Forum: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Issue #1: Evaluating the ethical and legal justifications of military intervention in humanitarian crises, while considering the necessities to achieve international peace

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Introduction

Our world is one filled with passion, intensity, and a deafening geopolitical landscape. Within our society, a fascinating convergence of ethics, politics, law, and international relations is noticed; military intervention. Despite our best efforts to prevent it, conflicts inevitably erupt around the world, resulting in foreign

countries intervening for the greater goal of peace, harmony, and stability among nations. However, there's more than meets the eye within these interventions. A web of ethical and legal dilemmas, conundrums, and geo-political concerns, presents itself.

War not only affects its host countries but a myriad of others as well in a domino effect, economically, politically, and socially speaking. Foreign military intervention in conflicts exemplifies the responsibility powerful allies hold in protecting more vulnerable nations. Countries which are directly affected by conflicts will benefit from military support and intervention from foreign nations. However, due to the sheer intricate complexities behind it all, the question must be asked: to what extent is military intervention an act of compassion for the greater goal of peace, or is it merely an act of self-interest hiding behind a kind and duplicitous facade?

The pure significance of this issue is massive, as it represents an abundance of conflict and controversy. In democracies, public opinion is of the utmost importance, therefore, it is only natural for citizens to be concerned with the allocation of their tax funds and the government's use of resources in foreign affairs. So, while some citizens may view it as a necessary economic expenditure, others may deem it as unnecessary or simply as an event which isn't of interest or concern to them

The ambiguity of the issue lies within the divergent perspectives of those directly involved and the foreign nations which intervene. Delegates will have to be able to empathetically explore the multifaceted nature of military interventions while attempting to uphold the standards for justice, peace, and compassion.

Definition of Key Terms

Geopolitics: Geopolitics refers to countries and their relations between them, incorporating different phenomena such as political instability, tensions, military conflicts between countries, terrorist threats, or geographical events that can

have regional or global impacts.

Military intervention: The interference of one state, a coalition of states, or an international organization in the domestic and/or external affairs of the targeted state through the use or the threat of military force.

Armed Conflict: An armed conflict is said to exist when there is an armed confrontation between Armed forces of States (international armed conflict), or between governmental authorities and organized armed groups, or between such groups within a State

Humanitarian crisis: An event or a series of events that threatens the health and security of a large number of people.

Belligerent: An aggressive or fighting attitude, implies being actually in a war or engaged in hostilities. Belligerent nations suggest a disposition to fight.

General Overview

Military interventions have long been a contentious issue in international relations, involving nations intervening in conflicts outside their borders to protect their interests or support allies. These interventions encompass actions such as direct troop deployments, as well as providing financial aid and military supplies, all of which carry significant implications for the involved parties and global stability. Understanding the motivations and consequences of military interventions is crucial, as they can alter the course of conflicts, reshape alliances, and impact international diplomacy and security.

The concept of military interventions

Conflicts have occurred globally for years, varying in scale and societal impact. The global impact depends on the number of participating nations and their

engagement levels. Military intervention isn't limited to troop deployment; nations can intervene by providing monetary or armament support without direct troop involvement. Such interventions are motivated by potential benefits or consequences from the conflict's outcome, like victory or loss, which bring their own complications. Nations may prefer indirect involvement to influence the conflict's outcome without becoming active belligerents, balancing their interests and risks.

Conflicts

In recent conflicts like the Ukrainian-Russian war and the Israel-Palestine conflict, various countries indirectly participate. For example, EU members and the U.S. provide monetary and military aid to Ukraine, while Russia receives support from Iran and Belarus. Although not officially belligerent, these nations significantly influence conflict outcomes through their support. This pattern of indirect intervention is not new; post-WWII history shows powerful nations like the U.S. and Russia (formerly the Soviet Union) frequently intervening in smaller nations, shaping conflict results. The U.S. has intervened in Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan, while the Soviet Union/Russia has done so in Hungary, Afghanistan, and Syria. These interventions by established powers often determine the course and consequences of conflicts.

Consequences

Nations subjected to military interventions by other countries endure significant and lasting consequences. These consequences can vary but often include severe financial strain, degraded living conditions, and extensive infrastructural damage. Defeated nations particularly struggle with economic collapse, displacement of citizens, and the destruction of critical infrastructure. When multiple nations are involved in a conflict, the repercussions are magnified, complicating recovery efforts and prolonging instability. The more extensive the

conflict, the deeper the "hole" from which affected countries must emerge, making the path to recovery more arduous and prolonged.

Impact on international relations

Military interventions significantly affect international relations by altering alliances, fostering resentment, and reshaping power dynamics. For instance, U.S. interventions in the Middle East have strained relations with countries like Iran and Syria, while strengthening ties with allies such as Israel and Saudi Arabia. Russia's involvement in Ukraine has led to severe sanctions from Western nations, deepening the rift between Russia and NATO members. These actions can lead to a reassessment of global alliances, as nations react to perceived threats or aids. Additionally, interventions often provoke diplomatic tensions, trade restrictions, and shifts in foreign policy, complicating international cooperation on broader issues like security, trade, and climate change. Overall, military interventions can create lasting geopolitical shifts, influencing global stability and diplomatic relationships between countries.

The issue

The big question raised by the issue of military interventions is what justifies such actions. Interventions can be driven by humanitarian concerns, national security interests, or geopolitical strategies. The more countries that intervene, the greater their impact on the conflict, influencing its outcome and the global balance of power. This topic is highly controversial, as it involves ethical considerations, sovereignty issues, and international law. Many countries have vested interests in either conducting military interventions to support allies and protect their interests or in receiving aid through such interventions to bolster their position in a conflict. The debate centers on the legitimacy, consequences, and motivations behind these interventions, highlighting the complex interplay between national interests and global stability.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

USA

The US has always had a very significant role in global politics and conflicts. More specifically, it's always taken initiative in affairs which in their eyes, are perceived threats to international peace. Most notably, they've been involved in military interventions, in Israel, Iraq, Ukraine, and many more. The US has been a powerful advocate for democracy and protectors of human rights, despite the fact they've been accused of hypocrisy and intervening out of self-interest rather than the greater good.

NATO

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization is a military alliance, currently composed of 32 different nations. NATO operates under a system in which if one of its members is attacked, all other nations will assist, militarily if necessary. Notably, they've been involved in military interventions in Kosovo and Libya. Similarly to the US, who is a member of NATO, NATO shares the same role when it comes to promoting international peace, security, and harmony. Its sheer size, political and military influence, and importance make it a pivotal party in the discussion of this particular issue.

Russia

Russia, similarly to China and the US, is a global superpower. Its role in all global aspects is very noticeable. Yet, in contrast to the US, Russia's military action is more influenced by its own history and geo-political interest, rather than the greater good. As evidenced by the 2015 intervention in Syria to support the Assad regime, while simultaneously securing a Mediterranean port in Tartus, an action which caused significant civilian casualties. These aspects can be

recognized in the military intervention in Syria and in Russia's current invasion of Ukraine.

Ukraine

Since 2014, the eastern European country of Ukraine has been tensely involved with Russian-supported separatists in conflicts, resulting in humanitarian crises, war and death, and finally with Russia's invasion of the country. Ukraine acts upon its own sovereignty and defense of its territory.

Israel

Located in the Middle East, Israel holds many conflicts with its neighboring state, Palestine, and subsequently, Palestinian groups. Israel has been the beneficiary of military intervention by the US in said conflict, in the form of billions of USD. Israel claims to act in self-defense, against acts of terrorism and parties from the region.

Palestine

As of 1988, the Palestine National Council meeting proclaimed the establishment of the State of Palestine, making it a fairly "new" country, compared to the rest. Nevertheless, its populous, residing mainly in the Gaza Strip, West Bank, and East Jerusalem has encountered many conflicts. Mainly with Israel, and the Hamas who control Gaza, in a struggle for sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Timeline of Events, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

Date	Description of Event
May 14th, 1948	An Israeli state was created, causing the first Arab - Israeli war.

June 5th - 10th, 1967	6 day war between Israel, Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. Resulting in Israel gaining control of the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Sinai Peninsula, and Golan heights.
December 1987 - September 1993	Palestinian uprising against Israel, 'First Intifada'
March 20th, 2003	Invasion of Iraq in the form of a coalition led by the US, allegedly to search for weapons of mass destruction
September 28th, 2000 - February 8th, 2005	The 'Second Intifada'
February 27th - March 26th, 2014	Russian annexation of Crimea, resulting in increased tension in the West
April 2014	Armed groups of pro-Russian backed separatists seize several buildings in Eastern Ukraine
September 5th, 2014	Signature of Minsk agreements, which aimed to end conflicts fought between armed Russian separatists and Ukraine
February 24th, 2022	Russian invasion of Ukraine
October 7th, 2023	Israel - Hamas War begins, Hamas launches land, sea, and air attack on

	Israel from the Gaza Strip

Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

Geneva Conventions

The 4 Geneva Conventions provide civilians, as well as combatants with legal protection during conflicts. In the context of military intervention, the application of these principles is very commonly debated, mainly in cases in which the intervention occurs without or even against the consent of the nations in which the conflict is taking place. The conventions effectively set legal and humane standards for treatment in war. However, in order to improve its efficacy, enforcement should be strengthened, informing non-states about these laws and conventions, and imposing strict penalties for any sort of violation.

Customary International Law

This law recognizes that in very limited circumstances, military intervention can eventually be justified, in cases of self-defense or UN Security Council-approved collective security measures. The basis of this law is often put up to debate as the context of each crisis can be very subjective. This law is often interpreted as subjective and one that is misused for its own geopolitical interests.

UN involvement

United Nations Resolution

In 2005, the United Nations adopted the resolution "R2P", the responsibility to protect. It states that nations must protect their populations from threats, such as war crimes, genocide, etc. In the case in which a nation is unable to provide and fulfill this responsibility, the international community is allowed to intervene, diplomatically, through humanitarian means, or as a last resort, military. R2P's

success has been inconsistent, while the intervention in Libya in 2011 prevented worse atrocities, interventions in Syria and Myanmar, resulted in failure due to political issues.

Peacekeeping Missions

For its first 45 years, the United Nations was associated with the principle of non-intervention and the use of non-force, however, since 1990 a shift in the way the UN approached the humanitarian crisis shifted, and the body has endorsed a series of interventions for military purposes. United Nations peacekeeping missions where military troops were sent became more recurrent in the year 1990, with some examples being the United Nations protection force (1992-1995) to address the Yugoslav wars and the United Nations Iran-Iraq Military Observer Group in Iraq and Iran (1988-1991) to address the Iran-Iraq war.

Currently the UN can only deploy military personnel when there is a UN Security Council resolution authorizing them to do so, with the Security Council determining how many military personnel are required. The United Nations possesses no peacekeeping troops in current bigger conflicts such as the Ukraine-Russia conflict, but the United Nations has together with other member states sent military assistance to Ukraine and encourages all nations to do the same as it understands Russia has committed war crimes against the civilian population. However, in the Israel-Palestine conflict, the UN urges states to immediately stop exporting weapons to both sides of the conflict. As states have to do their part to urgently end the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza.

Treaties and resolutions ("Convention on the prohibition of military or any other hostile use of environmental modification techniques")

On November of 1976, the United Nations approved a convention on the Prohibition of Military or Any Other Hostile Use of Environmental Modification

Techniques, that consisted of ten articles which, *inter alia*, "prohibit the States Parties from engaging in military or any other hostile use of environmental modification techniques having widespread, long-lasting or severe effects as the means of destruction, damage or injury to any other State Party". The convention was opened for signatories and ratification, from 18 to 31 May 1977, it had 48 signatories and 78 parties that ratified the resolution.

Possible Solutions

Although this issue is of major importance in today's world and heavily discussed by nations in UN conferences, there is still a taboo related to discussing its possible solutions as it is multifaceted and complex to address. Possible solutions can be found for this issue if there is global cooperation. For a head start, nations should come to an agreement of when a military intervention is justified and whether nations that are not directly involved in the crisis should be allowed to military intervene. Nations should decide in which situations military intervention should be utilized, whether it should be imposed freely or not to do so, and evaluate if military intervention will accelerate the process of achieving peace. Furthermore, countries should decide what can be defined as an "humanitarian crisis" to be able to support the guidelines on which cases military interventions can be justified. For a final and more extreme solution, nations could ban any type of military interventions as by imposing that solution it will decrease the casualties and more easily reach a peaceful outcome.

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)

The 16th SDG, "Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions" is one that is embedded within the issue at hand. This goal indulges for the reduction in violence, upright and swift justice, as well as the establishment of inclusive institutions, three elements which are crucial in the context of intervention at all levels. This

alignment in goals is essential to not solely address immediate and necessary humanitarian needs, but also to cement the foundation for a future composed of sustainable peace.

Appendix

I. **Links**

A. https://www.ifw-kiel.de/topics/war-against-ukraine/ukraine-support-tracker/

1. Here you can see some of the major parties that are financially and military aiding Ukraine.

B. https://edam.org.tr/en/blog/western-military-interventions-in-the-middle-east

1. This link shows a well detailed description of western military interventions in the middle east since 1980, providing information on the belligerents and which situation led to this intervention.

C. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9dba1P3BLkg

1. This is a news report by France 24 on the nations that are providing military aid to Ukraine and is stating what are the consequences of these military interventions.

D. https://www.statista.com/chart/27278/military-aid-to-ukraine-by-country/

1. A detailed chart with detailed numbers with how much aid is being provided to Ukraine and from which countries.

E. treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=XXVI-1&chapter=26&clang=_en

1. UN page on the Convention on the prohibition of military or any other hostile use of environmental modification techniques, showing the contents of the agreement and signatories.

F. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/11/27/palestine-and-israel-brief-history-maps-and-charts

   1. Brief history of Palestine and Israel conflict, showing all of the nations that have a participation on the conflict throughout history.

G. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KvppoDl66Ak

   1. A news report from BBC on a study made that states how american military interventions around the world are backfiring

H. https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/figures

   1. Study from the university of Brown on what are the costs of wars post 9/11, monetary and deaths.

I. https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/major-nato-military-interventions.html.

   1. Article on the major military interventions made by NATO since its foundation

J. https://www.statista.com/chart/10054/share-of-war-dead-over-time-since-world-war-two/

   1. Article with graph that demonstrates all the post World War II

deaths in conflicts.

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