

17.523: Ethnicity and Race in World Politics-Fall 2005

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Lecture 19: Human Rights and Foreign Policy: Should Outsiders Assist the Ethnic/Racial Groups of Another Country?

Last week we spoke about multiculturalism and upholding women's rights. The focus shifts to the international arena and humanitarian intervention. Again you have competing values of whether and when to intervene.

What does the international community think about intervention and what is the status of international law?

- The international community hasn't come to a consensus
- It's an easy question, but a difficult answer.
- The block against intervention is the notion of sovereignty and respecting that idea.
- The idea is that the international system is built on states, which are built on sovereignty. It's very important.
- There isn't a grand international government. There's a hope that governments don't mistreat their own populations.
- Historically, there was very little recourse for groups within a given country.

Certain views on intervention changed after WWII and the creation of the U.N.

- Intervention is allowed for now.
- It's something that states use sparingly.
- Ch. 7 of the U.N. allows for intervention.
- Article 34 empowers Security Council to investigate security problems within and between states.

A government can invite another government to help. That's not seen as an intervention.

What is the basis for humanitarian intervention?

- It's vexing b/c of the iron law of sovereignty, on the one hand, and the international community is interested in protecting basic human rights, on the other. You have to balance the two commitments.

What is an example where an intervention leads to occupation?

- Cyprus.

An intervention on humanitarian grounds can sometimes be viewed as an occupation.

Any response is viewed as meddling and is automatically discredited. In the absence of any consensus for intervention (when you should intervene, how long, how you would intervene, etc.) in international law, then we shouldn't have any kind of intervention.

"The Responsibility to Protect" was written in response to what happened in Rwanda, Bosnia, and Somalia. The U.N. wanted to come up with a rationale for why they didn't intervene and under what conditions it could intervene.

- Read: [PRINCIPLES FOR MILITARY INTERVENTION](#), “the Responsibility to Protect.”
 - Student: Hurricane Katrina would have justified intervention based on this definition.
 - Student: what does the U.N. have to gain from creating such broad abilities?
 - The U.N. has no power and it can only implore the country to stop the human rights abuses, but it’s ultimately left up to the country.
 - Student: what would you consider a significant loss of life? You could rationalize not considering intervention of the Hussein regime because the atrocities may not have added up to a “significant loss of life.”
 - Student: it seems to me that it gives the U.N. a lot of leeway to use as justification to do what they want.
 - Student: it seems counterproductive to protecting human rights. It quantifies the number that must be lost but the idea of human rights is that if it’s violated it’s violated. Not quantified.
 - Student: There’s something morally wrong to saying “significant loss of life” and assigning value to a particular number of lives.
- What about the ethnic cleansing portion of the document
 - How does a person who is the product of rape ethnically identify himself/herself when the mother was raped by an “ethnically superior” man?
 - It has something to do with the larger political concept.
 - You want demographic superiority and you solve that by saying the child belongs to the “superior” group.
 - Serbs for instance didn’t like the Bosnians, but raped Bosnian women in order to change the ethnic balance.
 - Unless the kids are removed from the mother, they will not adopt the identity of the rapist.
 - This is a common strategy in war and ethnic cleansing.
- There are some precautionary principles in the document.
 - Intervention should be a last resort.
 - The country must be intervening to halt or avert human suffering.
- Why would you want reasonable prospects of success for an intervention?
 - Student: the idea that you could make it worse.
- What’s going on in the Sudan today?
 - Arabs in the north at war with Christians in the south.
 - In Darfur, Northern Arabs who are Muslim are against the black Africans who are also Muslim.
 - The government hasn’t done anything about these militias, mostly because the government are supporting them.
 - There had been a war going on for the past 20 years in southern Sudan.
 - They reached a peace agreement last year; the head of the southern liberation forces was made the vice president in the Sudanese government to show that they were united.

- There was a lot of international pressure for both sides to settle this conflict.
- The VP was killed in a plane crash
- In the West (Darfur), there's a conflict between Arabs and Blacks (both Muslim)
- It's very complicated, and it appears to be Arab vs. Black, but there are other elements to the conflict as well.
- People have been using rape as a war tool.
- People from the Darfur region have escaped to Chad.

There are many places around the world with significant levels of violence, but no one is calling for an intervention.

- The Sudan is one of these.
- The Russians and Chechnya.

International laws say one thing about humanitarian intervention, but how does the national foreign policy of other countries compare to the U.S.?

- Different countries respond differently.
- Donnelly discusses "Like minded countries"
 - Which countries? What do their foreign policies look like?
 - There are a few smaller western European countries
 - Norway
 - Netherlands
 - Human rights matters enormously.
 - Use development assistance
 - Fashion foreign policy that communicates that to the recipient country that human rights is important and helps them with the development of these ideas
 - Actively use foreign policy to promote these ideas within recipient countries
- U.S. and Great Britain
 - Student: Norway and Netherlands have the luxury of spending their money and foreign policy to advance smaller nation because they enjoy the security provided by a larger country like the U.S.

Is it that humanitarian efforts have boiled down to a smoke screen for ulterior motives?

- Student: I think the world likes to hear discussions about that, but it's unlikely coming from the U.S. In the Middle East, people were killed to maintain his power. In Egypt, they exported people for torture and the government is chasing after those people and shooting them. Instead of invading we're giving them foreign aid.
- Would Somalia have satisfied that claim? Going in for humanitarian reasons?
 - Student: there was significant oil, not in Somalia, but in the sea. Americans had holdings and foreign investment in the area and stood to lose a lot.
 - Most Americans saw Somalia as a purely humanitarian effort
 - It became a bigger deal and 18 soldiers were killed.
 - The operation went poorly and Americans immediately asked why the government was intervening considering the blood shed.

- Somalia syndrome: promoting isolationist principles because of the fallout in Somalia.

How do we think about U.S. interests in humanitarian intervention?

- Some would say that human rights don't even come close to describing the motives for intervention.
- If that's the case, why do we bother at all with human rights intervention?
 - Student: It sounds so much better to say that we're going for human rights. It cuts down on the "disgust."
 - Student: if the U.S. aids countries for humanitarian efforts, it could be seen as increasing credibility and legitimacy of government.
 - Student: it's an ideal because we're not there. The fact that it's out there and it's what we eventually want to be. It could potentially do good.
 - We can say that for smaller countries, they're able to put human rights at the center of their policies.
 - The world is a better place with human rights even if they are ignored or disregarded.
 - Leaders do have to acknowledge them and maybe that's the best we can hope for.
 - Even though dictators, etc violate human rights, the dictators know that they are violating human rights and could potentially be subject to some kind of intervention.