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### **Under what conditions do states participate in humanitarian interventions?**

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#### **Abstract**

This paper aims to find consistent reasons as to why states participate in humanitarian interventions. Using a combination of online archival documents and documents from the United Nations (only to specific cases) it has been concluded that there are three consistent conditions of which make states get involved in a humanitarian intervention. First this would be the legal basis because in today's day and age there are international organizations responsible for monitoring humanitarian interventions aka the United Nations. Second would be the moral obligation. This reason is deeply rooted in our human nature and because societies are ultimately made up of individuals, it is no wonder that human behavior influences political decisions. Finally, would be individual state interests. Arguably, the strongest component of what forces states to make up decisions.

#### **Introduction**

To start off it is crucial to first define what a humanitarian intervention is. Humanitarian interventions means when a state or, as it is usually the case,

an alliance of states comes together with the goal of ending human suffering with any means available. That includes financial aid, aid of food and other goods and the most common would-be military intervention. The suffering that the states are aiming at stopping is usually a deliberate attempt of a government to suppress individuals rights on a massive level. Humanitarian interventions throughout modern times have been the cause of a plethora of debate. On one hand experts believe that to provide humanitarian intervention is simply an act of good will to help individuals who truly need it. On the other hand, people tend to view humanitarian interventions as an act of violation of sovereign states and their right to liberty because for a humanitarian intervention to take place, states have to take action inside other states borders. In addition to this argument, it has been used many times by states to accuse other states of pursuing their national interests inside another country's borders. As later the paper explains national interests are one of the few consistent conditions which drive states to organizing a humanitarian intervention.

Specifically, this paper will answer the question: "Under what conditions do states participate in humanitarian interventions". In order to give a definitive and proper answer, this paper will undergo a specific structure using a combination of documents from online archives and primary sources to answer it. First it is necessary for the current literature to be analyzed and examine what existing authors have presented under this point. This will be followed by the methodology that will consist of the method used to collect data and the method used to analyze our data. Those are the qualitative method and the empirical one since those are the best suited for this type of paper. To continue the most important part of this paper is

going to take place and that is the analysis section. In it an analysis of the current humanitarian interventions will be conducted in order to find any common characteristics so the question can be answered correctly. The common characteristics can include type of human suffering that states are trying to stop, for example genocide, ways used to stop it and can even include the countries itself that participated in this effort. Finally in the conclusion section after the cases have been analyzed it will be safe to conclude on reasons which drive states to actively participate in another country's internal politics in order to stop human suffering on a large scale.

### **Literature Review**

The existing literature has been extensive on the current topic. The main reason for this is that, as mentioned on the introduction section, there is an argument about whether or not humanitarian intervention can be justified as a means of helping citizens of a sovereign country or is just a justification for states to "invade" other countries in order to promote their own interests. Of course, the United Nations who started to exist in order to, mainly, provide humanitarian interventions in countries of need has a specific chapter dedicated to this. If all diplomatic means fail then the council of the United Nations is permitted to use military forces in order to intervene, as the general premise of chapter VII article 41 and 42 suggest. In addition it should be also noted that literature regarding why states actually preform humanitarian interventions but they are mostly focused around a specific country. On the contrary this paper will try to answer why in general states participate in humanitarian interventions.

"What determines US humanitarian intervention"? By Seung-Whan Choi looks at the foreign policy of the United States and tries to answer to which

conditions the U.S. would participate in Humanitarian Interventions. He presents two options in his article. First is the perspective of the Liberals who are mostly in favor of participating in interventions with humanitarian character in order to defend a moral code and actually help people in need. On the other hand there is the arguments that the United States participates in humanitarian interventions for the sole reason of defending its national interests. After he presents a detailed analysis, he concludes that the United States foreign policy is more aligned with the Liberal point of view.

"Deciding Humanitarian Intervention" by Jonathan Moore observes different cases from different countries in order to find consistencies as well as flaws in what made them ultimately intervene in order to provide aid of humanitarian character. He also mentions and acknowledges, that way, the complexity of what might cause a humanitarian intervention so he picks many different countries in order for his answer to be more clear without making any wrong assumptions and concluding to any possible solution based on the previous examples that might be incorrect.

"THE LIBERAL CASE FOR HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTION" by Fernando Teson is a great document that supports humanitarian interventions from the Liberal point of view. Having been written a few months after the nine eleven attacks the article is in favor of using military intervention or as the author calls it, hard intervention, in order to protect human rights. The article by itself should be noted that is in alignment with Liberal ideals who not only strive for peace but also, they put a great deal of emphasis on individual's rights. The author makes the case that while he is sympathetic with the view that all war is terrible, he sees military intervention as a

necessary evil to stop a bad operation from continuing. In his own words "proponents of humanitarian intervention simply argue that humanitarian intervention in some instances (rare ones, to be sure) is morally justified, while agreeing of course that war is generally a bad thing" (Teson 2001). However, this article should be considered with a grain of caution since its fueled with emotions of recent events. Specifically as mentioned also in the beginning, this article was written a few months after the nine eleven attacks.

"The Concept of Humanitarian Intervention Revisited" by Yogesh K. Tyagi tackles a variety of problems with humanitarian interventions with most notable of them being the legal case. The author here argues that at stake we can witness the sovereignty of one state being doubted by another nation in the name of humanitarian intervention. He especially emphasizes after a country is over with its humanitarian intervention mission it usually never takes into account the possible destruction that it caused after it intervened. For this he points out that while a humanitarian intervention is for a good reason it can bring violations in international law, something that people rarely take responsibility for.

To conclude the literature review multiple articles have been analyzed with the goal of presenting each sides argument regarding humanitarian intervention. On one hand people see even military force as necessary when it comes to protecting human lives, For these people this its simply necessary. For the other side of the coin, rules have been made so people follow them. Getting involved in a country's internal politics is a clear violation of international law and if those countries disobey they have to face the consequences (unlike now who almost never do). Additionally, the

literature review also presents reasons why states might feel necessary to intervene and provide humanitarian aid to another country.

## **Methodology**

For the initial question to be answered it is best to use a qualitative method of collecting data since this paper relies on online archival documents for the most part. Examples of different cases of humanitarian intervention will be presented and later compared in order to find similarities and differences between them. The findings will give a better overlook to our question. It should be mentioned that primary sources will also be used to try answering the question. While one could rely entirely on articles and abstracts from books, using primary sources will give a deeper character to the paper which in turn will produce a fundamentally better answer. The conclusions drawn out will be presented on the conclusion section, after the analysis section whereas the title suggests, the analysis of the cases will have taken place.

## **Analysis**

To begin explaining the conditions under which humanitarian interventions happen it is important to mention first and foremost the legal basis.

Responsible for this would be the United Nations and specifically chapter VII which states that the United Nations members can use force if at least five of their members decide there is a significant threat to peace. The first time it was put into practice was during the nineties where the United Kingdom invoked it in order to find support for establishing a no fly zone over Iraq. It was invoked because Russia and China, who are permanent members of the

United Nations, failed to support this delegation. Ultimately as the chapter says five other members supported it and the no fly zone over Iraq passed.

To illustrate another example of a humanitarian intervention that was claimed to be based on legal grounds was the case of Kosovo. In the late 1990's several members of the NATO alliance underwent a series of bombings in the Kosovo region of the collapsing Yugoslavia. As Paul Latawski and Martin A. Smith point out in their article *The Kosovo crisis and the evolution of post-Cold War European security* "It can also be argued that the UN Secretary-General gave a de facto green light to military action on a visit to NATO headquarters in January 1999" (Latawski, Smith 2018).

Because of this, despite the controversial role of the Kosovo wars, it can be at least claimed that it had legal backing.

Besides from this article there is also official documents from the United Nations emphasizing the need for a humanitarian intervention in the region.

As resolution 1239 was adopted in 1999 it states that "the security council expresses grave concern at the humanitarian catastrophe in and around Kosovo, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, as a result of the continuing crisis"

This again proves the legal character behind the controversial Kosovo humanitarian intervention by one of the most important international organizations, which at the end of the day was created mainly to provide a legal character behind humanitarian interventions. The previous two points accompanied with examples goes to show that legality is not only a consistent characteristic but also a certain condition under which states participate in humanitarian interventions.

In addition, another condition of which states decide to take part in humanitarian interventions would be moral obligation. This condition is

deeply rooted inside our human nature as human beings are in the most part opposed to mistreatment, not only of their own but for other people also. This condition while it may sound simplistic is actually one of the best ways to explain humanitarian interventions. That is because individuals are organized in societies and therefore human nature is bound to effect political decisions. Historically this argument stands too. If we refer to the first ever recorded humanitarian intervention, which was the battle of Navarino and the Greek war of independence as a whole, we can observe that it was a case of human behavior acting in the politics arena. That is because the great powers of the time (Britain, France and Russia) actively interfered against another great power in order to save the fragile Greek revolution. It was really a case of the strong protecting the weak.

Moral obligation is also an official policy of the Canadian government since 2001. It is called "responsibility to protect" and it solved the question faced by the Canadian government on what states do about injustices internationally. It was created by the "Internal Commission on intervention and state sovereignty" of the Canadian government, and it states that although every state is responsible for their own citizens and it is responsible for their own affairs, if the state fails to protect its citizens then the international community must intervene so the injustice stops. This policy consists of three stages to prevent, to react and to rebuild. To prevent a humanitarian disaster before happening (if possible), to react to an ongoing humanitarian disaster even if military force is required and to rebuild everything affected by it. Moral obligation thus is proven to be a consistent condition not only historically but also in today's day and age where in the case of Canada it has been adopted as a formal policy.



Undoubtedly, many humanitarian interventions also occur because one state can use it as a means of pursuing its national interest inside another country's borders. Such was the case during the cold war where both the western world and the eastern European powers both used humanitarian interventions as excuses to promote their national interests whenever possible. The earliest case of this would be the Greek civil war which occurred very early in the cold war (1946 – 1949). In the Greek civil war both NATO allies and the coalition of the Warsaw pact justified humanitarian interventions in Greece with the goal of one ideology prevailing over the other (Capitalism and Communism). Specifically, it was observed that the United States and the United Kingdom offered Greece not only economic support but also troops to restore the king's government back in power. In modern times something similar is happening with China. China as the world's second biggest economy is offering African nations more than anyone else in humanitarian aid in order to help build up their economy. Although it seems innocent and good hearted at first, China's plan involves trapping those countries with impossible to pay back debt essentially owning them. The reason as to why China has been so successful in that aspect is because it disguise's its intentions as humanitarian intervention. Therefore, it is safe to assume based on the examples previously given that states interests play a major role when talking about the conditions under which a humanitarian intervention happens. Despite its unethical character many countries use it as a justification to promote their own agenda and while many countries did it only in the past, they are some that still practice it. To conclude the analysis section, three consistent conditions ended up being consistent enough to answer the question set out in the beginning. Those

are legality, moral obligation, and national interests.

### **Conclusion**

To conclude this paper, its aims were to find under what conditions states participate in humanitarian interventions. After a thorough analysis which included articles from online databases and official documentation for the United Nations there have been three consistent conditions that have been observed. Those are the legal basis which obviously involve at the most part the United Nations, the moral obligation which as explained previously has its origins in human behavior and finally state interests. While state interests sound pessimistic considering they only view humanitarian aid as a means of achieving a higher goal it has been observed so many times both in past history and today's international politics that this paper could not have finish if it did not mention them.

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