

DIFFERENT INTERPRETATIONS OF HUMANITARIAN (IMPERIALIST) INTERVENTION: THE CASES OF UKRAINE AND LIBYA*

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ABSTRACT

The problem of the role and place of peacekeeping, including humanitarian intervention in the modern system of international order, deserves attention because it has practical application in international relations. Humanitarianism is a contentious notion, especially when it involves military action and results in casualties. The dispute surrounding humanitarian intervention arises from the issue of determining the optimal moment for action. There are many who contend that there is never an opportune moment to interfere, but others assert that it is our moral obligation to safeguard individuals who lack the ability to defend themselves. The act of safeguarding individuals who lack the ability to defend themselves is inherently dignified. Nevertheless, historical evidence has demonstrated that humanitarian action may be driven by hidden agendas.

This paper highlights the military interventions that take place in the contemporary world. Using two case studies, the article addresses the main problems arising from different interpretations of the definition of humanitarian (imperialist) intervention. Thus, using the cases of Libya and Ukraine, the article emphasises that the concept of humanitarian intervention has changed from military intervention for humanitarian purposes to military intervention in which the interventionist states pursue their own geopolitical or economic goals.

Keywords: Humanitarian Intervention, USA, Imperialism, Ukraine, United Nations, Russia, Libya

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İNSANİ (EMPERYALİST) MÜDAHALENİN FARKLI YORUMLARI: UKRAYNA VE LİBYA ÖRNEKLERİ

ÖZ

Modern uluslararası ilişkiler sisteminde insani müdahale de dahil olmak üzere barışı korumanın rolü ve yeri sorunu, her şeyden önce pratik bir uygulamaya sahip olduğu için dikkati çekmekte ve bu nedenle de çalışılmayı hak etmektedir. İnsani yardım, özellikle askeri müdahale içerdiğinde ve ölümlerle sonuçlandığında tartışmalı bir kavrama dönüşmektedir. İnsani müdahaleyle ilgili temel anlaşmazlık, müdahale için en uygun anın belirlenmesinden kaynaklanmaktadır. Bir taraftan bazıları müdahalenin hiçbir zaman uygun olmadığını iddia ederken, diğerleri kendilerini savunma yeteneğinden yoksun bireyleri korumanın ahlaki yükümlülüğümüz olduğunu iddia etmektedirler. Kendisini savunma yeteneği olmayan bireyleri koruma eylemi, doğası gereği onurludur. Yine de, tarih bize göstermektedir ki insani müdahaleler gizli gündemler tarafından yönlendirilebilmektedir. Bu bağlamda, bu makale, modern dünyada gerçekleşen askeri müdahalelerin altını çizmektedir. Makale, özellikle insani (emperyalist) müdahale tanımının farklı yorumlarından kaynaklanan temel sorunlarına vaka çalışması kullanarak değinmektedir. Böylece makale, Libya ve Ukrayna örneklerini kullanarak, insani müdahale kavramının, insani amaçlarla askeri müdahaleden, müdahaleci devletlerin kendi jeopolitik veya ekonomik hedeflerinin peşinden gittiği askeri müdahaleye dönüştüğünü vurgulamaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: İnsani Müdahale, ABD, Emperyalizm, Ukrayna, Birleşmiş Milletler, Rusya, Libya

Introduction

After the end of the Cold War, humanitarian or military intervention became a frequent phenomenon in international relations. A rapid globalisation process in the political and humanitarian spheres during the last two decades has "institutionalised" interference in the internal affairs of sovereign states for humanitarian reasons. Consequently, the concept of humanitarian intervention allows interference in the affairs of a foreign state. In some cases, it may even be necessary if its purpose is to prevent war crimes and crimes against humanity. It should be noted that the protection of human rights and freedoms is also accompanied by the spread of Western values, first of all - democracy. This is a foreseeable consequence since the main interventionists are democracies and UN members. Consequently, humanitarian intervention is a component of the spread of liberal ideas, which in turn became the basis for the formation of modern Western democracies and liberal systems. It should be noted that from the Westphalian treaty of 1648 and before the beginning of the twenty-first century, the laissez-faire principle was considered to be system-forming and provided the unrestricted freedom of sovereign states in internal politics, which obviously threatened the security of other states.

Humanitarianism is a contentious notion, especially when it involves military action and results in casualties. The dispute surrounding humanitarian intervention arises from the issue of determining the optimal moment for action. There are many who contend that there is never an opportune moment to interfere, but others assert that it is our moral obligation to safeguard individuals who lack the ability to defend themselves. The act of safeguarding individuals who lack the ability to defend themselves is inherently dignified. Nevertheless, historical evidence has demonstrated that humanitarian action may be driven by hidden agendas.¹

In the modern liberal world, human rights is one of the most significant concepts. Then, other states have the right and even the duty to intervene if a state resorts to repression against its own population. But the main question is: how cruel should repressions be so that foreign state intervention is necessary? In accordance with international law, the UN Security Council decides whether or not to intervene in a particular state. In general, there is also a precedent in this situation, which emphasises that in extreme cases, it is possible to intervene without the mandate of the UN when people massively get killed. In fact, this is the main argument of the critics of humanitarian intervention. If the criteria for foreign state intervention in the affairs of another state are not clearly defined in the leading international legal instruments and the operation has yet to receive broad international support, there is a very high risk that intervention would end up being just an imperialistic policy. It is clear that intervention can occur only with the participation and under the leadership of the great powers. It is also evident that nobody will take risks to intervene in the affairs of any powerful state. In addition, critics of humanitarian intervention argue that big powers intervene when, in addition to good intentions, they have their own interests.

The uncertainty in the interpretation of humanitarian intervention is justified geopolitically because, without a clear definition in international law, politicians and military forces can use humanitarian intervention to establish regime change and political and military control over the region/state. In the context of the imperialist approach, great powers or the states which are powerful enough to initiate a humanitarian intervention might take the cases basically humanitarian but actually follow their own interest in these interventions. To make it clear, Western (mostly American) and Russian interpretations of humanitarian interventions differ from each other in their legitimization process for such interventions.

¹ Jessica Cobran, "Humanist or Imperialist? Humanitarian Interventionism in the Post-Cold War Era", Ed. Maximilian C. Forte, *The New Imperialism: Interventionism, Information Warfare, and the Military-Academic Complex*, Montreal 2011, p. 115.

This paper aims to find the answer to the research question, “Can a military campaign ever be strictly humanitarian?” This paper is intended to examine the transformation of the concept and the evolution of the use of humanitarian intervention. At the same time, the main goal is to determine what the interventionist states are guided by applying the humanitarian principles of intervention, as well as whether all military interventions in the internal affairs of other states have a humanitarian character or rather humanitarian imperialism since critics of the policy of intervention also argue that the intervention is mainly based on imperial ambitions, political or economic interests of certain states. For this purpose, Libya and Ukraine will be used as case studies.

This paper consists of two parts: theoretical and practical. The first section defines humanitarian intervention and humanitarian imperialism and emphasises its main features. It also analyses the interests (political, humanitarian, and military) of the states involved in humanitarian operations. A theoretical framework will provide an overview of this paper’s focus-intervention problems in the modern world. The second section compares the cases of Libya and Ukraine as cases of different interventions provided by Western states and Russia. It also highlights the main reasons for military involvement in humanitarian operations.

The Power of Law or The Right of Power

The attention paid to humanitarian interventions as a foreign policy tool is steadily increasing today. Humanitarian intervention is explained as “the violation of a nation-state’s sovereignty for the purpose of protecting human life from government repression or famine or civil breakdown”. It “is an old concept that has been given a new lease on life with the end of the Cold War”.² On a global scale, humanitarian interventions have started relatively recently. Yet, several examples were observed in the 19th century, as well. One of the first mentions was the humanitarian intervention of France, justifying sending its troops to Lebanon in 1860 to save one tribal alliance from the destruction of others. However, later, according to many experts, it was the diplomacy of France and Britain that aggravated relations between these tribes.

Further, the actions of Germany, Austria-Hungary, the United States, France, Great Britain, Italy, Russia, and Japan in China in 1901 were justified in the same way to protect their citizens and Chinese Christians who were hiding in prisons during the Boxer rebellion.³ The Alliance of States sought to strengthen its influence in China. It fell under even greater dependence on foreign powers

² Rakiya Omaar and Alex De Waal, “Can Military Intervention Be ‘Humanitarian’?”, *Middle East Report*, Vol: 187/188, 1994, p. 3.

³ Risto Kivi, R., *Humanitarian intervention or imperial ambitions?* Retrieved from: <https://rus.postimees.ee/569060/gumanitarnaya-intervenciya-ili-imperskie-ambicii>, 2011.

due to the uprising, which seriously affected its development in the first half of the 20th century.

The concept of humanitarian intervention was widely used in the practice of international relations to protect national and religious minorities up to the 20th century. However, well-known lawyer-internationalist Humphrey (2002) came to the conclusion that "in fact, all interventions of that time took place for political purposes, far from the ideas of humanism".⁴ After the Second World War and the formation of the United Nations, the right to use force in international relations was severely restricted. The UN Security Council resolutions and individual norms of international humanitarian law were considered during the study of the problem of humanitarian intervention. Various sources of information were used to make this research more objective, including the works of Ukrainian, Russian and Western scholars. It should be noted that there is a difference between a Russian perspective and the current situation in Ukraine. The UN Charter completely prohibits states from using armed force unilaterally. However, many government officials and scholars are still arguing today about the legitimacy of humanitarian intervention, which was repeatedly used by individual states as an occasion for the use of armed force.

It is worth noting the works of F. K. Abiew, "Evolution of Doctrine and Practice of Humanitarian Interventions"⁵, as well as S. N. MacFarlane's "Intervention in Modern World Politics"⁶, who studied the historical foundations and evolution of the doctrine of "humanitarian intervention." In their works, scholars focus on the problem of the relationship between the two concepts - human rights and state sovereignty and the dilemma of humanitarian intervention. Also, the role of humanitarian interventions in world politics is devoted to the works of J. L. Holzgrefe and R. O. Keohane, for example, "Human Intervention: Ethical, Legal and Political Dilemmas"⁷. In this edited book, the authors analyse historical political aspects and how they relate to humanitarian interventions.

In Russian academic literature, in S. Chernichenko's "Human Rights and Humanitarian Issues in Modern Diplomacy"⁸ and O. Khokhlysheva's "The

⁴ Michael Humphrey, "Humanitarianism, Terrorism and the Transnational Border", *Social Analysis: The International Journal of Social and Cultural Practice*, 46(1), p. 118–124. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23170137>, 2002.

⁵ Francis Kofi Abiew, *Evolution of Doctrine and Practice of Humanitarian Interventions*, Hague 1999.

⁶ S. Neil Macfarlane, *Intervention in Contemporary World Politics*, London 2002.

⁷ Jeff L. Holzgrefe & Robert O. Keohane, *Humanitarian Intervention: Ethical, Legal and Political Dilemmas*, Cambridge 2003.

⁸ S. Chernichenko, *Human rights and humanitarian issues in modern diplomacy*, Moscow 2008.

World of Dignity and Illusion of Peacemaking"⁹ articles, the authors cover the issues of humanitarian intervention and their compliance with international law.

A. Antokolsky, in his article "NATO against Yugoslavia, the bombing of civilian objects",¹⁰ argues that NATO's humanitarian intervention in Yugoslavia only worsened the situation, causing an even more severe crisis. Significant attention deserves the work of Vorobyova, "The War in Libya: Another Oil",¹¹ in which the author noted that America primarily used the war in Libya and the humanitarian intervention of NATO to achieve its own goals.

According to one version, this term appeared for the first time in the late 1980s. It was widely used by a professor of international law at the University of Paris, Mario Bettati and the French politician Bernard Kouchner, one of the founders of the well-known "Doctors Without Borders" organisation, especially for the operations conducted in Haiti, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Somalia.¹²

According to some scholars, humanitarian intervention means the use of armed force by one state or group of states against another state to protect human rights (the citizens of that country), that is, the protection of the rights of the population in the territory of another state without its consent.¹³ For instance, in the American military doctrine, humanitarian interventions relate to limited use of military force, peacekeeping, the compulsion for peace, separation of conflicting parties and humanitarian assistance. In addition, it should be noted that there is no generally accepted international instrument (such as the definition of aggression adopted by the United Nations in 1974) which would give an exhaustive notion of humanitarian intervention.

The term humanitarian intervention is defined by Holzgrefe as:

“The threat or use of force across state borders by a state (or a group of states) aimed at preventing or ending widespread and grave violations of the fundamental human rights of individuals other than its own citizens, without the permission of the state within whose territory force is applied.”¹⁴

⁹ Olga Khokhlysheva, *"The world of dignity and illusion of peacemaking"*. Retrieved from: <http://www.dslib.net/pravo-evropy/mehanizm-mezhdunarodno-pravovogo-regulirovanija-operacij-oon-po-podderzhaniju-mira.html>, Moscow 2000.

¹⁰ A. Antokolsky, "NATO against Yugoslavia, the Bombing of Civilian Objects", *General Military Problems - ZVO - 7/2000*. Retrieved from: <https://commi.narod.ru/txt/2000/0702.htm>, 2000.

¹¹ I. Vorobyova, "The War in Libya: Another Oil", *Direct Investments*, 2011, (4), 8-9.

¹² Francis Kofi Abiew, *Evolution of Doctrine and Practice of Humanitarian Interventions*. Hague 1999.

¹³ Jeff L. Holzgrefe, *Humanitarian Intervention*, Cambridge 2003.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

The mission is widely supported by the international community and leading regional international organisations and does not provoke the perception of it as an "occupation" by the local population. The military operation should be guided by a clearly defined and realistic plan within the framework of an integrated program for the restoration of the functioning of the state. As UN practice shows, the continued international presence is not a guarantee of the success of the intervention, but an early exit guarantees the failure of the mission. Thus, in 1993, the UN Mission in Somalia (UNOSOM) was intended to promote national reconciliation and revival of the state, which at the time did not cope with government functions. To accomplish this task, the mission coordinators set too short terms - 2 years to achieve national reconciliation, draft a new constitution, choose the district and regional councils and temporary national legislative assemblies, holding a referendum, which ultimately affected the failure of the UN.

Critics of intervention policy also argue that intervention is mainly based on imperial ambitions or certain states' political or economic interests. In this vein, many critics focus on the argument that 'Humanitarian war' is a contradiction in terms. War and its consequences, bombing and maiming people, can never be part of protecting human rights and morality.¹⁵ Douzinas's argument briefly and clearly describes that humanitarian problems are only an occasion for the introduction of troops.

Teson, in his work "The liberal case of humanitarian intervention", gave a solid explanation for humanitarian interventions: "I indicated that critics of humanitarian intervention are not pacifists. They object to this kind of war, a war to protect human rights. This position is somewhat anomalous because it requires separate justifications for different kinds of wars. There is no defence of the State that is not parasitic on the rights and interests of individuals. If this is correct, any moral distinction between self-defence and humanitarian intervention, that is, any judgment that self-defence is justified while humanitarian intervention does not have to rely on something above and beyond the general rationale of defence of persons".¹⁶

A prominent critic of American foreign policy, including humanitarian interventions, is N. Chomsky. He criticised the US policy in the Middle East, calling American policy in this region American imperialism: "The intervention will be where and how US power chooses, the guiding consideration being: 'What is in it for us?' To be sure, the 'vision' is cloaked in inappropriate rhetoric about 'democracy' and all good things, the standard accompaniment of whatever is being implemented, and by whom, hence meaningless – carrying no

¹⁵ Costas Douzinas, *The End of Human Rights*, Oxford 2000.

¹⁶ Fernando R. Teson, *The Liberal Case of Humanitarian Intervention*, Oxford 2003.

information, in the technical sense. The declared intent, the record of planning, and the actual policies implemented, with their persistent leading themes, will not be overlooked by someone seriously considering 'humanitarian intervention', which, in this world, means intervention authorised or directed by the United States.¹⁷

According to the definition of international scholars, it is necessary to distinguish between situations where military actions are alike but not humanitarian interventions. Former Minister for Foreign Affairs of Australia and ex-president of the International Crisis Group G. Evans, in his NATO report "Responsibility to Protect," noted the criteria for military intervention. The reason for the intervention, as the author noted, is the situation when the state cannot or does not want to rectify the crisis in the country. In this case, interventions of other states may be required. In order for a military intervention to protect human beings to be justified, there must be severe causes: significant loss of life, genocidal intent, or the consequence of public policy state neglect or inability to act, or large-scale ethnic cleansing. G. Evans insisted that military action can only be justified if it has a sufficient chance of success and does not risk causing a more significant crisis. For example, humanitarian interventions cannot be military actions at the request of a legitimate government, military operations that take place to rescue their citizens abroad, or operations involving military force and made without the consent of the legitimate government but not received by the United Nations.¹⁸

All in all, the main issue in terms of humanitarian intervention is state sovereignty. The state's sovereignty, which is established by means of the Treaty of Westphalia, obstructs intervention in another state's territory – or, at least, that obstruction is expected since sovereignty provides immunity for states themselves. In addition, sovereign states are responsible for their citizens' security. When governments exploit this kind of immunity and carry out the massacre or genocide of their own citizens, the option of humanitarian intervention by certain states or international organisations is thought to exist. However, the UN Charter permits only the right of self-defence against armed attacks and collective enforcement action authorised by the UN Security Council.¹⁹

¹⁷ Noam Chomsky, *Humanitarian Imperialism: The New Doctrine of Imperial Right*, Oxford 2010.

¹⁸ Gareth Evans, *Responsibility to protect*. Retrieved from NATO review: <https://www.nato.int/docu/review/2002/issue4/english/analysis.html>, 2002.

¹⁹ Ozgur Tufekci, 'Can War Ever Be Ethical? Perspectives On Just War Theory and The Humanitarian Intervention Concept', *Journal of Economics and Administrative Sciences*, Vol. 32 No. 4, 2018, pp. 1217-1229; Ekrem Ok and Ozgur Tufekci, "Effect of Cases on the Rivalry Between National Sovereignty and Intervention", Ed. Özgür Tüfekçi and Rahman Dag, *Trends and Transformation in World Politics*, London 2022; Duygu

The Western and Russian Approaches to Providing Intervention

This section will try to find common features in interventions that took place in the last 15 years. It is worth noting that for this research, it is crucial to figure out whether these interventions are humanitarian or more imperialistic. Here, we will not describe the causes of conflicts and how events unfolded but only point to the general features that have become the reasons for intervention in both cases.

The Case of Libya and A Critical Approach

Libya had been in a state of economic and political crisis for a long time. The situation worsened in early 2011 when demonstrations against the regime of M. Gaddafi began on the streets. The dispersal of these demonstrations was accompanied by the use of force against the population, which led to the death of civilians. In this vein, the situation in Libya had signs of internal conflict. At the same time, the Libyan ambassador, Ibrahim Dabbashi, appealed to the UN to impose a ban on flights to Libya. This was necessary in order to prevent the supply of weapons to the Gaddafi regime and, thus, to protect the civilian population from air strikes.²⁰ Later, the chairman of the National Committee of Libya, Mustafa Muhammad Abdul-Djalil, appealed to the international community with the same request that Ambassador Dabbashi immediately set up a no-fly zone over Libya.

It should be noted that the sanctions against Libya were introduced very quickly, without dealing with it properly, neglecting the search for ways to resolve the conflict by adhering to the principle of peaceful settlement of disputes. Following that, the international community responded to the calls to intervene in the internal conflict in Libya. On 17 March 2011, at a meeting of the UN Security Council, the Resolution №1973, which legalised interference in Libya, was adopted. This resolution provided for establishing a no-fly area over Libya and forbidding any ground-based military operations on its territory. The United States took a particularly active stance, emphasising that the goal of the intervention was to save the lives of peaceful, democratically-minded demonstrators suffering from Muammar Gaddafi's dictatorial regime.

Already two days after the resolution was adopted, NATO allied forces began bombing government forces and facilities in the country. The active phase of the battles lasted six months, and the war ended officially in October 2011 when Gaddafi was killed.

Cagla Bayram and Ozgur Tufekci, "Turkey's Black Sea Vision and Its Dynamics", *Journal of the Black Sea Studies*, 15(57), 2018, p. 1-16.

²⁰ John R. Bell, *Libya crisis: Wishful thinking still isn't a viable strategy*, *Comparative Strategy*, 35:2, 2016, p. 139-153.

There is no reliable data on the deaths in Libya. According to the International Criminal Court (ICC), which released details before the intervention in February 2011, 500-700 civilians were killed. (MacFarquhar and Simons, 2011). However, the overall estimate of the number of deaths in battles during March-October 2011 varies from 10 thousand to more than 30 thousand people.²¹ The number of victims among the civilian population could be less than 100 people directly as a result of NATO-led hostilities.²²

Still, the humanitarian intervention in Libya in 2011 was criticised by the international community, first because Resolution 1973 (2011) was adopted even though two permanent members of the Security Council abstained from voting. According to Part 3 of Art. 27 of the UN Security Council, the decision shall be made when they present a vote of nine members, including the total votes of all the permanent members. Indeed, the coalition international troops acted by the resolution of the Security Council of 17 March 2011. The cause of the invasion was "systematic violations of human rights", as well as assistance to refugees in the country. In response to the allegation that allied troops are fighting human rights abuses in Libya, the UN Security Council refused to create a special military peacekeeping mission in the country. Still, it limited itself to establishing a support mission in Libya, which only advised the government and monitored the rule of law in the country.

The 2011 international intervention in Libya, which was authorised by Security Council Resolution 1973, has sparked discussions regarding the appropriate circumstances and methods for employing force in the interest of protection. Additionally, it has raised concerns among certain member states regarding the potential misuse of the responsibility to protect. Furthermore, it has served as a reminder to actors to carefully contemplate the obligations that responsible action entails following the implementation of force.²³

UN troops operated without the participation of UN peacekeepers, and this led to the escalation of the conflict in Tunisia and Egypt. The controversial fact is that the intervention was completed after the assassination of leader M. Gaddafi, but civil war continued in the country. Despite the prohibition of Resolution No. 1970 on the supply by the Allied Arms to the opposition forces, the French government organised secret operations to supply weapons to Libyan

²¹ Seumas Milne, *If the Libyan war was about saving lives, it was a catastrophic failure*. Retrieved from The Guardian: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/oct/26/libya-war-saving-lives-catastrophic-failure>, 2011.

²² Chivers, C. A., *In strikes on Libya by NATO, an unspoken civilian toll*. Retrieved from The New York Times: Retrieved from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/18/world/africa/scores-of-unintended-casualties-in-nato-war-in-libya.html>, 2011.

²³ The United Nations General Assembly and Security Council, *Letter Dated 9 November 2011 from the Permanent Representative of Brazil to the United Nations Addressed to the Secretary-General (A/66/551-S/2011/701)*.

rebels in the West Gur region. Subsequently, the General Staff of the French Armed Forces confirmed that the French air forces provided weapons to the Libyan rebels. French Foreign Minister Alain Juppe acknowledged the fact that they supplied arms but said that it had only light weapons to protect civilians in Libya.²⁴

The Ukrainian Case and A Critical Approach

Perhaps the term humanitarian intervention in the Ukrainian case may seem inappropriate. However, it should be noted that the political crisis in Ukraine, which developed after the revolutionary events in November 2013 and the further deployment of military operations in April 2014²⁵, which were supported by Russian military forces in the two eastern provinces of the Donbas region of Ukraine in the Russian academic circles, is considered as a humanitarian intervention.²⁶

The official reason for Russia's humanitarian intervention in Ukraine was presented by the Russian delegation at the UN Security Council meeting in New York on 1 March 2014. The Russian ambassador to the UN Security Council, V. Churkin, showed the letter of former Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich to Vladimir Putin requesting the introduction of Russian troops into the territory of Ukraine. Thus, V. Churkin, while explaining Russian foreign policy, said that the political crisis in Ukraine was a "coup d'état that threatens the lives of Russians in the Crimea".²⁷ Russia's position was criticised by other member states of the UN Security Council, so Russia's strategy has undergone some changes. Churkin further argued for the intervention in Ukraine by Article 51 of the UN Charter on the right of any state to seek help.²⁸ Later, during his speech at the investment forum "Russia Calls!" in Moscow, Russian President Vladimir Putin said that Russia "was forced to defend the Russian-speaking population in

²⁴ Ray Bush, Giuliano Martiniello & Claire Mercer, Humanitarian imperialism. *Review of African Political Economy*, 38, 2011, p. 357 – 365.

²⁵ Sennur Ozdemir & Ayca Eminoglu, "Understanding the New War in the Modern Age: An Assessment on The Russia–Ukraine War". *Karadeniz Arařtırmaları*. XX/79: 559-584, 2023; Ismail Kose, "Russia's New Irredentist Foreign Policy Approach & Energy Card". *Karadeniz Arařtırmaları Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 2/2, 2016, s. 42-63; Rahman Dag, "Geopolitical Struggle between Russia and Turkey: The Intersection of Ukraine and Syrian Crises", *The Rest: Journal of Politics and Development*, 12/2, 2002, p.150-161.

²⁶ Sergey Smirnov, Putin: We are not considering the option of annexing Crimea., *Vedomosti*. Retrieved from: <https://www.vedomosti.ru/politics/articles/2014/03/04/putin-nachal-press-konferenciyu>, 2014;

²⁷ MID, Speech by the Permanent Representative of Russia to the UN V.I. Churkin at a meeting of the UN Security Council on the situation in Ukraine, New York, June 24, 2014.

²⁸ Yana Polyanskaya, *Yanukovich's letter to the President of Russia*. Retrieved from: *Crimea.Reality*: <https://ru.krymr.com/a/28679423.html>, 2017.

the Donbas".²⁹ In his interview, Putin mentioned the reasons for the deterioration of Russian-American relations. So, the president of Russia said that the revolutionary events in Kyiv in the winter of 2014 (according to Putin, "the coup d'etat in Ukraine") were provoked by the United States. Therefore, the Kremlin "was forced" to support the separatists in the Donbas and also "to respond to the aspirations of the Crimean people to return to Russia".³⁰

In August 2014, the official website of the president of Russia revealed information about the talks between Vladimir Putin and the head of the European Commission, Manuel Barroso. It was announced that Russia intends to send a humanitarian convoy to Ukraine together with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). At the same time, news was published by ITAR-TASS (official information agency) about the appeal of the Public Chamber (PC) of Russia to the president of the ICRC, Peter Maurer, about the situation in Ukraine.³¹ Members of the PC were asked to assist in the creation of humanitarian corridors.

Russian intervention has lasted for ten years. According to the United Nations Monitoring Mission on Human Rights, as a result of the armed conflict in the East of Ukraine, in the first five years, from April 2014 to the end of 2018, between 12,000 and 13,000 people were killed. Thus, according to the mission, about 3,300 civilians in the Donbas, 4,000 service members of the Ukrainian Army, and 5500 - armed militants supported by Russia died. In addition, another 27 thousand to 30 thousand people were injured during the conflict.³²

For a long time, Russia has criticised the Western model of "humanitarian intervention" and "limited sovereignty". However, the Russian Foreign Ministry, for the first time, used the term during the Russian-Georgian war in 2008, calling the war in Georgia a military operation to protect civilians in South Ossetia (Russian citizens) from the threat of genocide.

Taking advantage of the political crisis that has developed since the revolutionary events in Ukraine, Russia has violated the territorial integrity of Ukrainian borders. Statement by V. Churkin before the UN Security Council, the then Ukrainian President V. Yanukovich asked Russia whether an armed

²⁹ RadioSvoboda, Russia calls. Putin: "We were forced to protect the Russian-speaking population of Donbass", Retrieved from: Radio Svoboda: <https://www.svoboda.org/a/28048368.html>, 2016.

³⁰ RadioSvoboda, Russia calls. Putin: "We were forced to protect the Russian-speaking population of Donbass", Retrieved from: Radio Svoboda: <https://www.svoboda.org/a/28048368.html>, 2016.

³¹ Igor Fyodorov, *About humanitarian konvoi*. Retrieved from BK55.ru (official information agency). Retrieved from: <https://bk55.ru/news/article/37027/?source=>, 2014.

³² 24Tv. *War in Donbas: How many we lost?* Retrieved from 24tv: https://24tv.ua/viyina_na_donbasi_v_oon_ozvuchili_kilkist_zagiblih_vid_pochatku_konfliktu_n1100031, 2019.

intervention cannot be considered legitimate. At that time, ex-president V. Yanukovych was impeached and, therefore, could no longer claim to represent Ukraine or its people.³³ On 21 April 2018, presidential elections took place in Ukraine. At the same time, the official site of the President of Russia appeared to announce that Vladimir Putin on 24 April signed a decree on the simplification of the procedure for issuing Russian passports to residents of the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Luhansk "People's Republics".³⁴ According to the acting president of Ukraine, P. Poroshenko, "this is a direct interference in the internal affairs of Ukraine".³⁵ The expert of the Carnegie Moscow Center, K. Scorkin, noted the similarity of Ukraine with Russia's actions in South Ossetia, Abkhazia, and Transnistria. In particular, he noted that the issuance of Russian passports to the population in the eastern regions of Ukraine will finally consolidate the existing status quo of these regions. Therefore, Russia can always protect its citizens by applying force.³⁶

To sum up, international experts, political figures, and academics give a mixed assessment of the intervention in Libya and Ukraine. However, intervention in Libya, despite being imperialist, still has more humanitarian features. While Russian intervention in Ukraine is exclusively military, backed by imperialist principles of Russia's foreign policy.

Conclusion

By the end of the Cold War, both theory and practice dominated the thought that intervention in the internal affairs of the state was allowed only in extreme cases. Consequently, the problem of ambiguity in the concept of intervention has an impact on the course of its conduct. It should be considered that the primary goal of humanitarian interventions is to prevent massive violence against the population.

Obviously, the intervention violates some of the fundamental principles laid down in the UN Charter, particularly the principle of inviolability of state sovereignty. As already mentioned, the main problem is that it is difficult for states to reach international agreement on interference with the internal conflict of a third state since each has its own approaches and pursues its goals through interventions. Therefore, humanitarian interventions are always criticised as

³³ Marc Weller, *Crimea and international law*. Retrieved from: https://www.bbc.com/russian/international/2014/03/140309_crimea_international_1, 2014.

³⁴ Kremlin, *The official website of the President of Russian Federation*. Retrieved from: <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/60429>, 2019.

³⁵ RIA. (2019). *New passports for Donbas*. Retrieved from DW/ Made for minds. Retrieved from: <https://www.dw.com/ru>

³⁶ RIA. (2019). *New passports for Donbas*. Retrieved from DW/ Made for minds. Retrieved from: <https://www.dw.com/ru>

great powers are pursuing a double standards policy. The problem with the concept of humanitarian intervention is the contradictory interpretation of this term, as well as the fact that there is still no formal consolidation of international documents. That is why humanitarian intervention in modern realities may seem like a unilateral military intervention.

Obviously, humanitarian intervention is now a new form of military intervention in the internal affairs of the state. As this study showed, state leaders and diplomats justify using force for humanitarian purposes, referring to international legal concepts and the UN Charter. Apparently, in order for interference in internal affairs to be truly humanitarian, it is necessary to pursue a policy of cooperation that would ensure the peaceful resolution of any conflict. Mechanisms for regulating humanitarian interventions should be global and require broad involvement of participants in the international process.

To sum up, it must be pointed out that any military campaign, including a humanitarian one, always leads to human losses. The "humanitarian" interventions that have been carried out over the past 15 years in the world, in particular in Libya and Ukraine, by the Western countries and Russia, also have goals and strategies that did not serve the interests of the Libyans or Ukrainians, Crimean Tatars, whom they were supposed to help. When investigating examples of interferences in Libya and Ukraine, it should, of course, be noted that the military operation in Libya is considered to be more successful. Despite the significant criticism of this intervention, it is worth saying that the goal of the military campaign was partly achieved by Allied troops. NATO troops launched this military operation under the pretext of protecting the civilian population of Libya, and, according to the ISS, during the period of intervention, civilian casualties were slight compared to Russian intervention in Ukraine.

As a result, some of the standard features of these two interventions are as follows:

1. The role of the UN Security Council has ceased to be obligatory in deciding on an intervention in a third country. Although Russia substantiated its actions at a UN Security Council meeting, it received no support from the member states. Moreover, Russia was sanctioned for interference in Ukraine, but it did not solve the Ukrainian situation in any way.

2. Humanitarian problems are, for the most part, only an occasion for the introduction of troops. If, in the case of Libya, the humanitarian situation was partly present, then there was no need for help in Ukraine. Russia has hypocritically concealed and precipitated its criminal actions in Ukraine, insisting that in some regions of the Donbas, there is a boom in humanitarian aid. According to the statement made by the former president of Ukraine, P. Poroshenko, Ukraine does not need additional foreign aid and could fully help its people if the Russian troops left the Ukrainian territory.

3. Interference by foreign troops does not end the humanitarian catastrophe. After the military campaign ended, the situation in Libya was not much improved since the overthrow of Gaddafi's regime only deepened the internal crisis. The situation in Ukraine cannot be improved due to the presence of Russian troops on Ukrainian territory.

Answering the question of whether these interventions were humanitarian or imperialist, according to the cases given, despite criticism, intervention in Libya can be considered more humanitarian but not less imperialist. Obviously, referring to the doctrine of protecting their minorities abroad, Russia violates international law since the doctrine of salvation does not apply to foreigners who have already become nationals of a second country. According to international law, the issuance of passports should only facilitate the return of citizens back to their homeland - in Russia. However, this can not justify the occupation of a neighbouring state in any case. The "humanitarian intervention", which originally developed in the West, has been transformed considerably in Russia and is only interpreted as the legitimate pretext for its expansionist policy.

In the given examples, we see that there is much in common between these interventions. Unfortunately, the intervention in both Libya and Ukraine did not solve the problems of democratic security values or didn't reach the purpose of the interventions that were actually set. In Libya, the military invasion coincided with economic and strategic interests. Unstable economic and political situations, as well as natural disasters that shook the region of North Africa, in particular Libya, caused mass migration crises. According to the UN, in the period from January to August 2023, more than 45 thousand refugees and migrants tried to cross the central part of the Mediterranean Sea, trying to get to Europe from Libya.³⁷

Summing up the Russian intervention in the events of February-March 2014, it can be stated that the operation to seize the peninsula began long before that and became an unprecedented event for the post-war world order. The result of the annexation was the illegal persecution, imprisonment, repression of Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars and the formation of a Russian military base, which provoked the formation of a liberation movement both in Crimea and in other temporarily occupied Ukrainian territories. Ten years since Russia's intervention in Crimea, it is seen that the imperialist aims of Russia have not halted. During nine years of occupation, Crimea turned into a military base of the Russian Federation, which made it easier for Russia to invade the southern territories of Ukraine during the Russian full-scale military invasion that started in February 2022 and is still going on.

³⁷ UNHCR, Operational Data Portal, Retrieved from: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean/location/5205>, 2023.

As a result, these facts once again confirm that the interventions in Libya and Ukraine have overtly or covertly imperialist aims and prove that both are imperialist humanitarian interventions which prioritise the interveners' benefits.

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