggered by the generic requirements of capitalism that simultaneously involved policies that on the one hand normalized the market risks and its attendant fallouts bordering on naturalized irresponsibility while investing in a notion of contractual responsibility on the other. At the level of discourse, humanitarianism did involve a feeling of compassion and guilt for the suffering other as it was increasingly possible to show that the death and sufferings of the poor were the result of wilful inaction of the rich or the able, and the increasing technological feasibility of delivering assistance and its efficacy in making the desired transformation in the quality of life of the targets exposed the wilful negligence of the rich as never before. As Thomas Haskell argued, "It is not merely coincidental that humanitarianism burst into bloom in the late eighteenth century just as the norm of promise keeping was being elevated to a supreme moral and legal imperative. At the most obvious level, the new stress on promise keeping contributed to the emergence of the humanitarian sensibility by encouraging new levels of scrupulosity in the fulfillment of ethical maxims." (Haskell 1985: 555). (Haskell, Thomas L. "Capitalism and the Origins of the Humanitarian Sensibility, Part 1." *The American Historical Review*, Part-II, Vol. 90, No. 3 (Jun., 1985), pp. 547-566.)

However, it was the economic transformations of capitalism that required a more humane system of governance as the state increasingly became a factor of analysis. The braiding of the state and the market in virtually all spheres of life meant that governance became critical

to the working of the market economy itself so that new modes of tolerable disciplining could be used to extract value and the working classes made to believe that capitalism was not a morally degenerate order that did nothing for the poor and the sick. The health of the population became the precondition of the health of the economy and the discourses of protection were fine tuned to serve the needs of an increasingly globalized production process. If Weber thought that Protestant values were responsible for the flourishing of capitalism in the West, capitalism, in fact, was more efficient in creating the kind of lives necessary for its success. It is also clear that the humanitarianism induced by capitalism could not be absolute. The boundary of moral culpability coincided with an alleged capacity for intervention that was almost always decided by the arc of possibility marked out by the capitalist mode of production.

In more recent times, the enormous dilation in humanitarianism similarly shows a close connection with the class interests and market needs of neoliberal capitalism.[5] All forms of modern humanitarianism like advocacy based humanitarian action, the work done by many non-governmental organizations, the instrumentalities and ties specified by most humanitarian aid by donors, and celebrity humanitarianism show a clear link with market considerations and a welter of literature already exists that empirically documents these linkages. Not only is there a manifest continuity in the nature of the past and the contemporary forms of what I would describe as 'market humanitarianism', the underlying ethical motivations and the careful delineation of the limits of care are also comparable. Modern humanitarianism requires a similar ethic of victimhood, the need to distinguish between who is deserving of protection and who can be dispensed with, the hierarchies of both the politics of life and death, the tendency to settle for the bare minimums, the summoning of geopolitical and national interest driven justifications for the insufficiency of care, and the refusal, on balance, to see the problem of humanitarianism as a structural one. Without fundamental changes in the global political economy of production and distribution, the protection regimes of contemporary humanitarianism as a form of biopolitical governmentality will continue to betray its functionalist and limited character, though it will at the same time save lives and provide a modicum of benefits to millions under stipulated conditions of hierarchy.

To conclude, there have been many changes over the years to the forms of humanitarian protection. From an avowedly non-political and neutral positioning that sought to care and protect everyone in need to the human rights centric interventionism of recent years, humanitarianism, in essence, shows the fundamental ambiguities that are built into the idea, which is analogous with notions like forgiveness, hospitality and tolerance. How much of a change have we actually witnessed in the models of protection? According to David Chandler, "The Red Cross established that humanity, impartiality, neutrality and universality were the underlying principles of any humanitarian intervention. The principle of humanity was based on the desire to assist the wounded and suffering without discrimination,

[5] For an excellent analysis, see De Lauri, A. (2016). The Politics of Humanitarianism. Power, Ideology and Aid. London and New York: IB Tauris.. Also relevant, though somewhat controversial, is Kapoor, I. (2013). Celebrity humanitarianism: The ideology of global charity. Routledge.

recognising a common humanity and that ‘our enemies are men’. The principle of impartiality derived from the desire to assist without discrimination except on the basis of needs, giving priority to the most urgent cases of distress.” (Chandler 2001: 1) (Chandler, David C., “The Road to Military Humanitarianism: How the HumanRights NGOs Shaped a New Humanitarian Agenda,”*Human Rights Quarterly*, 23:3 (2001). 678-700). A similar framework was adopted by the specialized agencies of the UN and other private-funded NGOs.

It seemed that in the politically banal period of the Cold War years, where humanitarian action was hostage to geopolitical considerations of the super powers, the charity activities of the agencies like the IRC, the UNHCR or Oxfam, among many others, were seen to be saving lives and protecting millions of displaced people across the world due to their commitment to political neutrality. While this reading is not entirely unacceptable, the IRC, for instance, was divided on the question of which lives to protect and sensitive to concerns like what security cover was available to their volunteers and the assessment of risks involved in protecting lives. By the 1970s, the paradigm of political neutrality was increasingly criticized as silence and complicity with some of the worst contexts of massacres of human life, either deliberately by the warring groups and the state or by unpardonable neglect by the authorities and able bodied citizens of their duties to avert such crises by available means. In contrast to the IRC, the Médecines sans Frontières (MSF) adopted a far more political approach, preferring to speak out against atrocities and inaction and claiming powers of intervention to protect lives despite the constraints of sovereignty. In the changed political dynamics of the post-Cold War years, the new humanitarianism ramped this up many times more, advocating security of lives and livelihood of the victims. Solidarity with and development of the victims came to replace the earlier commitment to political neutrality. Humanitarian protection was no longer an unqualified dispensation of aid to all those who needed protection irrespective of their roles. Humanitarianism began to seek out political responsibility on the part of the recipients so that values like human rights, democracy, responsive governance, rule of law, and freedom for civil society organizations could be built up concomitantly. The doctrine of the responsibility to protect, the climactic point of this new humanitarianism, was the natural fallout of this transformation.

It must, however, be underlined that this new humanitarianism is a biopolitical construct, a form of governmentality, which is necessary for the practices of neoliberal capitalism and its ethical sensibilities that must care, protect, and discipline lives within the realm of possibilities. It must also deploy a sanitised discourse of the victim, understood as a differentiated category, who must be protected and uncared for at the same time, and be kept apart of the political lives of citizens. However, this biological existence of the bare life is not only a politics of death but also a politics of life. For, the protected must live in the moral interest of the caregivers and the excision of the undeserving is the precondition of the protection of the deserving.