*Support or Suppress?*The Irony of Armed Humanitarian Interventions

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Geneva

2024

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i. Introduction

An Overview of Interventionism

When does an act of compassion become an act of aggression? NATO's intervention in Libya in 2011 was allegedly influenced by the need to act in accordance with the Responsibility to Protect, its stated goal to help protect the civilians in Libya from the Gadaffi regime. And yet on August 30th 2011 at around 3.30am, a family home was bombed in a NATO strike, killing 5 members of the Fathi family, two men, two women, and a 9 year old girl named Farah. Due to the nature of the airstrike, Farah's remains were found outside the house, despite having been inside at the time of the attack and some of the girl's limbs and organs had been ripped off her body. A violent and gruesome death for anyone, and particularly so for a child.

"I just need an answer from NATO:
Why did you destroy my home and kill my family?"

- Faiz Fathi Jfara, Bani Walid, 23.01.2012 (Abrahams, 2023).

This act in the name of humanitarianism on the part of NATO certainly does not seem compassionate, and highlights the controversy of the topic of armed humanitarian interventions quite well: how can states intervene militarily in another country, all while promoting ideals of peace and humanitarianism? Is there an inherent irony in fighting for peace with violence? This thesis aims to address the topic of irony in armed humanitarian interventions.

As of today, military interventionism is a highly debated topic, though it still has a large part to play as a mechanism and tool of some of the most powerful states. According to a Congressional Research Service Report, the United States of America alone has pursued at least 251 military interventions across the globe since 1991, with most occurring in the Middle East, Asia, or on the African continent (Norton, 2024; Salazar Torreon & Plagakis, 2022, p. 14-52). Many of these military interventions have been dubbed "armed humanitarian interventions" where the use of military force is 'justified' with moral and humanitarian purposes. Despite the alleged humanitarian aims, these interventions can have disastrous effects on the people and the region they're operating in, usually disproportionately affecting those already facing hardships (Eggert, 2022, p. 299). These conflicts, while already devastating enough to require interventions, can

often be exacerbated by foreign interventions, and cause more problems in the long-run, adding to the instability and suffering, and provoking an increase in refugees. A strong example is the 2011 NATO intervention in Libya, which explicitly invoked the 'Responsibility to Protect', yet according to Airwars research, killed at least 223 civilians, and up to 403: the very people the intervention was aiming to 'protect' (Dyke, 2021). As of today, most NATO states have yet to take responsibility for the deaths, leaving many of the families of the victims to deal with the harrowing consequences of NATO's actions on their own: no apology, no consolation, no reparation. Furthermore, following NATO's intervention, Libya turned into a failed state due to being left in an everlasting turmoil, and has yet to achieve regional stability (Camacoza, 2022, p. 55).

In a world continuously developing, with the ongoing advancement and use of Lethal Autonomous Weapons, a comprehensive understanding of what armed humanitarian interventions entail and what they *should* entail is a necessity. The misuse of the term could lead to more interventions for self-interested reasons, particularly when we're faced with fewer and lower 'costs' to intervening, such as a state's own citizens or soldiers dying. This could lead to a general erosion of sovereignty, an undermining of diplomatic solutions, and an increase in conflicts. All of these cause increased human suffering and pain, thus going against the core of the humanitarian concept. In fact, we are currently in a geopolitical landscape that seems to highlight this very erosion of diplomatic solutions and increase in conflicts: there is a deeply disturbing lack of response from the international scene, particularly from states, to intervene in adequate ways that respect all the Pillars of the principle of 'Responsibility to Protect'. According to the Geneva Academy, there are over 110 armed conflicts happening at the time of writing this thesis: March 2024. 45 of these armed conflicts are currently taking place in North Africa and the Middle East, more than 35 in other regions of Africa, 21 in Asia, 7 in Europe, and 6 in South America. (*Today's Armed Conflicts - the Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights*, n.d.). There's a lack of international discussion on many of these conflicts, barring the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and the Israeli invasion of Gaza - and yet even in these conflicts that have much media attention on them, there's been a lack of adequate response from the international community.

Research Question

My intention in this thesis is not to argue that military interventions are inherently unjustifiable or ineffective, but rather to highlight some of the inherent ironies and complexities that they entail. The paradox of the use of military force in the name of humanitarian purposes must be critically assessed, as such my goal is to critically evaluate the current practices and frameworks governing these armed humanitarian interventions, with a view to identifying measures that can enhance their effectiveness and ensure they are better aligned with humanitarian goals. To this end, this paper will address the following question:

> **How do the inherent ironies of armed humanitarian interventions, which are intended to alleviate suffering, instead reflect ethical challenges, and what measures can improve the effectiveness of these interventions and their alignment with humanitarian goals?**

This thesis will be concentrating on analysing the irony of armed humanitarian interventions by picking at discrepancies between the rhetoric and reality surrounding them, both linguistically, and in certain case studies. It will start by presenting a conceptual analysis of the concept itself of armed humanitarian interventions and highlight the concept's inherent irony. Next, will be two ideological analyses of the concept of armed humanitarian interventions through the lens of liberalism and neorealism, to expose how certain governments and organisations may proclaim noble and humanitarian intentions, like the promotion of peace and protection of human rights, but where the actions that follow could reveal outcomes that contradict these stated goals.

Next, I will address the issue of selectivity in interventionism through multiple different facets: the typical debate, the decolonisation of the selectivity bias, and the selection of which lives are prioritised. These are just some of the ethical challenges of armed humanitarian interventions, which underlines just some of the neo-imperial tendencies associated with interventionism.

The last section will be on the importance of emphasising the moral responsibility of states to tackle the issues of irony present within armed humanitarian interventions. Through responsibility, we can work towards paths that could address the ethical issues of using armed humanitarian interventions to help end human suffering by reducing the gap between rhetoric and reality.

Methodologies

To tackle this research question, this thesis employs a combination of applied conceptual analysis, ideological analysis, and thought experiments to explore the complexities and ironies of armed humanitarian interventions. Applied conceptual analysis, as described by Olsthoorn (2017), is utilised to dissect and critically examine the foundational concepts and terminologies within the discourse of armed humanitarian interventions. Through this method, the thesis hopes to provide clarity and precision to the key terms and bring to light their implications on political theory. Following the framework proposed by Maynard (2017), this thesis uses ideological analyses to scrutinise the underlying ideologies and political motivations that drive states and international actors to engage in armed humanitarian interventions abroad. By being critical of the ideologies used, the thesis hopes to uncover the often-hidden biases and interests that influence the decisions of these actors. Lastly, thought experiments, as articulated by Brownlee and Stemplowska (2017), are used to hypothesise and explore potential scenarios and outcomes of humanitarian interventions, allowing for a deeper understanding of their ethical and practical ramifications. These methodologies collectively enable a comprehensive and multifaceted examination of the subject, ensuring that the analysis is both thorough and nuanced.

Definitions of the Main Concepts

Interventions

When one talks about an intervention in international politics, one is often referring to the use of force of one state to intervene in the internal or external affairs of another state. It can refer to interference in a state's freedom to choose its political, economic, social, or cultural path, or to interference in the formulation of its foreign policy. Intervention may take the form of military action, or it may be undertaken through the exertion of economic or political pressures. Interventions are meant to be regarded as unlawful under international law if such interference is achieved through the excessive use of force, be it in the direct form of military action or in the indirect form of support for subversive or terrorist armed activities within another state ("General Assembly Resolution 2131 (XX)," 1965). However, there are certainly cases in which military interventions have been deemed legitimate and considered legal within the confines of international law. Most of these legal interventions are armed humanitarian interventions, which

is the deployment of military forces with the aim of addressing issues of large-scale human suffering like genocide or ethnic-cleansing in other states.

For the purpose of this essay, we will be limiting ourselves to the military and humanitarian aspects of interventionism as seen above, and proceed with a conceptual analysis of the term 'armed humanitarian intervention.' We will start by defining an armed humanitarian intervention as being: 'the interference of one state or coalition of states into the internal or external affairs of another state through the use or deployment of military force, with the stated intention of addressing humanitarian concerns.'

Irony

Irony is a rhetorical device often used as a literary tool wherein the speaker will say one thing, but mean something else, often the opposite of the original statement, due to its evidently untrue nature. Irony manifests itself as a discrepancy between the statement and the facts, creating an antiphrasis where the disparity between the two often creates a usually humorous effect. For example, saying "Well that was fun," after an incredibly boring party is an example of irony, due to the speaker implying that the idea they're trying to endorse (that a boring party was fun), feels ludicrous, and thus, is entertaining. However, irony is not only used for humour, but rather it can be used to indicate the inherent juxtaposition of two conflicting things: the intended original meaning of a word, and its apparent contradiction (Wilson & Sperber, 2012, p. 123).

In international relations or in the field of politics irony can manifest itself in the gaps between stated intentions, and the actual outcomes or actions. This phenomenon can be observed in various different contexts, such as the dissonances between speeches of international leaders, and their *actual* commitments and actions towards addressing such problems. This thesis aims to analyse irony in the context of armed humanitarian interventions, in the ways discussed in the previous section. Observing the paradoxes and contradictions that can emerge in the field of international relations can potentially have beneficial effects. Questioning the narratives imposed upon us allows for the development of critical thought and analysis, which can help people better understand how and when to question the dominant narratives in media, and so to challenge simplistic or overly optimistic portrayals of what are essentially, acts of war, however "just" they may be. This can lead to more informed public discourse, and policy debates that can help us

make sure that armed humanitarian interventions are being used for the betterment of the *people*, rather than for any other reason. Being critical of armed humanitarian interventions is a necessity when it comes to holding decision-makers accountable for their actions, inviting public discourse, and hopefully, leading to more proportional and just interventions.

As such, this thesis will define irony as being a rhetorical device characterised by a discrepancy between expected and actual outcomes, often revealing contradictions between stated intentions and resulting consequences.

Responsibility

In the later half of this thesis, there will be an analysis on the notion of responsibility of states and on how we can combat the irony of armed humanitarian interventions by emphasising the importance of accountability and responsibility of state actors. As such, responsibility of states is a major concept in this paper. But what exactly is "State Responsibility"? The notion of responsibility of states is a pre-established concept in both political science and law, that unfortunately is tied to a plethora of legal meanings, as well as more philosophical ones. Its main association is to legal responsibility, such as the obligations derived from international treaties and conventions, particularly the UN Charter and international public and humanitarian law.

However, while this paper will briefly touch upon the legal notions of state responsibility, it mainly wishes to focus on *the people* and individuals, not other states. As such, our notion of state responsibility will be differentiated into two parts. When referring to "the laws of state responsibility" or "legal responsibility", this paper will be referring to the legal notions and the governing principles of when and how a state is held responsible for a breach of an international obligation, such as a breach in *jus cogens*. Under the legal perspective, responsibility of states is seen as a 'secondary' international obligation, where they are then responsible for repairing the damages. Typically, the laws of state responsibility only invoke the responsibility of the state if the breach is directed against another state.

On a more day-to-day basis, "responsibility" has many meanings, but we will focus on two: the first being as stated by the Oxford English Dictionary, definition 2.b: "The state or fact of being in charge of or of having a duty towards a person or thing; obligation. Frequently with *for*." Indeed, a person can be responsible *for* a certain project, a pet, or even another person. For

example, a parent is responsible for their children: making sure that they are well taken care of, that they don't hurt themselves or cause trouble to others. In the context of states, there is a vast debate on the topic of responsibility of states towards their citizens, with different political parties having contrasting ideologies: on whether there should only be negative obligations, or on the inclusion of positive obligations. Without delving further into this debate, and for the purpose of this thesis, we will define this aspect of "State Responsibility" towards their citizens as being the 'the duty of governments to ensure the well-being of their population by safeguarding their rights, providing essential services, maintaining law and order, and promoting a safe and just society.'

Conversely, when a *person* 'takes responsibility' for something, we do not refer to laws and obligations, but rather, we think about how they are acknowledging that they are *accountable* for a particular action, decision or outcome. When one 'takes responsibility', they recognise their role in a given situation and accept the consequences, whether positive or negative, and commit themselves to addressing any issues or rectifying any mistakes they've caused. Taking responsibility involves being honest and transparent about what occurred, and it demonstrates a certain willingness to learn from the experience to improve in the future. In general, a person who takes responsibility for their actions is viewed positively, as they are seen to act maturely, with integrity and accountability. These are marks of a good leader, as well as one who's oriented towards conflict resolution since taking accountability is often the first step towards repairing relationships or resolving conflicts.

This thesis would like to address states' responsibility in a similar light: when states take responsibility for their actions in honest and transparent ways, then they take strides towards learning and growing. This facet of responsibility includes moral considerations: honesty, transparency, justice, as well as taking the steps to rectify any conflicts caused by their own actions. It is therefore an important component when it comes to what sort of behaviour should be expected of states, and their ability to take responsibility for the actions of their governments and armed forces. We will thus refer to this as the "moral responsibility of states".

Legitimacy

Lastly, though this paper will not delve deep into the topic of legitimacy, we will for now define it under the context of international interventions as being the perceived or actual rightfulness of a particular intervention, justified through legal frameworks such as the UN Charter and international law, and through moral values or the general cultural norms and traditions of the international community.

I. Literary Review - Significant Debates

Particularly since the end of the Cold War, interventionism and humanitarianism have become broad subjects that have a strong presence in the academic and political debates all over the world. They, along with armed humanitarian interventions, are hot topics that have been the subject of many ongoing academic debates which are fraught with ethical, moral, legal and even strategic dilemmas and considerations. Some of the most significant of these debates revolve around the following topics: the question of sovereignty, versus the responsibility to protect; the question of legitimacy and authorisation; the effectiveness and outcomes of interventions; the ethical and moral considerations; and finally the matter of geopolitical and strategic interests.

Sovereignty vs Responsibility to Protect

The first debate I'll be addressing is the one that's arisen between academics on the question of sovereignty, versus the principle of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) in the context of armed humanitarian interventions. The main contention in these back-and-forth discussions centre around the conflict between respecting the principles of state sovereignty, and promoting the international community's duty to prevent and respond to mass atrocities.

Traditionally, the notion of sovereignty of states places a strong emphasis on a state's autonomy and on the principle of non-interference in its internal affairs. Realist authors are particularly attached to the concept of sovereignty, as their understanding of state interactions in the international sphere revolves around the idea that the international system is an anarchy between self-interested states. One of the most prominent authors who advocates this is John Mearsheimer (2001, p. 30), who in his book *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* emphasises that sovereignty and non-interference are foundational to the international system. This view of

the international order leads to the belief that states will and should always prioritise their own sovereignty, as it is their most important asset which guarantees them their place in the system. Mearsheimer, who deems himself an 'offensive realist' argues that interventions in the internal affairs of other states can lead to more power struggles, to counterproductive outcomes, and unintended consequences which can ultimately destabilise the international order. To him, while there could potentially be moral arguments made in favour of humanitarian interventions, they are not worth putting in jeopardy the stability provided by a system which is based on sovereign equality and non-interference.

Similarly, Samuel P. Huntington (2007), in his book *The Clash of Civilisations and the Remaking of World Order* also advocates for the importance of sovereignty, however his arguments take on a more culturally nuanced perspective. He too believes that respecting the autonomy of states is a means of maintaining international stability, but that it also serves to avoid cultural clashes. Huntington's approach highlights the role of cultural divisions between states in the international order and thus the importance of understanding and respecting these differences. His analysis underlines how cultural and civilisational identities shape global politics, meaning that the potential for conflict arises mainly from clashes between different value systems, which he believes can be mitigated by respecting the sovereign equality of states.

So where is the contention between Sovereignty and R2P? Well, combating this 'right' to sovereignty and the principle of non-interference, a new core of the concept of armed humanitarian interventions emerged in 2005 following a unanimous adoption from the UN General Assembly: the principle of the Responsibility to Protect, also known as R2P. According to the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect "R2P is an international norm that seeks to ensure that the international community never again fails to halt the mass atrocity crimes of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity." This principle asserts that states have a responsibility to protect not only their populations from atrocities, but also the populations of foreign states. Indeed, when states fail to meet their obligations, "the international community must be prepared to take appropriate collective action" (*What Is R2P?*, 2022). R2P focuses on creating an international response to particularly harrowing instances of violations of human rights: genocide, ethnic cleansing, war crimes, and crimes against humanity through the implementation of its' Third Pillar (*What Is R2P?*, 2022). It emphasises the importance of human

rights, and through this the moral imperative to prevent and mitigate mass human suffering. Generally, this concept recognises that at times, armed interventions are necessary to fulfil this duty to protect, and so in a sense, R2P creates a duty to undertake humanitarian intervention (Pattison, 2013). Gareth Evans, a strong proponent of R2P wrote in 2009 in his book *The Responsibility to Protect: Ending Mass Atrocity Crimes Once and For All* that "sovereignty is not a licence to kill" in a way intended to highlight that the prevention of mass atrocity crimes is more important than a states' sovereignty.

As such, R2P directly promotes the *interference* (or intervention) of states into the internal affairs of other states, eroding the principle of sovereign equality and non-interference. At the heart of the debate between Sovereignty vs R2P is whether one should prioritise innocent lives, or the stability of the international order. Critics of R2P point out that the concept can undermine state sovereignty and lead to selective or inconsistent application based on geopolitical interests. Proponents, however, argue that while it might not be perfect, R2P provides a necessary framework for preventing human suffering and holding states accountable for their actions on their own territory. The debate continues as both sides seek a balance between respecting state sovereignty and upholding the moral imperative of protecting vulnerable populations from mass atrocities.

Pluralism vs Solidarism

The questions posed on sovereignty and the responsibility to protect are retold and rehashed in various ways, one such way is through the numerous academic debates between pluralists and solidarists. As we saw in the previous section, the debate between pluralism and solidarism on the topic of humanitarian intervention is also centred on whether the primary focus of international relations should be on protecting state sovereignty and order (pluralism) or on promoting human rights and moral obligations (solidarism) (Bellamy, 2003b). As a result of this, the academics who contribute to the debates on interventionism often align themselves as being either of the pluralist tradition, or of the solidarist tradition following similar demarcation lines as in the previous debate. Tackling the question of pluralism and solidarism in interventionist literature provides us with a more encompassing perspective, and helps us to identify the trends in academia. Nevertheless, this perspective is rife with ironies and paradoxes, particularly when we note how the same states can align themselves as pluralist in some cases, and solidarist in

others depending on what arranges them best in each context. For example, in 1971 the Indian government intervened in East Pakistan without UN authorisation to put an end to Pakistani atrocities against the Bengali people, arguing that these extreme cases of human rights violations caused the state to lose its right to sovereignty. However, not even three decades later, when NATO claimed they had a duty to intervene in Kosovo, the Indian government criticised the intervention and accused NATO of acting "as if it were above the law." As such, we see that during their intervention in East Pakistan, now Bangladesh, the Indian government pushed forth a solidarist narrative, yet during NATO's intervention was quick to turn to pluralism (Bellamy, 2003a, p. 8).

In his text on "Humanitarian Intervention and the Three Traditions", Bellamy points out some of the other paradoxes that exist within the pluralist/solidarist debate. Firstly, he addresses the "disjuncture between discourses of human rights and practices of human wrongs" in which we see the growing claims of a humanitarian belief in a universal conception of rights which is consistently undermined by some of the horrors committed by states against their people across the globe (Menon, 2016). Next is the contradiction between the supposed norm of non-intervention and the frequent interventionist actions of states, followed by the paradox of state sovereignty which lies in the belief that states deserve legal protection as the guarantors of human welfare and security, despite the fact that states themselves often pose threats to their citizens' security. Lastly, Bellamy notes the "inconsistent approach to dealing with sovereignty."

In order to begin addressing these topics, he goes beyond the typical solidarist/pluralist discussion and instead uses Wight's conception of the "three traditions" to point out that the "paradoxes of intervention and inconsistencies of state practice" are mainly due to the "contradictory responsibilities that states have to their citizens (realism), to international society (rational-ism/pluralism), and to humanity (revolutionism/solidarism)." Indeed, the contradiction between the supposed norm of non-intervention and the frequent interventionist actions of states (Krasner, 1999) could be in part explained by their need to balance between these three responsibilities. Throughout his analysis of human interventionism as seen through the lens of the three traditions, Bellamy concludes that the paradoxes and inconsistencies in behaviour of states on this subject are irresolvable. And while this may be true, the aim of this thesis is

hopefully to address the ways in which the ironies and inconsistencies could be reduced, rather than eradicated.

Legitimacy and Authorisation

But just who is permitted to intervene, and when? Who's authorisation is, or should be, needed? These questions, which focus on examining whose authority is needed to legitimise an intervention, are some of the major talking points at the heart of the debates surrounding armed humanitarian interventions. Some authors, like Ian Hurd (2007, p. 173) believe that the United Nations Security Council plays a large role in granting legitimacy to intervention through resolutions, as long as it is acting within its authority and in accordance with international norms and laws. The authors that subscribe to this thought process often believe that interventions done without authorisation from the United Nations Security Council have their legitimacy questioned, lowering the amount of international support for them in general. Unilateral interventions which are not approved by the UNSC therefore remain particularly contentious.

On the other hand, there are those with critical views of using the United Nations Security Council as an adequate measure of legitimacy of interventions, particularly due to their inconsistency in decision-making processes as the political interests of the Permanent Members are much too influential due to their veto power. As well as this, the UN Security Council has had a habit of prioritising sovereignty over humanitarian concerns, which lead some authors such as Nicholas J. Wheeler (2002) to emphasise the importance of finding other sources of legitimacy for interventions, and for them to come from a broader range of sources, such as regional organisations or coalitions of willing states, and international civil society groups. This is particularly important in order to separate the self-interest of certain states from the criteria of legitimacy to promote equality and fair treatment during the decision-making processes which lead to armed humanitarian interventions.

The debate on legitimacy and authorisation is a broad and complex one, which will not be delved into deeper in this thesis.

And of Irony?

Despite the mountain of literature on these topics, there is very little written on the *irony* of armed humanitarian interventions. This surprised me, as I found that even within the concept of armed humanitarian interventions itself lies an important and inherent irony, which I will elaborate on further in my conceptual analysis. Admittedly, the paradoxes of humanitarian interventions, both by other state actors and humanitarian organisations, have been addressed by many authors such as Rajan Menon (2016) in his book on *The Conceit of Humanitarian Interventions*, Alex Bellamy often addresses the paradoxes and challenges of R2P, or even Fiona Terry (2013) who wrote a book about the failure of humanitarian organisations to take into account political contexts before providing aid, which sustains the suffering rather than alleviating it. However, the question of irony itself has somehow evaded public discourse, yet throughout this literature review, we already see the emergence of multiple ironies which exist on the topic of interventionism, *particularly* for armed humanitarian interventions. As such, I hope for this thesis to help fill in the gaps, and address the subject of irony in order to challenge assumptions, expose contradictions, highlight (allegedly) unintended consequences, critique existing power dynamics and encourage alternate approaches. And so, let us begin with the conceptual analysis of armed humanitarian intervention: the first irony.

II. Conceptual Analysis: Armed Humanitarian Interventions

The Core of Armed Humanitarian Interventions

In general, when the concept of armed humanitarian interventions is voiced, it is referencing the prevailing notion that the use of military force can be justified in order to protect the lives of civilians from severe humanitarian crises such as ethnic cleansing, genocides, or widespread human rights abuses. Its generally-accepted 'essence' is therefore one where armed humanitarian interventions seek to prevent or halt these mass atrocities and alleviate human suffering through the means of military deployment. Hence, while overwhelmingly linked to military concepts, it is also strongly rooted and connected to other notions, such as legitimacy, justice, and humanitarianism as a whole. Thus, armed humanitarian intervention is a concept of innate tensions, and of the irony of using violence to prevent violence.

According to Pattison (2013), there is a widespread agreement in the academic field that "humanitarian intervention is sometimes permissible," and I would be inclined to agree. Humanitarian intervention is important, and I in no way wish to dismiss the importance of protecting vulnerable populations or addressing humanitarian crises. In fact, I strongly support the appropriate use of humanitarian interventions in the correct situations, which I will attempt to define later on. Rather, the goal is to highlight that there are certain challenges involved when implementing and using the concept of armed humanitarian interventions, even under the framework of R2P. For example, certain critics believe that there are neo-imperialist implications associated with the use of R2P (Bhatnagar, 2016), we will elaborate on this further in the second section of the paper.

The Oxymoron of the "Armed Humanitarian Intervention"

Despite all of this, we are faced with an oddity within the concept itself: an "*armed humanitarian* intervention." When breaking down this term into singular concepts, we find ourselves confronted by an inherent oxymoron, two words with seemingly contradictory meanings. On one hand, a derivative of the word 'army', an adjective directly relating to the use and involvement of weapons; a word implying the use of force and coercion to achieve goals with strong connotations of violence. On the other hand, "humanitarian" is an adjective focused on compassionate initiatives for the promotion of human welfare and happiness of people: it embodies ideals of peace and principles of protection. It is a word with a strong history: of a certain Henri Dunant being so appalled at the utter neglect of the wounded soldiers he saw at the battle of Solferino in 1859 (Hardy, 2016). How do these two seemingly opposite components come together to form one concept that is so frequently used in international politics?

The juxtaposition of "armed" and "humanitarian" reflects a certain level of inherent tension and complexity to the concept of using military force to further humanitarian objectives. While the motives of such interventions are stated as to protect civilian lives and to alleviate human suffering, the use of force automatically brings about certain risks and ethical dilemmas. Armed interventions whether on the ground or through air support can bring about unintended risks, particularly collateral damage and harm to non-combattants. For instance, it is estimated that 488 to 527 innocent civilians were killed during the NATO airstrike bombings over former Yugoslavia: these deaths are fundamentally incompatible with the concept of humanitarianism

(Trbovich, 2008). Humanitarianism, the doctrine that states that it is the people's duty to promote human welfare: how can it thus be tied so closely to the direct harm of people?

The means employed contradicts the very essence associated with humanitarian actions: the oxymoron of the *armed humanitarian* intervention is not only an oxymoron in terms of simple words, but an oxymoron of conflicting natures and principles. It's a paradox of concepts, and an ironic one at that: for the apparent unintended consequences of an armed humanitarian intervention is inconsistent with its intended meaning: to preserve human rights, and prevent human suffering. Additionally, the use of this oxymoron partly minimises the 'armed' aspect of the interventions, by making the focus of the term the central word 'humanitarian.' Doing so brings our gaze to this positive word, leaving 'armed' on the edge of our vision, and thus, on the edge of our minds. A "humanitarian armed intervention" would ultimately be the same thing and have the same meaning as an "armed humanitarian intervention", however it would centralise the very concept that the intervening states wish to minimise – that is to say, the facet of war.

As established, the building blocks of armed humanitarian interventions are *inherently inconsistent* with each other. To promote peace with violence, or to use violence in the name of peace seems counterintuitive simply because it is.

This oxymoron is a prime example of the type of irony that's present in humanitarian intervention rhetoric: an irony *inherent* to the concept itself. One cannot analyse armed humanitarian intervention without first acknowledging the paradox present in the terms of the notion itself. Irony is part of the inherent intrinsic identity of armed humanitarian interventions.

Intervention or Interference?

The conceptual analysis above helps us delve deeper into the meaning of armed humanitarian interventions; however, there is another idea that I find adds an interesting twist to the concepts at hand: the subtle distinction between 'intervention' and 'interference'. The two words tend to be used interchangeably, but there are some key differences in connotation and there are many implications depending on the context each word is used in. In the sphere of international relations, we talk of the principle of 'non-interference', yet then we refer to an interference as a 'military intervention'. Considering this, why do we use 'intervention' in the context of armed humanitarian interventions over the similar term 'interference'?

Simply enough, I would argue that it is because ‘intervention’ has a generally positive connotation, while ‘interference’ tends to be seen pejoratively. Both are terms that involve external involvement in a situation, but as noted by the Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, an intervention is first and foremost an “action taken to improve or help a situation”, the word itself implies the existence of a purposeful and constructive engagement aimed at resolving an issue or mitigating harm. In the context of international politics, the term ends up being associated with efforts that *do* seem to have a legitimate basis and that tend to foster peace and genuine humanitarian outcomes. Using a word with these types of connotations in general helps create a sense of legitimacy to the acts being done, whether or not there may be one.

On the other hand an interference is “the act of getting involved in and trying to influence a situation that should not really involve you, in a way that annoys other people” (Hornby, 1974). Indeed, if you believed one of your close ones had a problem with alcohol, you’d be inclined to organise an ‘intervention’ if you felt it needed to be addressed in a constructive manner; you would think your actions are legitimate due to their good intentions. Meanwhile, your friend can perceive that very action as an ‘interference’ on your part, as you are meddling in a situation that does not involve you; they may think that you are exaggerating their issues, or reading into their actions in a way that does not reflect their reality. Indeed, ‘interference’ highlights the intrusive and often disruptive nature of the involvement, which tends to undermine or disregard the autonomy of the subject at hand. As such, ‘interference’ is rarely referred to when it comes to the use of military force in a foreign country, as it would acknowledge that states who intervene disregard the sovereignty of other states. It also helps explain why the principle of non-interference is not named the principle of non-intervention.

Nevertheless, considering what we’ve analysed thus far, perhaps the term ‘military interference’ would be more appropriate than ‘military intervention’ as it allows us to change perspective and view the situation from the point of view of the state that’s being intervened *in*, rather than the point of view of the intervener. This change in narrative can help us determine whether or not an intervention is truly legitimate by insisting on starting from a foundation where legitimacy is not assumed, but diagnosed.

As such, the implications of the word ‘intervention’, as well as the oxymoron of meanings in ‘armed humanitarian’, portray a certain image that perpetuates the idea that armed humanitarian

interventions are a confusing, but beneficial practice. In spite of that, it also leaves room to understand that these armed humanitarian interventions are deemed automatically legitimate thanks to their intended goals, when in truth the focus on legitimacy should be on the mitigation of unintended consequences as well as the focus on humanitarian goals and the follow-through. Overall, this conceptual analysis of armed humanitarian interventions has helped us acquire a more rounded understanding of the hidden linguistic meanings behind the concept of armed humanitarian interventions. However, it isn't enough to understand exactly in what ways this chosen term continues to perpetrate harmful conventions.

III. Cultural Collisions: Imposing Western Ideals Under the Guise of Aid

This thesis will put forth the notion that armed humanitarian interventions can perpetuate harmful conventions, an irony in and of itself, notably through the use of these interventions as a means of upholding harmful neo-imperial ideals. We will see that this is done by propagating Western (and often liberal) values onto the regions they are intervening in through the promotion of certain narratives, but also by more direct means like resource exploitation, creating economic dependency, and forceful regime changes. We will view these notions through a liberal and realist ideological analysis of the topic, starting with liberalism.

Liberalism: The 'Gift' of Humanitarian Interventions

The respect of human rights is a value strongly entrenched into the liberal ideology due to its strong emphasis on the belief that individuals have inherent rights and liberties that need to be protected by (or from) the state. Considering this, it's natural for liberalism to advocate for armed humanitarian interventions as they are seen as a necessary tool to promote liberal values, protect human rights and to uphold the principles of international law. Within the framework of liberalism, armed humanitarian interventions are a justified means to protect populations from gross human rights abuses, as such liberal proponents argue in favour of interventions due to its alignment with the principles of liberalism that go beyond state borders (Tesón, 2001). By employing armed forces, there is the belief that they can halt violations of human rights, and perhaps even establish conditions to create more democratic governance globally.

In the paper "The Liberal Case for Humanitarian Intervention", Tesón (2001, p. 3) defines permissible humanitarian intervention as being the "proportionate international use or threat of military force, undertaken in principle by a liberal government or alliance, aimed at ending tyranny or anarchy, welcomed by the victims, and consistent with the doctrine of double effect." I am not convinced by this description, as for one, it only relates to 'permissible' humanitarian interventions, rather than armed humanitarian interventions as a whole. Secondly, and possibly most importantly, this definition implicitly connotes interventions as being a favour done by liberal governments towards the victims; this is noted by the criterion which says that the use of military force is "welcomed by the victims." This beneficiary perspective and emphasis on voluntary acceptance frames humanitarian objectives as a 'gift' towards the victims, creating a lasting positive connotation to the term of armed humanitarian intervention that can spill into day-to-day use. However, the actual perceptions and experiences of victims in real situations of humanitarian intervention can greatly differ: I am certain Faiz Fathi Jfara did not welcome NATO's intervention with open arms. Furthermore, the term "welcomed by the victims" is a prerequisite which is very easy to manipulate: one person's victim is another's enemy: it adds a simple dimension of 'picking sides' which allows intervening states to pick and choose according to what suits the needs of their agenda.

In fact, there is a certain level of "White Saviour" and "White Man's Burden" complex related to the topic of armed humanitarian interventions under the liberal lens, especially when we consider humanitarian interventions with the above definition. This is particularly true when we acknowledge that most liberal states are predominantly white and western, and are intervening in non-western and non-democratic countries (Bhatnagar, 2016; Murphy, 2010). Tesón's definition in fact makes it a prerequisite for a *"liberal government or alliance"* to be the one intervening. Additionally, Tesón, a strong proponent of liberalism, quite vehemently believes that any state's rights claims, such as sovereignty, are contingent on their ability to fulfil their human rights obligations towards their own citizens above all else. By doing so, he strongly undermines the principle of sovereignty, and he goes so far as to say that the state "forfeits any rights to nonintervention" if they are not legitimate (by Tesón's liberal and democratic standards) (Szende, 2011; Tesón 2005).

For the purpose of this essay, we'll be referring to this phenomenon as the "Interventionist Saviour" complex due to its direct link to the topic. This concept is rooted in a historical legacy of colonialism and imperialism, and the belief that western societies were 'superior' and had a certain moral duty to 'save' other societies (often from themselves). The interventionist saviour complex can manifest itself in several ways in the context of armed humanitarian interventions.

Firstly, it propagates western values through the assumption that their systems are inherently superior, this mindset can lead to a complete disregard for local history, cultures, and traditions, and an imposition of Western liberal values and institutions. We can in fact confirm this disregard through Tesón's own words which state that "because human rights are rights held by individuals by virtue of their personhood, they are independent of history, culture, or national borders" (Tesón, 2001). In this case, 'independent of' suggests a level of negligence towards local customs, which can lead to a lack of local agency in the region through undermining the local actors by addressing their problems 'for them' and prioritising western actors as the primary agents of change. Overall, this undermines the potential for sustainable local solutions to conflicts, but also emphasises neo-imperialist tendencies and paternalistic attitudes towards interventionism when we leave these liberal values uncontested.

Curiously, this feels conceptually similar to old "civilising missions" that were popular during the colonial era, wherein colonial powers would justify their invasions and control of other states by claiming to themselves and to others that they were 'helping' the local populations by bringing civilisation, order, and progress to these "less developed" people and regions. These civilising missions would impose their own standards of governance, their own laws and societal norms, and would often suppress and ignore local customs and autonomy. While armed humanitarian interventions and 'civilising missions' may not be directly linked to one another, the similitude when looking through the lens of neoliberalism is too similar to ignore when considering the possible existence of the interventionist saviour complex. Both are entrenched in the idea that white and western societies are here to help "less developed" nations, and thus are wrapped in lofty humanitarian ideals which are not entirely appropriate to the situations at hand.

Due to this general disregard for historical factors, liberalism allows for the interventionist saviour to create certain narratives through the oversimplification of complex issues; oftentimes complicated crises and conflicts are reduced to simplistic narratives of good versus evil, and

victims versus perpetrators (Glover, 2011). This can lead to flawed methods of humanitarian intervention strategies that can exacerbate the existing situation and reinforce power imbalances between the intervening and the intervened states, perpetrating the idea of Western dominance and control.

Libya 2011: The Anti-Imperial Villain

Indeed, the 2011 NATO intervention in Libya is a prime example of oversimplification: the intervention was largely justified by intervening forces on the grounds of protecting the Libyan civilians from Gaddafi forces, due to a fear from the USA and Europe of a looming slaughter in the city of Benghazi, the last anti-regime stronghold in Libya at the time. One US spokesperson, Dennis Ross, "warned – without a shred of evidence – that 100'000 people would be killed in Benghazi, a city with a population of about 700'000, were Gaddafi to conquer it" (Menon, 2016; Douthat, 2011). These outlandish claims were not backed by any sources or evidence, and in fact when some journalists contacted the White House press office for additional information, they refused to comment (Chapman, 2011). The only evidence that this 'slaughter' would occur was Gaddafi's short speech on March 17th, in which he states "We will have no mercy on them" — but by "them," he was referring to the armed rebels ("traitors"), not all the city's inhabitants. As well as this, he specifically said "We have left the way open to them," and "Escape. Let those who escape go forever." Even going so far as to pledge that "whoever hands over his weapons, stays at home without any weapons, whatever he did previously, he will be pardoned, protected." (Chapman, 2011, p. 2).

Obviously, there is no way of knowing what would have happened had Gaddafi truly invaded Benghazi, but it is completely unsound to claim that such a terrible humanitarian crisis was about to occur. In fact, contrary to these claims, Gaddafi's regime never particularly targeted civilians while recapturing areas from rebels: Alan J. Kuperman (2013) wrote that "From March 5 to March 15, Libyan government forces retook all but one of the major rebel-held cities, including Ajdabiya, Bani Walid, Brega, Ras Lanuf, Zawiya, and most of Misurata. In none of those cities did the regime target civilians in revenge, let alone commit a bloodbath." However, rebel forces knew that talks of intervention were on the table in the West and lied about the amount of people who had

‘already’ been killed by Gaddafi forces in order to tip the balance to their favour. This, as well as sensationalization from media sources and US and European spokespeople, led to the eventual approval to intervene from the Security Council, followed by NATO’s intervention. The heavy emphasis by the USA and Europe on the importance of intervening in order to bring down the “vile piece of work Colonel Gaddafi,” who was often portrayed as an almost cartoon-like villain by Western media, and save the civilians of Libya from his rule (Delingpole, 2022), created an oversimplified narrative of good versus evil, where the Western powers could be the heroes and thus reinforcing this interventionist saviour complex and imposing Western ideals in the region by forcing regime change, rather than prioritising peace.

And there certainly was a wish to impose Western liberal ideas in the region, particularly in order to dismantle some of the anti-imperial ambitions that Gaddafi had. Gaddafi had often challenged Western states who wished to establish military bases in Libya, and sought to create alternative institutions to the neoliberal ones. Some of his most anti-imperial ambitions included the creation of a ‘United States of Africa’, an ‘African Investment Bank’, and even an ‘African Monetary Fund’ in order to rid Africa of the IMF’s predatory structural adjustment programs and loans (Koenig, 2017). Doing so, he wished to introduce a gold-backed African currency which would be independent from the US Dollar. Despite his ambitions never coming to fruition due to Gaddafi lacking friends even in Africa, if his initiatives had ever come to pass, it could have the potential to completely tip the economic balance of the world, bringing Africa up to the detriment of the Western states (Rahmani, 2023). It is thus not unreasonable to conclude that a large motivation from these Western intervening agents was to sabotage these projects, and an intervention promoted as a humanitarian one was thus the perfect cover. This was therefore something that US and NATO states desperately wished to avoid in order to continue their pursuit of propagating neo-liberal policies worldwide, policies that serve themselves and their interests in ways reminiscent of imperialism.

In fact, thanks to the declassification of emails released by the US State Department at the end of 2016, we find evidence that the strive for regime change in Libya in 2011 was not motivated by humanitarian concerns, but rather in order to stop Gaddafi from his

desire to unify Africa. In particular, there is an email threat from April 2011 between former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and her political aide, Sidney Blumenthal titled “France's client & Qaddafi's gold” where they discuss their desire to access Libya’s nationalised oil, and thwart his plan to replace the French franc with the gold-backed Dinar (Clinton & Blumenthal, 2016). Additionally, there were other emails which revealed why French President Nicolas Sarkozy turned on Gaddafi so quickly when he faced rebels: he had aims to secure a larger share of Libya’s oil production, bolster French influence in North Africa, and provide the French military an opportunity to reassert itself in global politics (Rahmani, 2023). There is also an ongoing investigation on alleged Libyan financing of his 2007 presidential campaign, with accusations of there being a loan that he did not wish to pay back (France 24, 2023). Overthrowing Gaddafi’s anti-imperial regime in Libya was therefore a perfect opportunity to put these plans in motion.

In conclusion, the 2011 NATO intervention in Libya serves as a prime example of oversimplification and the manipulation of humanitarian justifications to achieve regime change. The intervention was predominantly rationalised by the need to protect Libyan civilians from an alleged impending massacre by Gaddafi's forces in Benghazi. However, these claims, lacking solid evidence and heavily sensationalised by Western media and officials, masked the true motivations behind the intervention. Declassified emails and analyses reveal that key Western actors, particularly the USA and France, were driven by geopolitical and economic interests, including access to Libya's oil and the thwarting of Gaddafi's anti-imperial ambitions in Africa. The portrayal of Gaddafi as a monstrous villain in Western narratives facilitated a simplistic good-versus-evil storyline, justifying the imposition of Western ideals and regime change under the guise of humanitarian concern. This intervention, rather than prioritising peace and stability, exemplified the pursuit of neo-liberal policies and the continuation of imperialistic strategies in the region.

While oversimplification of conflicts makes it easier to create narratives that promote interventions, the over-complexification of conflicts can also happen. For many years the Isaeli-Palestinian conflict was deemed ‘too complex’ to understand *at all*, with Western media

outlets, academics, military experts and world leaders describing “the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as intractable, complicated and deadlocked” (Alsaafin, 2023). The insistence on the complexity of the situation created a narrative that made it near-impossible for the typical person to feel like they could understand which party was in the right or in the wrong, or if even there was a right or wrong. This led to the maintenance of the status-quo for so long, something that many Western states found much more convenient than the developments we see today, where many feel that an armed humanitarian intervention in order to protect the lives of Palestinian civilians is needed, and yet severely lacking.

Through the neo-liberal lens, interventionism perpetrated by ‘liberal governments or alliances’ in ‘lesser developed’ states are generally applauded, particularly by other liberal governments or alliances. For example, when NATO intervened in Kosovo following a violent crackdown by Serbian forces on the ethnic Albanian population, leading to a widespread humanitarian crisis, their intervention, despite its legality being contested due to a lack of approval from the UN Security Council, it was still considered a “success” by the European Union and the United States. The US Secretary of Defense William Cohen even boasted, “We achieved our goals with the most precise application of airpower in history” (Walters, 2023), while the Czech President said “If one can say of any war that it is ethical, or that it is being waged for ethical reasons, then it is true of this war” (R. A. Falk, 1999, p. 848). The strikes were deemed a necessary action to prevent further humanitarian disasters, *despite* some of the NATO strikes unlawfully targeting Serbian civilian populations, and the ‘accidental’ bombing of a Chinese embassy which sparked ideological concerns (Marinkovic, 2019). Liberals like Tesón (2005, p. 381) greatly applauded the NATO intervention in Kosovo, citing that “there is little question that the dominant motivation of NATO” was entirely humanitarian, as he believes “there were no strategic or material interests of NATO nations in Kosovo, or any of the usual factors that noninterventionists usually cite as fulfilling the hidden agenda of interveners” (Tesón, 2005, p. 384). Broad and sweeping statements such as these are the types of declarations that continue to promote and propagate Western liberal ideals by undermining criticisms of the interventions, particularly those which highlight the irony between NATO’s humanitarian rhetoric and their almost cowardly methods. Indeed, non-state actors and academics who are more critical of the intervention note that NATO’s decision to pursue their intervention only via air strikes rather than the utilisation of land invasions was non-proportional, and endangered and killed civilian

populations, contributing to the mass exodus of refugees in the region (Wise, 2013). Decidedly, we will address these criticisms and concerns in the next section.

On the other hand there has historically been a strong bias against interventions perpetrated by non-western states. Rajan Menon references India's intervention in East Pakistan in 1971, whose army had been killing tens of thousands of Bengali citizens, possibly up to 300'000, and displacing millions, many of which ended up as refugees in India. India's intervention swiftly resolved the horrific murders, allowing for many Bengali citizens to return to their homes, and to no longer be the target of such terrible murders, leading to the creation of Bangladesh. And yet, rather than being applauded as an act of humanitarian interventionism, India's actions were criticised by many Western states, particularly Pakistan's allies such as China, and the United States of America, who wished to condemn India's actions in order to portray them as a state that did not respect the sovereignty of states and the rule of non-intervention (Wheeler, 2002a). Other examples include Vietnam's incursion into Cambodia in 1978 to topple the Khmer Rouge: a regime which killed around 2 million people, nearly a quarter of Cambodia's population (Heuveline, 2015). Vietnam was never applauded for ending the Cambodian Genocide, but was instead accused by Western States and China of power plays, and disrespecting the norm of sovereignty (Menon, 2016).

While Responsibility to Protect and humanitarian interventions were not yet considered a norm nor frequently practised at the time, it's not improbable to consider this phenomenon to be, in part, due to these interventions not fitting into the 'White Saviour' requirement of the interventionist saviour complex. This blatant discrepancy between the reactions of states and the differing media portrayals of the interventions highlights the irony of armed humanitarian interventions, where we plainly see that the inconsistent application of international norms and the ways in which interventions are received or deemed acceptable are based on who is performing the intervention, rather than on any of the actions themselves.

As noted in the conceptual analysis, the positive connotations associated with the word 'humanitarian' can spill into the day-to-day use of the term. So while liberalism promotes important values relating to the individual, its positive traits become nearly insouciant in the sense that there is a lack of concern of what the constant perpetuation of liberalism may cause.

When liberal values become prevalent as 'true' to the typical person, it leaves space for anything dubbed 'humanitarian' to be deemed legitimate without much concern towards *proving* that it is legitimate. This sets a dangerous precedent for multiple reasons as without proper evaluation we open the door to possible abuses of power, particularly from powerful countries or alliances. They would be free to exploit this notion (as well as the notion of the Responsibility to Protect) to further their own interests, and use humanitarian justifications as a pretence to intervene militarily in order to serve their own political or economic goals, all while being lauded for their 'humanitarian efforts.' This criticism has been developed by theorists such as Mearsheimer (2003), or Danilo Zolo (2002) who examine how humanitarian interventions can be manipulated by powerful nations to serve their own agendas under the guise of protecting human rights. In fact, Michael Ignatieff (2014) also addresses this concern in one of his talks by pinpointing the problem with the misuse of the term 'protection' in interventionism, born from language of the Responsibility to Protect. He said that "the use of protection language in Libya created a precedent Putin was happy to exploit," and indeed, in 2014, Putin's "normative justification for the seizure of Crimea was 'to protect.'" This malpractice and misuse of humanitarian lingo has already had real-life impact, and poses a danger for the future of legitimate humanitarian interventions.

Neo-Realism: Humanitarianism as a Guise

Despite its faults, the liberal view of humanitarianism is mostly reassuring and tends to be something to aspire towards in an ideal world however, it forgoes an important factor: the greed of states, or their 'will to power', and their tendency towards realpolitik. This factor is heavily emphasised in realist theory, as such, considering it in collaboration with liberalism can perhaps help us identify a more authentic middle ground. Compared to liberalism, realism is much more likely an ideology to place an emphasis on neo-imperial trends in international relations due to its primary assumption that states only ever act in self-interest to maximise their security and power. Realism is also much more ideologically flexible, as it lacks a strong common core of commitments that one finds in liberal politics and theory, thus diverging from this trend.

Under the lens of realism, armed humanitarian interventions are analysed from an ideological perspective which prioritises the national interests of states, with states as the central actors in an anarchic system of international relations. Considering this, realism argues that states would only

engage in military interventions when there are obvious or relative benefits to serve their strategic goals. As such, armed humanitarian interventions are often considered to be costly and risky endeavours that divert attention and resources away from important national interests (Bellamy, 2003a). Despite this, we see that interventions still occur. Since the birth of realism there have been significant changes in the relationships between states, as well as to what could constitute as a benefit. As such, we will analyse the topic of armed humanitarian interventions through the perspective of neorealism and attempt to see why interventions continue to happen despite the risk incurred.

Different (neo)realist thinkers have varying opinions on the topic: for the most part realists tend to believe that there are no, or few, benefits gained from intervening in other states due to the human loss of their own soldiers. However some concur that interventionism can be beneficial for the intervening country; for example some interventions such as the NATO intervention in Kosovo, the Australian intervention in East Timor, or the British intervention in Sierra Leone have been defended through neorealism thanks to arguments supporting that they were justified by national interest (Bellamy, 2003a). Despite opposing claims by liberals such as Tesón, there is appropriate evidence that supports the belief that the NATO intervention in Kosovo to support national and supranational interests as the intervening actors wished to preserve stability in a key part of Europe, as well as to maintain NATO credibility.

The liberal perspective dominant in the previous section made blanket statements as to the non-existence of national interests of NATO's intervention in Kosovo, but through realism, we can certainly find evidence of these interests and make note of the irony between the humanitarian rhetoric and their methods. The intervention in Kosovo in 1999 cannot be explained in a vacuum; it happened only a few years after the Srebrenica genocide and other crimes of ethnic cleansing in Bosnia committed by the Bosnian Serb Army. This led to the creation of around 1.3 million refugees, one of the largest migrant movements in Europe since the Second World War (Phillips, 2005; Franz 2010). These horrors were a shock to the conscience in Europe in particular, with media outlets heavily covering the conflict, and there was thus the creation of a strong moral pressure for Western states to not let this happen again. Additionally, one can imagine that avoiding another exodus such as this was an additional motivation for the NATO states to intervene in the growing conflict in Kosovo to avoid another

situation such as the one they saw in Bosnia. Some other national interests of NATO states in Kosovo include wanting stability in a nearby region, improving the credibility and necessity of NATO after the fall of the USSR, and the promotion of democratic values, and lastly, the establishment of Camp Bondsteel: a military base headed by the U.S. Army and supported by other European states which is still active to this day (*Camp Bondsteel Army Base in Ferizaj, Kosovo*, 2022).

During the intervention NATO primarily conducted high-altitude airstrikes targeting Serbian territory and deploying cluster bombs, which disperse across wide areas. Reports indicate that nonmilitary targets such as television and radio centres, bridges, heating plants, and electrical grids were struck (Menon, 2016). Approximately 500 Serb non-combatants were killed by NATO's bombing (Human Rights Watch, 2016). This use of cluster bombs and indiscriminate strikes contradict Just War theory and International Law by disregarding the principles of proportionality and of distinction, all while NATO claimed humanitarian intentions (Menon, 2016). The irony lies in NATO's approach of bombing from above the cloud-line, causing extensive civilian casualties and infrastructure damage which could have been avoided. It shows a lack of concern for distinguishing between combatants and civilians. Realists would argue that the main reason for this off-hand approach and lack of ground assault was to limit NATO casualties, because they deemed their own soldiers' lives as more important than those of civilians. Although there was a humanitarian crisis necessitating intervention, NATO's methods were not purely humanitarian; otherwise their tactics would have been more suited to the conflict. While the Kosovo intervention might not have directly advanced more noticeable and typical national interests of states, there are certainly instances where interventions serve such interests.

In these situations, humanitarianism is often used as a guise for promoting national interests - let us return to the example of the NATO 2011 intervention in Libya that has been mentioned throughout this paper. When we look deeper into the situation we see that while the principle of the 'Responsibility to Protect' was invoked, many of the actions taken by NATO seemed more focused on regime change than on humanitarian aspirations. Under the umbrella of neorealism, this intervention can be explained in part thanks to two key national interests that the intervening states had in Libya: economic incentives, and security concerns. Indeed, Libya has the largest oil

reserve in Africa, and one of the top ten largest globally: before the Gadaffi crisis, many European countries like Italy, France, Spain and the UK were the top oil importers from Libya, accounting for 85% of all exports (Kazianis, 2011). But during the civil war with Gadaffi, oil production dropped dramatically, while prices increased: as such there was an economic disadvantage that directly affected these states due, and thus many of these European states intervened.

The second point of self-interest was the concern that Libya would turn into a terrorist-sponsored state if Gadaffi were to win the civil war: in a period of time greatly affected by the fear of terrorism, a state like this so close to European borders was deemed a direct threat, especially one with alleged access to chemical weapons. As such, there was a strong interest in overturning the regime. Seeing this, NATO members had strong economic and security incentives to intervene in Libya outside of the humanitarian concerns (Yoshida, 2013). And despite these clear self-interested reasons, when we refer to the NATO intervention in Libya, all that is remembered are the humanitarian goals, rather than the self-interested ones. Humanitarianism, and the use of R2P, became the perfect cloak to mask these self-interested motivations. As Carl Schmitt said, "whoever invokes humanity wants to cheat" – "to confiscate the word humanity, to invoke and monopolize such a term probably has certain incalculable effects" (Rasch, 2008, p. 56). In a neorealist perspective the use of the 'humanitarian aspirations' narrative has become a tool for states to act as they would wish to without the public repercussions of infringing on sovereignty. We will address some of the effects that this entails.

Furthermore, a view through neorealism helps explain the lack of humanitarian follow-through in many armed humanitarian interventions: indeed, we've mentioned that Libya has since become a failed state after the NATO intervention. As it stands now, the country is deemed very dangerous; travel agencies note that you should not visit Libya "due to crime, terrorism, civil unrest, kidnapping, and armed conflict" (*Libya Travel Advisory*, 2022). In fact, many reports note that there is much more political repression and poverty today than there was under Gadaffi's rule: so where are the armed humanitarian interventions today? Is there no more 'Responsibility to Protect' the citizens of Libya when they're no longer under a regime that Western states would prefer to overthrow? (Daragahi, 2021) We see that there were few efforts from NATO to create a stable state that would allow for less human suffering. The former U.S. President Obama even

admitted that his biggest failure was “failing to plan for the day after” (Guardian Staff Reporter, 2016). This lack of follow-through on the humanitarian aspects of the intervention truly denigrates the positive narrative that had been pushed forth, and opens us to re-evaluate the true meaning of the armed humanitarian intervention.

Another good example of humanitarianism and human rights ideals being used as a guise to further national interests is the UN-authorised intervention in Iraq during the Gulf War in 2003. This intervention often associated with ‘Operation Provide Comfort’ was said to primarily be aimed at protecting Kurdish refugees in northern Iraq, as well as Shiite Muslims in the south. These groups had been facing severe repression, violence, and were suffering from grave human rights violations from Saddam Hussein’s regime, particularly after their failed uprisings during the Gulf War. The US and its allies, with authorisation from the UN Security Council, set up no-fly zones and provided some aid to the repressed populations. This armed humanitarian intervention was the first one that emerged in the post-Cold war era after the dissolution of the USSR, and thus served to reinforce the unipolarity of world power dynamics. Many critics such as Richard Falk (1991, p. 263) note that this was therefore not a war about democracy or human rights, but a “war about oil, and the capacity of the United States to establish itself as the primary leader of post-Cold War global security arrangements.” And oil certainly played a part because any disruption to access to oil causes reverberations across the world – a shortfall in the Gulf would have increased prices for everyone which would have taxed the world economy, stimulated inflation, depressed demand, and kickstarted recessions. Other reasons cited for the intervention are the establishment of order, and halting weapons proliferation to Iraq (Nye, 1991). Ultimately, the humanitarian facet of the military interventions in the Gulf War were minor in comparison to the advancement of national interests, but were largely promoted.

Contrarily, when there is a lack of obvious national interest, we tend to see less armed humanitarian interventions. A good example is the Rwanda genocide in 1994, in which approximately 800’000 Rwandans were killed in just 100 days (Power, 2003) and yet most countries refused to get involved until it was much too late. This is due to the general realist traditions within governments and politicians to act in their own national interest: as such, when there are no clear motives to intervene, many states and organisations won’t intervene, no matter how atrocious the human rights situation may be. As noted by Bellamy (2003a, p. 11), a large

part of this is due to the media and citizens: “Western democratic governments do not lose elections if they fail to intervene to halt bloodshed in a faraway place. They do lose elections if they intervene unsuccessfully and body bags start appearing back home.” As such, neorealist traditions negatively affect the success of armed humanitarian interventions due to the strong considerations of their own national interests. This lack of national interest equally helps explain why there are so many human atrocities happening today that lack armed humanitarian interventions, such as the Uyghur human rights violations in China that receive much backlash from civil societies, and yet receive no humanitarian aid from liberal state actors (Human Rights Watch, 2019).

To conclude, the public claims of interventions could be of moral order such as to bring “stability” and “human rights” to the region by overthrowing an unjust dictator, in order to overshadow the more self-interested goals of states: the true influence in intervening is not to promote global justice, but rather for strategic gains. When there is a lack of gain, there is a lack of intervention. Through the neorealist lens, humanitarianism at times feels more like a guise that states are able to put on to pursue their ideological objectives without being named and shamed by other states or by civil society, all while never truly focusing on the humanitarian aspirations that the concept requires of them. This focus on gains is a reminder of the neo-imperial inclinations that are perpetrated through these armed humanitarian interventions.

There is a certain extrinsic irony which lies in the frequent overlap between liberal perspectives and ideals, and the realist behaviours we see in the international scene in the context of armed humanitarian interventions. Despite their ideological differences, the practical implementation of these interventions reveal that liberal states act in ways that mainly reflect realist principles, which challenges the virtue of their humanitarian motives. We will see in the next section that the ethical and operational challenges of armed humanitarian interventions also tend to play into these liberal vs realist dynamics, particularly when addressing the challenge of selective interventionism.

IV. Selective Saviours: Hypocrisy in Interventions

The Problematization of Selectivity and Double Standards

There are numerous ethical and operational challenges that arise with the use of armed humanitarian interventions to address conflicts, but one of the main challenges and controversies happens before the intervention even begins: the selection of interventions. Who decides which interventions are deemed worthwhile? What factors decide which lives get to be saved? The decision-making processes of intervening states must be questioned in order to analyse which groups or lives are deemed to deserve to receive aid and protection, versus those that don't. This question of selectivity presents numerous neo-imperial challenges which will soon be addressed. But first, what is selective interventionism?

Selective interventionism in armed humanitarian interventions is the policy where a state or coalition of states will choose to engage militarily in certain humanitarian crises in some regions, while ignoring others. In theory, according to R2P, these decisions are based on specific criteria like the severity of human rights violations or geopolitical considerations. But as we have seen in practice, they are oftentimes highly influenced by the national interests of intervening states. Academia generally concedes that there is a practice of selectivity from global powers, however there is a large debate as to whether or not this practice is 'problematic' or not. Most critics point out that this practice of selectionism highlights the double standards and hypocrisy of the intervening states, particularly Western states. However, Hesam Rahmani (2023) correctly points out that both critics and advocates of humanitarian interventions often address the problem of selectivity as a problem of global power 'inaction' in non-intervened crises, where states are seen as bystanders to distant and disconnected crises, rather than as active accomplices. His quest to decolonise the problem of selectivity adds an interesting and provocative new dimension to the irony of armed humanitarian interventions, and the next section will thus explore his decolonisation of selectivity, as well as address the classic questions of double standards and hypocrisy that are often addressed on this topic in ways which underline the irony of selective interventionism.

Let us begin with a summary of the typical debate between proponents and critics of humanitarian interventions on the question of selectivity. Pattison, a proponent of humanitarian

interventions notes that "one of the more frequent criticisms of humanitarian interventions is that it is carried out inconsistently" (2010, p.169). This is typically because the issue of selectivity implies that some people's lives are more worth saving than others – a notion that assuredly isn't humanitarian in nature. And indeed, I would tend to align myself with the critics: if humanitarian interventions are truly to be humanitarian in nature, then they should be applied consistently and universally. Since humanitarian interventions "are undertaken on a selective basis and the same criteria are not applied uniformly and universally in every case, such interventions lose legitimacy and credibility in the eyes of many, if not most, members of the international system" (Ayoob, 2002, p. 86). A lack of perceived legitimacy caused by unequal treatment of conflicts can lead to armed humanitarian interventions to be questioned as a whole (which, I suppose it has, as it has led to the creation of this thesis), and thus potentially curb future efforts to aid those in need.

Critics of interventionism will ultimately note that inconsistent policies for selectionism highlight the double standards which exist on the international scene, and prove furthermore that these "humanitarian" interventions are not truly advancing humanitarian ideals or altruism, but are rather about national interests. In fact, this constitutes a neo-imperial and ethical challenge in armed humanitarian interventions which needs to be addressed. The selectivity reflects a continuation of historical patterns where the global powers, notably the Western and former colonial nations, asserted their influence over global affairs through selective interventionism in ways that served their geopolitical interests like maintaining strategic alliances, access to to ressources, and asserting dominance.

Mohammed Ayoob (2002, p. 87) addresses this issue of double standards with a pertinent example, noting that:

> "Double standards were particularly glaring in the case of the Middle East. They were most obvious in the case of the intervention in northern Iraq and the imposition of no-fly zones in northern and southern Iraq. The treatment of Kurds in Turkey was hardly better than that meted out to their cousins in Iraq. However, no humanitarian intervention was ever contemplated in the case of Turkey, a NATO member and a key player in enforcing economic and military sanctions against Iraq."

To develop on this point, during the 1980s and 1990s the Turkish war against the Kurdistan Workers' Party insurgency led to the destruction and depopulation of thousands of villages (or 'hamlets'), the deaths of thousands of civilians, notably Kurd, and the displacement of hundreds of thousands (Human Rights Watch, 2023). And yet, this did not motivate the United States to intervene in Türkiye; instead, the US intervened only 'for the Kurds and civilians' in Iraq when there was the presence of many other reasons which could be guided by national interest (Menon, 2016). The discrepancies between the reaction of the international community towards the plight of the Kurds in Türkiye, a NATO member, versus in Iraq, where there was a strong presence of national interests to intervene, calls attention to the double standards between human rights rhetoric and practice of interventionism.

Similarly, Stephen Zunes (2007, p. 6) refers to this Kurd humanitarian crisis in Turkey when he reports that "the Clinton administration justified its eleven-week bombing campaign of Yugoslavia in 1999 on the grounds that atrocities such as the Serbian repression of the Kosovar Albanians must not take place "on NATO's doorstep." Ironically, similar ethnic-based repression on an even greater scale had been already taking place for a number of years within a NATO country without U.S. objections." There is thus the presence of hypocrisy taking place within the decision making processes of intervening states, which points out the irony present in armed humanitarian interventions depending on who is committing the atrocities, and whose interests they may be serving.

Next, let us see how proponents address these concerns of selectivity and double standards.

Pattison (2010) believes that some selectivity is desirable, and offers multiple reasons as to why. He argues that an intervener must select which crises they intervene in based on how efficient they might be in any given crisis, while taking into account historical relations and past conflicts. He provides a theoretical example where there are significant crises in both Chad and Algeria, and deems France the potential intervener. He notes that in this situation, France could be legitimate to intervene in Chad, but not in Algeria due to their colonial history and unstable relations. He quotes Tharoor and Daws (2001), emphasising that "selectivity is thus an inevitable consequence of the requirement of efficacy in intervention." Additionally, he notes the importance of selectivity when it comes to resource allocation: an intervener may not have the

resources, especially military, in order to intervene in multiple conflicts, as such they should be careful to select which one they'll be most effective in.

Nevertheless, he does concede that if many specific circumstances are met, that "selective humanitarian intervention *is* morally problematic. Given that humanitarian intervention is a duty, it is wrong that agents fail to act on the duty to intervene when they could do so legitimately." Still, he considers that when selectivity is morally problematic, it is not the interventions that *are* committed which should be questioned, but those that aren't. He continues by saying that "this does not necessarily undermine the justification of humanitarian intervention *when it actually occurs*. We should not criticise states when they do intervene legitimately; we should criticise them when they do not" (Pattison, 2010, p. 172).

Within this debate, the irony lies in the inconsistency and therefore the perceived moral ambiguity of this approach: a nation intervenes to stop atrocities in some regions, promoting itself as a defender of human rights, yet turns a blind eye to similar or worse situations elsewhere, thus undermining the very principles of humanitarianism they claim to uphold. This extrinsic irony of armed humanitarian interventions contributes to the neo-imperial challenges that armed humanitarian interventions face, as the discourse is framed in humanitarian rhetoric which masks neo-imperial motives, legitimising the agendas of the typical intervening states all while obscuring the structural inequalities and power imbalances present in global governance. In both of the perspectives we've seen above the academics attribute the moral failings of not intervening in ways that highlight the *inaction* of intervening states, notably of the Western states, as something that needs to be criticised. This can lead to the implicit presumption that the 'worst' these intervening agents can do is be uninvolved bystanders.

Decolonising Selectivity: Active Complicity in Libya vs Bahrain

In order to diverge from this assumption, Hesan Rahmani (2023) works on reinterpreting selectivity by firstly moving away from the 'bystander complicity' bias towards a focus on 'active complicity' of intervening agents. Through this, he aims to decolonise the concept of armed humanitarian interventions, particularly the question of selectivity, (which he refers to as 'military humanitarian interventions' or "MHI") and analyse the ways in which the bystander complicity can lead to an "incomplete understanding of MHI-selectivity, and more expressly, a

coloniality of the issue as a whole" (Rahmani, 2023, p. 3). Additionally, he offers an alternative to R2P, the Responsibility For Justice (R4J) which instead incorporates the 'active complicity' paradigm with the goal of providing a more comprehensive understanding of the role and responsibilities of intervening actors.

In the previous section on Cultural Collisions, we saw that the use of armed humanitarian interventions could uphold neo-imperial ideals through the propagation of uncontested liberal values and the pursuit of national interests in other countries. Rahmani's decolonisation of selectivity ties back to this question of coloniality and imperialism, and how the typical intervening actors can continue to play into colonial dynamics through armed humanitarian interventions even when they *don't* intervene. Therefore, decolonising selectivity is crucial to addressing the neo-imperial challenges that come with armed humanitarian interventions, and could help towards finding steps that mitigate the neo-imperial tendencies by centering local perspectives, critically examining motivations and enhancing accountability of intervening states.

As we've seen in the previous section, both proponents and critics of interventions denote selective interventionism as a moral problem in some circumstances, and we saw that Pattison (2010) believes that "we should not criticise states when they do intervene legitimately; we should criticise them when they do not." This quote emphasises the assumption that the worst thing a state who can legitimately intervene can do, is to stand by and do nothing. By choosing not to intervene in humanitarian crises when they have the capacity to do so, states choose to contribute to the perpetuation of human rights abuses and suffering. To Pattison, and other authors, there is the idea that inaction can sometimes be nearly as morally culpable as direct wrongdoing. By failing to intervene, these states may allow atrocities to continue unchecked, thereby indirectly supporting or enabling the perpetrators. To Rahmani this belief that inaction is the worst part of the selectivity problem is called 'bystander complicity'.

Rahmani thus endeavours to dismantle the colonial notions embedded in this belief that the worst a state can do before a humanitarian crisis is to do nothing, and instead shifts the focus towards what he calls 'active complicity.' So just what is active complicity? Well to Rahmani (2023), active complicity considers the typical intervening actors (usually Western liberal states) as the key enablers of humanitarian crises themselves, considering that they are often actively involved

in creating and perpetuating these crises through their foreign policies and actions. By addressing this concern, we can re-analyse the prevailing assumption that humanitarian interventions are a 'gift' from Western liberal actors towards "an indefinitely persistently unstable set of Global South states" (Rahmani, 2023, p.3), as we've addressed in our ideological analysis of liberalism.

Rahmani separates 'active complicity' into seven sub-categories: postcolonial active complicity, pre-crisis active complicity, regime change active complicity, crisis escalation active complicity, perpetrator support active complicity, consequential active complicity, and crisis identity active complicity. I highly recommend reading his descriptions and explanations of each of these subcategories, as they are better than anything I could paraphrase (Rahmani, 2023, p.64-65). Each of these subcategories highlights a way in which intervening states can play an active role in the creation and prolongation of humanitarian crises, and helps us to move away from the colonial presumption of bystander complicity.

Unfortunately, there are multiple case studies in which the typical intervening actors played a role in setting up the humanitarian crises – whether or not they ended up intervening they had a part to play in the development of the horrors. As we've seen previously, the intervention in Libya in 2011 has been discussed in depth in this thesis, and yet we still have to uncover all of the details that led to the humanitarian crisis NATO felt the need to intervene in. When looking through the lens of active complicity, we see that the intervening agents had a large part to play in the creation, the prolongation, and the aftermath of the humanitarian crisis. So how did the intervening actors help create the establishment of the humanitarian crisis in which they then felt the need to intervene in?

When adopting a lens which aims to decolonise the concept of selectivity and armed humanitarian interventions, we note that NATO's intervention in Libya falls into multiple categories of active complicity, notably those of pre-crisis active complicity, regime change, crisis escalation, perpetrator support, and consequential active complicity. Prior to the crisis, Western actors knew of Gadaffi's vicious regime for 42 years before ever intervening on a so-called humanitarian basis – and prior to their intervention, they had a rich history of political relations with Gaddafi: both hostile and isolating sanctions from the 1980s to 1990s, to rehabilitation and rapprochement in the early 2000s.

Prior to the crisis, in the early 2000s when relations had been improving, the international community did not care about mitigating the human rights violations occurring in Libya as long as they were benefiting from the bilateral deals (Menon, 2016, p. 122). When they finally did intervene, NATO's goal of overthrowing Gaddafi directly contributed to creating the power vacuum and subsequent instability that led to Libya becoming a failed state, thus lengthening the duration of human suffering. Next, the intervention escalated the conflict, leading to greater violence and civilian casualties, thus fitting into the crisis escalation active complicity. Additionally, the indirect support from NATO to the various militant factions and rebel groups through the provision of arms and military assistance further fueled the conflict and instability. Lastly, the lack of plans for post-intervention stability and humanitarian follow-through meant that the intervention made the state of the country much worse than before the intervention.

But as we've seen, selectivity is usually criticised due to the humanitarian crises that are *not* intervened in, rather than those that are. Rahmani correctly points out that during the same time period as the intervention in Libya, a very similar humanitarian crisis was ongoing just 3'300km to the East, in Bahrain. Yet the international response was vastly different, but no less active in its complicity.

In 2011, Bahrain experienced significant civil unrest as part of the Arab Spring uprisings marked by widespread protests led mainly by the Shia majority against the ruling Sunni monarchy. The protests escalated into a humanitarian crisis and were marred by severe human rights violations, characterised by the Bahraini government's brutal crackdown on protestors, including the use of torture (Human Rights Watch, 2011). The government retaliated against the peaceful demonstrators via the destruction of Shia mosques, and violent suppression of dissent. Despite these flagrant breaches of human rights, the international response, particularly in the form of humanitarian interventions under the framework of R2P, was noticeably absent from the actors that intervened in Libya. Indeed, Menon (2016, p. 104) notes:

> "Though the United States and its European allies quickly denounced Gaddafi's violence against the Libyan opposition as R2P-worthy, they blinked at the Bahraini regime's repression of peaceful, unarmed protestors seeking basic political rights."

Admittedly, there were significantly less deaths in Bahrain than in Libya, nevertheless Aiden Hehir (2015) considers through his analysis that it was still a situation worthy of R2P intervention – but not necessarily a military one. When comparing Bahrain to Libya in 2011, we reveal the stark contrasts in international response: Libya witnessed an incredibly swift intervention authorised by the UN Security Council, while in contrast, Bahrain's crisis was largely ignored and there was minimal condemnation. Mainly, the lack of international response was due to the strategic considerations trumping humanitarian aspirations once again: Bahrain is a major non-NATO ally, making it strategically important to Western liberal powers, the typical intervening agents. Additionally, the US Fifth Fleet is headquartered in Bahrain (*Fifth Fleet*, n.d.), and there was the prevalent belief among US leaders that a Shi'a revolution could extend Iran's influence in the region (Menon, 2016).

As well as these national interests that could put Western liberal states off of intervening in favour in Bahrain, the politics of intervention were quickly becoming something of a commodity to be traded among nations. This was glaringly evident in the clandestine deal struck between Saudi Arabia and the United States which was reported by two separate UN diplomats. In essence: "You invade Bahrain. We take out Muammar Gaddafi in Libya" (Escobar, 2011). Saudi Arabia garnered support from the Arab League for the imposition of no-fly zones in Libya and the intervention that would overturn Gaddafi's regime, and in exchange Washington turned a blind eye to the repression of the pro-democracy Shi'a-led movement in Bahrain. This quid pro quo not only underlines the transactional nature of international politics, but also implicates the US in a web of active complicity, particularly perpetrator support active complicity. The US was not just a 'bystander' of the human rights violations occurring in Bahrain, but an active accomplice. By prioritising their strategic and national interests over human rights, they effectively endorsed the violent crackdown in Bahrain, and heavily undermined the moral and humanitarian principles they were trying to claim they were upholding in Libya. Rajan Menon (2016, p. 4) spoke truthfully when he said that "Democracies may not go to war with other democracies, but their complicity in the massive violence perpetrated by nondemocratic states is undeniable." The irony and hypocrisy at play here could not be clearer.

This observation is particularly pertinent when examining the dynamics between Israel and other democratic nations. Israel, often lauded as the only democracy in the Middle East, receives

substantial support and endorsement from other democratic countries, despite its controversial actions. This support implies a level of complicity in the ongoing conflict and human rights violations. Democracies around the world, while professing commitment to human rights and international law, often turn a blind eye to the suffering of Palestinians, thus perpetuating a cycle of violence and repression.

Palestine 2024: Complicity and Blindness

R2P was designed to prevent atrocities and protect civilians in times of crisis, but its consistently inconsistent application just underscores the issue of selective sacrifice. Palestinian lives have persistently been persecuted since the first Nakba in 1948: a series of military operations intent on destroying Palestinian towns and villages in order to expand the Zionist state that was about to be born. Approximately 15’000 Palestinians were killed during these operations, and 750’000 were forced to flee their homes. The Zionist movement captured 78 percent of historic Palestine, and the remaining 22 percent is what we now know as the occupied West Bank, and the besieged Gaza Strip (Alsaafin, 2023). Since then, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been marked by cycles of violence, wars, and failed peace processes. Key events include the 1967 Six-Day War, resulting in Israel's occupation of the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem, and the subsequent Israeli settlement expansions. The Oslo Accords in the 1990s offered a brief hope for peace but ultimately failed, leading to the Second Intifada in the early 2000s. Despite various attempts at negotiations, including the 2007 Annapolis Conference and the 2013-2014 peace talks, a two-state solution remains elusive (Alsaafin, 2023; Center for Preventive Action, 2024). Today, the situation is characterised by periodic escalations of violence, a blockade on Gaza, continued settlement activity, and deep-seated political and humanitarian crises, with Palestinians facing systemic discrimination and a lack of sovereignty, while Israel maintains security concerns and political divisions on how to resolve the conflict.

On October 7th 2023, Hamas launched a deadly attack on Israel and killed more than 1’300 Israelis, injured 3’300, and took hundreds hostage. In retaliation, Israel declared war on Hamas and subsequently, on Gaza. Their military operation has led to the complete demolition of large swaths of Gaza, and the deaths of thousands of civilians, particularly women and children. By the 30th of October, Save the Children reported that more children had died in just three weeks in Gaza than in the entire sum of conflicts around the world in the past four years (Al Jazeera,

2023). By January 2024, “More than 10,000 children have been killed by Israeli airstrikes and ground operations in Gaza in nearly 100 days of violence” (Save The Children, 2024). As of the 12th of July 2024, over 38’000 Palestinians have been reported as killed, as well as 108 journalists, 224 humanitarian aid workers, and 179 employees of UNRWA (*UN OCHA - Occupied Palestinian Territory | Home Page*, 2024; Committee to Protect Journalists, 2024; Joselow & Almendral, 2024). According to correspondence sent to The Lancet, it is estimated that the conflict could cause the death of up to almost 200’000 Palestinians in total, nearly 10% of the population of the Gaza Strip (Khatib et al., 2024).

Seeing these drastic figures, in which each single digit represents a human life, highlights the intense need for humanitarian intervention in the Gaza Strip and West Bank. The lack of intervention despite the ongoing horrors once more raises questions about the sincerity and universality of the R2P doctrine. Why does the international community fail to apply the same principles of protection to Palestinian civilians as it does to others? Many argue that this is a war that Hamas has started, and thus should face the consequence of starting a war they could not win. However it is not Hamas that started this conflict, but rather it is one kick-started by the constant active complicity of Western liberal states.

Their active complicity in the perpetuation of human rights violations in Israel and Palestine is multifaceted and deeply entrenched, and we can see proof of nearly all categories of active complicity: postcolonial, pre-crisis, regime change, crisis escalation, perpetrator support, and crisis identity active complicity. On one hand, the international community has routinely allowed Israel to disregard United Nations resolutions and breach international law without facing any significant repercussions. Some such examples include continued Israeli violations of Security Council resolutions 242, 262, 267, 338, 446 and 465, just to name a few. Resolution 242 called for the withdrawal of Israeli troops from the territories occupied during the 1967 Six-Day War. Resolutions 262 and 267 demand that Israel revoke its annexation of greater East Jerusalem. Resolution 338 makes Resolution 242 legally binding. Resolutions 446 and 465 require Israel to dismantle all its illegal settlements on occupied Arab lands. And yet, none of these have been followed by Israel, much less enforced by the international community (Ortiz, 2004). As well as essentially condoning this continued impunity, the US has actively used their veto power in the UN Security Council to protect Israel from official sanctions: of 89 Security Council resolutions

the US has vetoed sincec 1945, 33 of them were on the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories or the country's treatment of the Palestinian people (O'Dell, 2023). This permissiveness from the international community is an active complicity which has emboldened Israel to continue its policies of occupation, settlement expansion, and systemic discrimination against Palestinians.

On the other hand, the international community has also contributed to the rise of Hamas by systematically undermining every alternative path pursued by Palestinians. Efforts at nonviolence, diplomacy, and legal advocacy have been met with Israeli suppression and international indifference. There have been numerous calls from Western observers for nonviolent action in Palestine following the terrible attacks on October 7th, but these calls "come devoid of context, [and are] delivered as moralising lectures rather than forthright and sober assessments of the possibilities for effective nonviolent action against Israeli occupation" (Cebul, 2024). The Palestinian movement has a lengthy history of nonviolence, however it has been near impossible for these movements to take root because, as Cebul (2024) notes nonviolence action works on the basis of two fronts: persuasion through principled nonviolence, and pressure by mobilising peaceful yet disruptive tactics.

However Palestinian nonviolence movements are hindered on both of these fronts. Firstly they will find it difficult to persuade their Israeli neighbours to perceive them nonviolently: multiple recent studies carried out before October 7 indicate that Israelis view nonviolent demonstrations by Arab Israelis as violent (Manekin & Mitts, 2021). They also link peaceful Palestinian advocacy to terrorism and overwhelmingly support the repression of peaceful Palestinian activists (Sasson-Gordis & Yakter, 2023; Edwards & Arnon, 2019). On the other hand, disruptive tactics are less than effective in Palestine, as they have very weak leverage. Many protests or strikes that might occur in Gaza or the West Bank have little to no direct impact on life for those in Israel.

Nevertheless, nonviolence is an avenue that Palestinians have tried and tried again only to be violently repressed. The Great March of Return from 2018 to 2019 was a series of weekly protests held along the Gaza-Israel border, which called for the right of return for Palestinian refugees and an end to the blockade of Gaza. This mostly peaceful protest faced harsh suppression from Israeli security forces, which responded by "shooting tear gas canisters, some

of them dropped from drones, rubber bullets and live ammunition, mostly by snipers. As a result, 214 Palestinians, including 46 children, were killed, and over 36,100, including nearly 8,800 children have been injured. One in five of those injured (over 8,000) were hit by live ammunition" (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs [OCHA], 2020; UNRWA, 2019).

Other examples of nonviolent protests which faced harsh suppression from Israeli forces include, but are not limited to: the Bilin Protests (Schulz, 2023), the Sheikh Jarrah Protests (Al Jazeera, 2022), the Olive Tree Campaign (Joint Advocacy Initiative, n.d.), the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) Movement (Kim, 2023), as well as peaceful student protests within Gazan and West Bank universities, and initiatives for cultural resistance, and more.

These efforts at nonviolence, diplomacy, and legal advocacy have been met with Israeli suppression and international indifference. Hamas, and the terrible and violent retaliation against the citizens of Israel, has thus emerged as a response to the failure of these peaceful avenues, capitalising on the despair and frustration of a population that saw no viable alternatives. The message propagated by Hamas—that international negotiations and peace processes are futile—resonates in a context where Palestinian efforts for peaceful resolution have been repeatedly crushed and ignored. Thus, the actions *and* inactions of Western liberal states and the international community as a whole have not only allowed human rights violations to persist but have also fueled the cycle of violence and extremism in the region. The active complicity here, and purposeful blindness to the seriousness of human rights violations in Israel have undermined prospects for peace and justice, perpetuated a climate of impunity, and deepened the suffering of civilians.

Through Rahmani's lens of active complicity, and the importance of decolonising the situation, the irony of Western involvement in Israel and Palestine becomes glaringly obvious. Western liberal states, which tend to be the typical intervening actors, often champion armed humanitarian interventions in other regions under the banner of protecting human rights and promoting democracy, yet exhibit an embarrassingly evident double standard when it comes to Israel and the suffering of Palestinians. Despite the clear and ongoing breaches in international law and numerous human rights violations, these same states not only refrain from intervening, but actively support and enable the perpetuation of these injustices. This hypocrisy is ironic and

highlights the selective application of humanitarian principles, revealing a troubling inconsistency in global governance and the true motivations behind international actions. The selective silence and inaction in the face of Palestinian suffering contrasts sharply with the often swift and decisive interventions elsewhere, underlining the deep-seated biases that shape foreign policies.

Hesan Rahmani's (2023) work on decolonising selectivity in armed humanitarian interventions fundamentally challenges the entrenched biases of 'bystander complicity,' advocating instead for a focus on 'active complicity.' By examining how Western liberal states often play active roles in creating and perpetuating humanitarian crises through their foreign policies, we can unveil the colonial underpinnings of current intervention practices. His Responsibility for Justice (R4J) framework could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the intervening actors' roles and responsibilities, an approach which could be instrumental when trying to reduce irony in armed humanitarian interventions. Case studies like NATO's intervention in Libya and the non-intervention in Bahrain highlight the transactional nature of international politics and the hypocrisy of selectively upholding humanitarian principles. Similarly, the case study on Palestine emphasises the gravity of active complicity, showing just how far states are willing to let impunity fly when it is authored by allies. Decolonising selectivity thus urges us to re-evaluate the morality and effectiveness of armed interventions, and emphasise the need to address the inequities and power imbalances that shape global responses to crises in more just ways.

Selective Ideals: Profits over Principles

The phrase “profits over principles” directly tackles the inherent contradictions between a state’s professed values, and what it *truly* values. In particular we see Western states, often seen as the champions of democracy and human rights, engage with regimes otherwise known for their human rights violations. This reveals a selectivity which prioritises economic and strategic interests over ethical considerations. Here, we can clearly see the existence of a gap between statement and action – the irony – of typical intervening actors when it comes to their role in armed humanitarian interventions.

Through the lens of moral responsibility and cosmopolitan ethics, we can address this issue. Thomas Pogge (2008, p. 121) argues that affluent states (such as Western states) have a moral

responsibility to ensure that their policies do not perpetuate harm to vulnerable positions. His concept of "institutional moral responsibility" suggests that when states engage in actions that maintain repressive regimes for economic gain, they're morally culpable for the ensuing human rights violations. Pogge asserts that the international order is structured to benefit wealthy nations and thus often exacerbates global inequalities and perpetuates conditions that lead to human rights abuses. And I completely agree. Pogge mainly brings this up in order to address world poverty, however it is just as true when it comes to armed humanitarian interventions.

To illustrate that this responsibility exists, consider a scenario where a Western state supplies arms to a repressive regime that uses these weapons to oppress its people. The regime uses the arms to commit atrocities, leading to a humanitarian crisis. Although the Western state is not directly carrying out the violence, it profits from the arms sales and enables the regime's actions. In this scenario, the Western state is actively complicit in the suffering of the oppressed population: it has contributed to the human rights violations. This demonstrates that affluent states are morally responsible for the human suffering they enable and profit from, reinforcing Pogge's argument that they should take responsibility for their roles in maintaining global injustices.

Unfortunately, this is not just a thought experiment. Richard Falk's (1991, p. 268) observation about the "capitalist coloring" of democratisation during the Reagan era provides a critical backdrop. The Reagan Doctrine placed a strong emphasis on the promotion of market economies as a core feature of democratic states, which meant tacit approvals for arms sales to project their influence and maintain economic advantages, even at the expense of supporting repressive regimes. Iraq is a pertinent example of selecting profits over principles. Despite Saddam Hussein's regime of deplorable human rights violations against the Kurds, both Western and Soviet states supplied Iraq with arms and engaged in beneficial economic trades. Before Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and the armed 'humanitarian' intervention in 2003, the United States actively supported his regime – President George H.W. Bush even intervened on Iraq's behalf to prevent Congress from terminating a significant credit line to Iraq mere weeks prior to claiming to be appalled by Saddam Hussein's actions in August 1990. There was a preference towards maintaining economic relationships over addressing human rights abuses. Before the United States intervened in Iraq in 2003, it prioritised profits through the sale of weapons. During the

intervention, it prioritised profits by securing their hold on oil. “Iraq became the monster in its region, it did so as a direct result of the way the existing international capitalist and political order are supposed to work” (Falk, 1991, p. 268). That is to say, Iraq was able to maintain its regime of human suffering thanks to the active complicity of the western world, willing to trade and prioritise profits over principles.

The persistent institutionalisation of profit in the global order has desensitised world leaders and the civilians of rich and western states to the human suffering happening globally. Additionally, their consistent active complicity in the crises happening abroad does not invoke their legal responsibility of providing compensation or reparations, as the global order (built as it is, for those who built it and those who profit from it), does not consider this level of active complicity to be an internationally wrongful act. As such, we must address the issue via moral responsibility, and the principle of states ‘taking responsibility’ for their actions which will be elaborated on later.

Profits over principles is just one example of many of the practices of typical intervening actors to determine their ‘humanitarian’ interventions based on selective ideals. Other examples include prioritising geopolitical interests, political alliances, or even the promotion of democracy over humanitarian motivations. Through this selectivity, we see the hypocrisy and the exacerbation of the *extrinsic* irony of armed humanitarian interventions.

Selective Sacrifice: Weighing the Lives of Civilians and Soldiers

“All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.”

- Art. 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights
(UN General Assembly, 1948)

“All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.” This is the first sentence of the first article of the UN General Assembly’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights: an aspirational and utopian statement. How can a statement that seems so self-evident to us today, be so hard to respect and achieve? Despite the universal acknowledgment of these rights, the reality of humanitarian interventions reveals a disturbing contrast between principle and practice. The concept of selective sacrifice challenges the idea of equal dignity and rights, as decisions

about whose lives to save often reflect the deeper biases and political calculations present in the international scene. As we've seen, this selective approach to interventions is evident on the global stage, where certain crises receive more attention and aid than others, but also within conflict zones, where the lives of soldiers are often prioritised over those of civilians. This section explores the complexities of selective sacrifice, examining the biases that influence humanitarian interventions and questioning the ways in which they reflect colonial-era behaviour towards the prioritisation of lives.

Religion and Race

The principle of universal human rights suggests that all lives are equally valuable, and therefore all similarly deserving of protection. Yet, we've seen that in practice the international community often exhibits *selective* compassion, choosing to intervene in some crises while overlooking others. This selective approach is certainly in part influenced by the geopolitical and strategic national interests of the typical intervening states, but it's also determined by other factors such as racial and religious biases and media coverage. The disparities in humanitarian intervention raises questions about the true motivations behind these actions, and the extent to which they reflect genuine concern for protecting human rights.

We've already addressed multiple cases of double standards, hypocrisy, and irony in the selection of armed humanitarian interventions as we saw in the case of Libya and Bahrain, however today we see the development of a much more current case of selective sacrifices: the stark contrasting responses to the crises in Ukraine and Palestine. Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the international community rallied around Ukraine providing them with substantial military and humanitarian aid. For example, the US has committed nearly 70 billion euros to Ukraine in both military and financial aid from January 24th 2022 till April 30th 2024; Combining military, financial and humanitarian assistance, the international community's support to Ukraine as a whole has exceeded 200 billion euros (Kiel Institute et al., 2024).

In contrast, the plight of Palestinians under Israeli occupation has received far less humanitarian support: in fact, military support has gone to the perpetrators of the human rights violations. Despite decades of ongoing conflict, human rights abuses, and calls for international intervention, the Palestinian crisis remains largely neglected. This discrepancy points out the

clear bias: that Ukrainian civilians are deemed more worthy of saving. The double standards between both ongoing wars have been so glaringly obvious that the European Union has even come under scrutiny during the State of Europe conference – the annual Friends of Europe high-level roundtable (Friends of Europe, 2023). The racial and religious dimensions of this bias come into question: Western nations appear more willing to intervene for humanitarian reasons in conflicts involving predominantly white, Christian populations; and to intervene for regime change reasons in conflicts involving muslim populations.

Indeed, Falk (1991, p. 268) notes that "there has long been a tension between the humanistic aspirations associated with democracy and the racist practices of specific democracies." This observation on the possibility of a racial or religious bias raises some critical issues regarding the underlying motivations and justifications in the selection of humanitarian interventions. And yet, despite its potentially profound implications, this topic remains surprisingly underexplored within academic literature particularly when it comes to quantitative studies. This calls attention to a significant gap in political theory. The lack of comprehensive analysis on the intersections of race, religion, and armed humanitarian interventions calls for a reexamination of the frameworks that guide our understanding of humanitarianism. Through the deconstruction of these biases, we should be able to better understand the geopolitical interests and historical legacies that shape global responses to crises (Rejali, 2020). Through a critical approach, we not only challenge the existing narratives but also seek to advance more equitable and inclusive theories of international relations, political theory, and humanitarian action.

Nevertheless there are a few studies and articles written on the presence of racism and religious bias in academic literature, though the subject matters they encompass are restricted. For example, Hannibal Travis (2014) did a qualitative and quantitative analysis titled "The United Nations and Genocide Prevention: The Problem of Racial and Religious Bias" which addresses this bias only in part. He found that there was a significant bias in UN resolutions and attention to genocides, which had a particularly adverse impact on marginalised ethnic and religious groups, and indigenous peoples. He points out that in William Schaba's treatise on *Genocide in International Law: The Crime of Crimes* (2009) that:

> "Schabas found nothing to discuss with reference to the decimation of the indigenous peoples of Argentina or Colombia, or of the Ibo people of Nigeria, Bambuti (Mbuti) or

> Batwa (Twa) of Rwanda or Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Dinka or Nuba of Sudan, or Acholi of Uganda, even though Bosnians are mentioned at least 61 times." (Travis, 2014, p. 122)

The chapter emphasises the lack of attention to genocides against indigenous peoples in various regions of the world. We can presume that this is in part due to their lack of representation in the international scene, but the ethnic, racial and religious bias is assuredly present in the ways that the UN tackles genocides. The lives of indigenous populations were selectively sacrificed, for the international community did not care to save them.

Another study done on racial and religious biases for interventionism is "Race, Religion, and American Support for Humanitarian Intervention" by Chu and Lee (2023) which tackles only the subject of public support of humanitarian interventions in the US. This examination does not quite have the reach we'd need to address the biases in armed humanitarian interventions as a whole, but it does give some insight as to general trends of public support in a western liberal state which often acts as an intervener. Their analysis found that "Americans are more likely to support interventions on behalf of victims that share their religion, and to a lesser extent, victims that share their racial characteristics." More particularly, they uncovered that Evangelical Christians, who wield significant political influence in the US, were much more inclined to support armed humanitarian interventions on behalf of other Christians globally. As such, their study confirmed the existence of identity-based preferences when it comes to supporting humanitarian interventions, and thus the presence of religious and racial biases towards public support of interventions.

The neo-imperial dimension of armed humanitarian interventions rears its head when considering the international community's selective sacrifice of some populations over others based on racial and religious biases. Despite the universal principle that all human beings are equally deserving of protection, reality more often than not falls short. This selective compassion and practice of selective sacrifices not only exposes the racial and religious prejudices influencing these actions, but also stresses the troubling inconsistency in the application of humanitarian principles. This highlights how the irony of selective interventions perpetuates neo-imperial dynamics by underscoring the systemic bias and influence of cultural affinities and strategic national interests, rather than universal humanitarian principles. A critical examination

of the influence of racial and religious biases in humanitarian interventions is needed in order to fill the gaps in academic literature on this subject. Further research to illuminate and rectify these biases could help in addressing these issues, which might prove essential for developing more equitable and inclusive frameworks for humanitarian action.

Soldiers over Civilians

As we explore the complexities of selective sacrifices, another stark reality emerges: the trend of prioritising the lives of soldiers over the lives of civilians in armed conflicts. There is a growing aversion in interventionism to risking the lives of soldiers, which is partly due to the emergence of alternative ways of waging war, mainly drone strikes, and the development of lethal autonomous weapons. This dilemma has been addressed by Michael Walzer (2004, p. 67) who finds that the way world leaders focus "only on the costs to their own soldiers and to themselves" rather than on the "costs to the men and women whose danger or suffering poses the question" is disturbing and ethically problematic. Namely, he states that:

> "Humanitarian interventions and peacekeeping operations are first of all military acts directed against people who are already using force, breaking the peace. They will be ineffective unless there is a willingness to accept the risks that naturally attach to military acts: to shed blood, to lose soldiers. Soldiers are not like Peace Corps volunteers [...]. Soldiers are destined for dangerous places and they should know that (and if they don't, they should be told)." (Walzer, 2004, p. 73)

My first instinct is to agree: soldiers are fundamentally aware that their choice in career involves a risk of being deployed to these types of missions, and that the missions involve significant danger and even the possibility of dying. Meanwhile, civilians never make any conscious decision to be in an area filled with significant danger to their lives, they tend to be victims of their circumstances.

Yet, the irony here is quite striking: the soldiers who are deployed in missions of armed humanitarian interventions are sent on missions designed specifically to protect these civilians, yet the strategic choices made during the interventions often place the lives of those civilians at greater risk in order to protect the soldiers. A good example of this is the intervention in Kosovo which we've already addressed: there were no group troops and the attacks consisted only of air

strikes from high-altitudes. Despite the high usage of precision-guided missiles, NATO also used cluster bombs which, due to their imprecise nature, killed approximately 150 of 500 civilian deaths. Additionally, there are speculations that some civilian deaths were caused by the high-altitude of the pilots who thus could not effectively identify military targets (Human Rights Watch, 2000). These high-altitude bombing campaigns inadvertently caused civilian casualties, highlighting the inherent irony present in these forms of interventions.

This type of prioritisation of soldiers' lives leads to a form of strategic conservatism where states and their military commanders are reluctant to engage in operations that could endanger their soldiers, even when it may be essentially to the mission of protecting civilians. For instance, group operations become heavily minimised in favour of air strikes and remote warfare, despite them being often necessary for more nuanced and effective protection and target-identification. This reluctance to accept the risks that "naturally attach to military acts" does, in fact, erode the effectiveness of these campaigns, and if in the name of R2P, undermines the moral considerations of humanitarian intervention.

This aversion to risk creates a paradox where the goal of protecting soldiers supersedes the mission of safeguarding civilians. As a result, the mission becomes twisted, and the humanitarian essence of the operation is compromised. We could imagine that in an extreme case, the interventions could even lead to do more harm than good as the introduction of new soldiers creates additional conflict-zones, perpetuating cycles of violence and instability in the very regions they aim to pacify.

This issue is compounded by the political aspect of the topic, and the public pressure that democratic governments can face. As we noted in the section on neorealism: "Western democratic governments do not lose elections if they fail to intervene to halt bloodshed in a faraway place. They do lose elections if they intervene unsuccessfully and body bags start appearing back home" (Bellamy, 2003a). The sight of flag-draped coffins returning home can cause significant repercussions when it comes to public support (or rather, public disapproval) for interventionism. This creates a habit of putting greater emphasis on force protection than mission success, and increases in casualty-aversion is inherently in tension with civilian protection. As technologies get more and more advanced and promote remote warfare

further, this may desensitise decision-makers to the human costs of their actions in the air and their consequences on the ground (Kaempf, 2018).

In essence, the strategic use of casualty-aversion reveals a troubling disconnect between the objectives of armed humanitarian interventions and the methods that are employed to achieve them. Soldiers, who are trained and equipped to handle dangerous situations, are shielded from harm, while civilians, who are meant to be those benefiting from these interventions, continue to suffer unprotected. This irony creates ethical challenges and raises the questions on the nature of military engagement, and the true cost of protecting soldiers at the expense of civilians. To address this, a balance needs to be struck between minimising military casualties, and fulfilling the moral and ethical obligation of protecting civilian lives. Kaempf (2018, p. 254) came to find that in order to succeed in their interventions, "US decision-makers will have to show fewer casualty-averse inclinations to achieve higher levels of civilian protection" as there is "a strategic need for democracies to adhere to stricter moral guidelines to protect innocent civilians to win today's asymmetric conflicts – even if this means a marginal increase in the combat risks to American soldiers." However, not all may agree where these two goals should meet, and finding out requires an even broader discourse on the underpinning values sustaining the two.

Despite this, I think it is crucial to recognise that I do not think soldiers inherently deserve to die in the pursuit of their duties, even for humanitarian principles. States have a profound responsibility – their State Responsibility – to their citizens, including those who serve in the military. Many soldiers, particularly in states where the military is not compulsory, come from modest backgrounds and enlist primarily to defend their country, not to engage in international humanitarian missions (Stickles, 2018). Their motivations to join the military will often include stable employment, and a sense of national duty, not a commitment to humanitarian principle nor to protecting civilians abroad. Menon (2016, p. 175) asked me, or rather "those of us who will not be ordered to fight and die in wars", "to reflect on our secure status before devising ethical frameworks that could contribute to others' getting killed for principles we deem dear." This crucial ethical consideration did have me second-guess my first instinct: that protecting soldiers over civilians is ironic in the case of humanitarian interventions. After some thought, I maintain that soldiers have at least been given the opportunity to make the conscious choice to join the military, and are prepared for the dangers of their profession. Meanwhile, civilians in situations

of conflict and human suffering face imminent dangers due to circumstances outside of their control and choices. The inherent risks faced by soldiers should not diminish the imperative to protect civilians, who, unlike soldiers, have no control over their perilous situations.

In conclusion, the growing tendency of world leaders to prioritise the lives of their soldiers through casualty-aversion tactics over the protection of the lives of civilians in armed humanitarian interventions presents quite the ethical and strategic dilemma. A more holistic approach to the topic could help us find methods that genuinely prioritise civilian lives, even if it means accepting the inherent risks and sacrifices in military operations. Only by aligning the methods of intervention with their intended or purported humanitarian goals can we hope to reduce this paradox and uphold the principles of justice and protection. No one deserves to die, but in the end, selective sacrifices must be made.

V. Taking Responsibility: Tackling the Ironies

This dilemma brings us to our next crucial aspect of armed humanitarian interventions: the responsibility of states. Responsibility, in this context, is multifaceted and encompasses both legal and moral obligations of states to act in accordance with international norms, and in this context, to be held *accountable* for their actions. This concept is crucial for maintaining the legitimacy and effectiveness of humanitarian interventions as it ensures that states adhere to the principles of international law, and that they don't continue to exploit humanitarian justifications for self-interested motives. Additionally, responsibility emphasises the need for states to follow-through on their post-intervention commitments in order to stabilise and reconstruct the regions in which they've intervened in. Therefore addressing and understanding the responsibility of states is fundamental to addressing the problem of irony in armed humanitarian interventions. However, only the *extrinsic* irony of armed humanitarian interventions can properly be tackled and mitigated by the appropriate strategies, as its *intrinsic* irony can never be entirely erased lest we change the concept entirely.

Legal Responsibility of States: The Fine Line Between Aid and Aggression

In international law, state responsibility is underpinned by several key frameworks that seek to set the boundaries between lawful and unlawful actions during interventions. The most

significant framework is the "Articles on Responsibility of States for International Wrongful Acts" adopted by the International Law Commission in 2001. These articles codify the principles of state responsibility: the set of rules governing the accountability of a state for its actions or omissions that violate international obligations. It does this through four key aspects. Firstly, acknowledging the breach of an international obligation, those of which arise from treaties, customary international law, or other sources of international legal norms. Next, attribution: that is to say, proof that the wrongful act can be attributable to the state, meaning that it was carried out by the state's organs, officials, or entities exercising governmental authority. The last two aspects are consequences where if found responsible the state must cease the wrongful act and offer reparations via compensation and/or restitution – and the use of lawful countermeasures from the injured state to induce the wrongdoer to comply with their obligations. (International Law Commission, 2001, p. 1).

> "Every internationally wrongful act of a State entails the international responsibility of that State."
>
> - Art. 1 of the Responsibility of States for Internationally Wrongful Acts (International Law Commission, 2001, p. 1)

Traditionally, a breach of state sovereignty would be considered an international wrongful act, due to the UN Charter which prohibits "the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state" in Article 2.4; and establishes the principles of state sovereignty and the prohibition of the use of force, except in cases of self-defence or when authorised by the UN Security Council. Breaching sovereignty through armed interventions should therefore invoke legal state responsibility and the rights to reparations and compensation from the intervening state (United Nations, 1945). However, development of humanitarian interventionism, as well as the R2P doctrine adopted at the 2005 World Summit, have recently served to alter previously established customary international law. This has happened because of the assertion that the international community has a duty to intervene when a state fails to protect its population from mass atrocities. As such, armed humanitarian interventions, despite their forceful nature, are not necessarily considered wrongful acts which would invoke legal state responsibility, and therefore, reparations.

One of the main obstacles of international law when it comes to humanitarian interventions and responsibility, is that despite its attempts to the contrary, it is often *not* legally binding. Or if it is meant to be, states continue to get away with not implementing the justice served. The application of these legal frameworks often reveals the complexities and challenges in balancing aid and aggression. To illustrate, we can examine specific cases. For instance, the 2011 NATO intervention in Libya was justified under R2P to protect civilians from the Gaddafi regime's brutal crackdown. UN Security Council Resolution 1973 authorised member states to take "all necessary measures" to protect civilians. However, as we've seen, the extensive bombing campaign and the resulting civilian casualties led to significant debates about whether the intervention overstepped its mandate. Critics argue that the intervention, while initially rooted in humanitarian concern, morphed into an operation focused solely on regime change, thereby violating the principles of proportionality and necessity under international humanitarian law. However, none of the NATO states were legally responsible to repair or compensate Libya, despite the destruction causing it to become a failed state.

ICJ Advisory Opinion

More recently, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) gave its advisory opinion on Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories highlighting the ongoing legal complexities. On July 19th, 2024, the ICJ declared Israel's continued presence in the occupied territories as illegal, constituting a *wrongful act* of a continuing character. The Court stated: "With regard to the Court’s finding that Israel’s continued presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory is illegal, the Court considers that such presence constitutes a wrongful act entailing its international responsibility. It is a wrongful act of a continuing character which has been brought about by Israel’s violations, through its policies and practices, of the prohibition on the acquisition of territory by force and the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people. Consequently, Israel has an obligation to bring an end to its presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory as rapidly as possible" (International Court of Justice, 2024).

This ruling on Israel and Palestine underscores the importance of adhering to international legal norms and the responsibilities of states. However it also brings to light

the challenges in enforcing such rulings, particularly when powerful political alliances and strategic interests are at play. As despite this ruling, we've yet to see Israel take responsibility for this internationally wrongful act, nor the responsibilities that should ensue be implemented.

Nevertheless, while there might not be legal responsibility to provide reparations and compensations during and after armed humanitarian interventions, there is still a moral responsibility to do so. While legal frameworks for responsibility have provided a basis for accountability, their limitations in enforcement and coverage of cases highlights the need for a more robust use of moral responsibility. States, particularly intervening states, need to recognise their ethical obligations towards providing reparations, compensation, and to support post-conflict reconstruction to avoid further harm. By addressing both legal and moral responsibility, the international community can better navigate the fine line between aid and aggression, ultimately reducing the inherent ironies of armed humanitarian interventions.

Moral Responsibility of States

The interplay between legal responsibility and moral responsibility is critical in the context of armed humanitarian interventions. While the legal frameworks provide foundations for holding states accountable, they often fall short in enforcement and scope which leave gaps that must be addressed through moral imperatives. The principle of 'taking responsibility' transcends mere legal obligations: it demands a broader ethical accountability from states to act in ways that genuinely protect and uphold human rights, all while acknowledging their roles in creating and maintaining conflicts. In the following subsections, we will delve deeper into the moral dimensions of state responsibility by first discovering what 'taking responsibility' means, and then by addressing certain ironic ethical issues which arise from armed humanitarian interventions, and how they can be mitigated by increased moral responsibility.

When a state "takes responsibility" for its actions, it goes beyond the confines of legal obligations and steps into the realm of ethical accountability. Generally taking responsibility involves recognising and acknowledging one's role in a particular action, decision, or outcome. It's a principle about accepting the consequences, whether positive or negative, and committing to address any issues or rectify any mistakes caused by its actions. This process involves honesty

and transparency about what occurred and demonstrates a willingness to learn from the experience to improve in the future.

For states, taking responsibility is not merely about admitting a fault; it is about the active participation in working towards rectification and making amends where possible. This includes being open about the causes and effects of their actions, seeking justice for the affected parties, and taking concrete steps to prevent future occurrences. If states were to take responsibility in this manner, not only would they address the immediate issues, but they could also foster an environment of trust and cooperation. This approach can lead to stronger international relationships, more effective conflict resolution, and an increased perception of legitimacy.

To me, the principle of states "taking responsibility" is essential for addressing the ethical and moral obligations of states involved in armed humanitarian interventions. This principle can be divided into two main components: acknowledgment and reparations. Another feature of moral responsibility that can help mitigate the irony of these interventions is the importance of the follow-through of humanitarian goals. Each of these components plays a critical role in ensuring that states act responsibly and ethically in the international arena.

Acknowledgement: Transparency and Accountability

More often than not, victims and the families of victims of armed humanitarian interventions do not receive any acknowledgment from the parties responsible for the suffering they've lived through. This can lead to resentment, distrust, and confusion. Faiz Fathi Jfara, just one victim from NATO's intervention in Libya in 2011, has publicly questioned the reasons and the identity of the vessel which bombed his home and killed his family. And yet, NATO was "unwilling to provide information on the nationality of the aircraft involved in specific operations," thus leaving Faiz Fathi Jfara unable to ever truly move on, as their deaths were never acknowledged, never apologised for, never repaired (Abrahams, 2012). Unfortunately, this trend towards secrecy and denial is quite ordinary for typical intervening actors during armed humanitarian interventions, as they wish to hide any 'unsavoury' conduct they might have carried out in order to uphold the perception of the legitimacy of their actions.

However, I believe that transparency and accountability – their acknowledgement – of their 'unsavoury' actions during armed humanitarian interventions could potentially help the perception of legitimacy rather than hinder it. Nevertheless, I believe that the priority of incorporating the moral responsibility of states is not to enhance legitimacy, but rather to provide justice (Rahmani, 2023, p. 212).

Acknowledgment involves states being *transparent* and *accountable* for their actions. It requires states to be clear and open about their actions, and the reasons behind them. When states do this, they foster trust, thus helping increase the perception of legitimacy. This would involve the full disclosure of motivations, decision-making processes, and the public acceptance of the impacts of their interventions. Transparency is essential to this component, as it is the foundation for building trust, legitimacy, and cooperation both domestically and internationally. First, transparency allows for the establishment of an environment which allows for scrutiny and oversight; both of which can help prevent abuses of power and corruption. Transparency is often seen as an essential element of good governance in liberal democracies, and this is just as true, if not more, during armed interventions (Davis, 2023). When states are transparent about their actions, the scrutiny they receive invites dialogue which can lead to more informed and democratic decision-making processes. Moreover, transparency helps to build trust by demonstrating that states have nothing to hide and are willing to be held *accountable* for their actions. This openness can foster a sense of mutual respect and cooperation between states, as well as between states and their citizens.

Accountability is another crucial element of acknowledgement. Someone who is accountable is someone who "is completely responsible for what they do and must be able to give a satisfactory reason for it" (Cambridge Dictionary, 2024). The same can be said for states. State institutions need to be responsive to the needs and rights of those affected by their actions: they must first be held accountable, and to do so, we must know what they're being held accountable *for*: hence the need for transparency. Being made to explain and justify their actions and decisions can help with the creation of mechanisms that would provide monitoring and evaluation during armed interventions. Through accountability, we can also hope that states will behave in ways that respect international humanitarian law, in line with the principle of proportionality, the principle of humanity, the principle of necessity, and the principle of distinction between civilians and

combatants (Federal Department of Foreign Affairs FDFA, n.d.). In the realm of armed humanitarian interventions, accountability helps to ensure that states do not act with impunity, and that they're committed to addressing any harm caused by their actions.

As such, acknowledgement ensues when we combine both transparency and accountability: it is the need to publicly admit and accept the truth and existence of something. For armed humanitarian interventions, this can be the acceptance of a state's role in perpetrating human suffering, whether intentional or not. Acknowledgement is a crucial step towards taking responsibility, as it reflects an understanding of the impact of one's actions on others and demonstrates the willingness to address the consequences. Trudy Govier (1999, p. 22) discusses the importance of acknowledgement as a "necessary first step in the direction of moral and political reform" because it creates a separation between the act of wrongdoing, and the move towards reparations.

In summary, acknowledgement can help enhance the perception of legitimacy by building trust, ensuring accountability, and demonstrating a commitment towards more ethical governance. Through this component of moral responsibility, states who intervene in crises abroad can start to tackle the extrinsic ironies of armed humanitarian interventions by acknowledging the existence of double standards in selectivity, the imposition of western ideals, and their roles in creating the conflicts they intervene in. By first applying this component of acknowledgment, states who intervene in armed humanitarian interventions could help create a better environment for the next step: reparations.

Reparation and Compensation

> "Unless and until some reparatory measures for the civilian victims of military operations are introduced into its framework, the idea of *just* military humanitarian intervention can only been as an oxymoron."
>
> - Shunzo Majima (2008, p. 209)

Armed humanitarian interventions often lead to civilian casualties and the destruction of infrastructure, creating ethical and moral dilemmas for intervening states. Although these interventions aim to protect civilians and restore peace, they frequently result in unintended

harm. This raises critical questions about justice during armed humanitarian interventions, and the moral responsibility of the interveners. Death and destruction in the name of humanitarian principles is part of the inherent ironic identity of armed humanitarian interventions. How can we tackle this irony? Just who is responsible for the compensation and reparations in these situations?

Intervening actors might believe that they're already performing a good deed by intervening abroad to help end human suffering. Thus, they may argue that any collateral damage should either be ignored in favour of the 'good' they're doing, or be repaired by the state in need of intervention. To an extent, there is some logic behind this thought process: if you help a pedestrian who is the victim of a car crash get out of the wreckage, but by doing so you graze their leg on a sharp edge and cause them to bleed, are you then also expected to be responsible for the costs of all of their medical bills? To pay for reparations and compensation for what they've lived through? Of course not! If that was the case, there would be no more good samaritans. Most would agree that the driver would be fully responsible, and that despite the damage you might have done to their leg, it was proportional and necessary to help them in the moment. However, when we remember that typical intervening actors are not just bystanders like in the example above, but often active accomplices, this skews our thought experiment to a different extreme.

Suppose you and the driver were engaged in a dangerous activity, like racing, that led to the crash. You were in the passenger seat, encouraging the driver, and after the crash, you rush to help the injured pedestrian. In this situation, your responsibility is significantly heightened. You are not merely an innocent helper; you are partially responsible for creating the dangerous conditions that led to the accident. Even though you may genuinely want to assist the pedestrian, the fact that you contributed to the cause of their suffering changes the ethical landscape. By being an accomplice, you share in the responsibility for the initial harm. Therefore, any additional harm caused during your attempt to help must also be viewed through this lens of shared culpability. If you cause further injury while assisting the pedestrian, your actions are doubly problematic: you contributed to both the initial and subsequent harms. In this scenario, as an active accomplice of the suffering of the civilian, both parties (you, and the driver) are morally and legally responsible for compensating the pedestrian for all of their injuries.

Applying this to armed humanitarian interventions, if an intervening state has previously supported or contributed to the conditions leading to a conflict (for example, through political alliances, arms sales, or other forms of support), it bears a greater responsibility for any collateral damage resulting from its intervention. The state cannot simply claim the mantle of a good samaritan; it must acknowledge its role in creating or exacerbating the conflict and take comprehensive measures to address all resulting harm, including providing reparations and compensation to affected civilians. This ensures a more just and accountable approach to international interventions, aligning actions with ethical and moral responsibilities.

Political theorists tend to agree that reparations are a necessary step towards justice; in fact, "Most victims see reparations as the most direct and meaningful way to obtain justice" too (International Center for Transitional Justice, n.d.). Iris Marion Young (2011, p. 142) believes that social justice requires institutions to be responsive to the needs and rights of those affected by their actions. In the context of armed humanitarian interventions, this means that states should not only intervene to stop immediate suffering but also *take responsibility* for the long-term consequences of interventionism.

Michael Walzer notes in his book *Just and Unjust Wars* (2006, p. 297) that "Reparations are surely due the victims of aggressive war, and they can hardly be collected only from those members of the defeated state who were active supporters of the aggression." As such, any collateral damage such as the destruction of homes, infrastructure, the breakdown of essential services, or even civilian casualties that are caused directly or indirectly by the intervening actor is under their responsibility to then be repaired. Plus, through the principle of *jus in bello*, intervening forces are expected to minimise harm to civilians and ensure that any damage inflicted is proportional and necessary. Walzer's framework supports the idea that intervening states need to be held accountable for collateral damage, as it aligns with the broader ethical mandate to protect non-combatants during war. While the specifics of which reparations or compensations would be appropriate for each scenario will not be addressed in this thesis, the general idea is to respect the 'Pottery Barn' rule in a "you break it, you fix it" way (Rahmani, 2023, p. 78; Blake, 2014).

Moreover, the concept of restorative justice as discussed by theorists such as Howard Zehr can also be applied to the context of humanitarian interventions. Restorative justice focuses on helping offenders to repair the harm they caused to victims by emphasising the importance of accountability and reconciliation. The goal is to repair the harm of the crimes, and include the engagement and participation of the needs and abilities of each of the parties. By adopting some of the restorative justice principles, intervening states can engage in more meaningful reparations and compensation efforts, fostering trust and cooperation in the affected communities. This approach not only addresses the immediate consequences felt, but also contributes to long-term stability (Majima, 2008, p. 207). This would invoke the necessity of acknowledgement.

As established previously, acknowledgement is a first – and necessary – component of the moral responsibility of states, one that paves the way towards reparations and compensations. Reparations can never truly be genuine lest they are done in full acknowledgment of the reasons that the reparations or compensation is necessary. Reparation without acknowledgement is bribery.

This is because without acknowledgement, the offending party avoids admitting their wrongdoing thus their accountability. By merely offering compensation, it can be seen as an attempt to buy silence or compliance without ever addressing the root cause of the issue. This leaves the underlying issues that caused the harm to remain unaddressed. The absence of justice here therefore bypasses the moral dimensions of justice and reparations, reducing the act to a transactional exchange, rather than a genuine effort to make amends. This means that the offending party, in this case the intervening state, might potentially continue harmful behaviours in the future as they have not been held accountable nor made to understand the full impact of their actions.

True moral responsibility involves admitting wrongdoings, admitting the harm caused, and taking comprehensive steps towards addressing and rectifying that harm. Once states have acknowledged their role in the perpetuation of human suffering, they must then seek to rectify the harms caused by their actions: this is reparation. This could involve the compensation of victims, rebuilding damaged infrastructure, and ensuring that justice is served through appropriate legal and restorative measures. Indeed, acknowledgement “has a role in the reform of

perpetrators and the moral advance of society. Acknowledgement may be expressed in various ways: through criminal trials, truth commissions, public inquiries, apologies, reparations, or memorials" (Gover, 1999, p. 18).

Through acknowledgement, we can therefore reach a conception of reparation and compensation for victims of armed humanitarian interventions which would be restorative in nature, rather than silencing. Thus, acknowledgement and reparations are essential to encourage states to 'take responsibility' of their behaviour during and after armed humanitarian interventions.

The Importance of Follow-Through in Post-Conflict Situations

While the moral principle of 'taking responsibility' could help mitigate some of the inherent ironies of armed humanitarian interventions, it isn't sufficient to address the concern of fulfilling the humanitarian goals that the interventions were set out to do. Armed humanitarian interventions aim to protect civilians, prevent human rights abuses, and restore peace in conflict zones. During the post-intervention phase, we must then focus on the "humanitarian imperative" which requires "that we do not leave the population behind in a state of chaos and anarchy, but that we (help) construct a decent and viable state" (Molier & Nieuwenhuys, 2009, p. 19). However, achieving these goals requires more than just military action; it necessitates a comprehensive and sustained commitment to rebuilding and supporting the affected region. Therefore it is important to place an emphasis on the need for the follow-through of these humanitarian objectives through post-conflict reconstruction and the establishment of sustainable peace to tackle the problem of human suffering.

Through initiatives which prioritise the follow-through of humanitarian goals, the achievement of sustainable peace becomes more attainable, ensuring long-term stability and hopefully preventing the recurrence of conflict. This is crucial as regions without such follow-through risk relapsing into violence and chaos that might even be worse than prior to the intervention, such is the case for Libya. Effective follow-through addresses infrastructure damage, economic instability, and social disruption caused by the conflict, thereby supporting reconstruction and the development of communities and local economies. Additionally, establishing human rights and justice systems which incorporate local customs and culture is essential for creating the rule of law and holding perpetrators of human rights abuses accountable, which can help foster trust in

newly established institutions and the justice system. By demonstrating commitment to the humanitarian goals typical intervening actors claim to be moved by, they can help create more trust and credibility towards armed humanitarian interventions internationally, but also within the local population, fostering goodwill and cooperation.

To determine the importance of certain strategies, let us analyse the example of Afghanistan.

Afghanistan 2001-2021: The Failure to Plan for Tomorrow

The intervention and occupation in Afghanistan, primarily led by the United States and NATO, was aimed to dismantle terrorist networks and establish a stable democratic government. Despite two decades of military and humanitarian efforts and $145 billion spent (Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, 2021, p. vii), the rapid collapse of the Afghan government following the U.S. withdrawal in 2021 highlighted the significant failures in the follow-through of humanitarian aspirations and state-building efforts (Schaeffer, 2022). A major component to this failure was the weak Afghan government at the provincial level which left NATO or the Taliban to fill in the gaps (Molier & Nieuwenhuys, 2009, p. 202). Another critical issue was the lack of comprehensive and sustained local engagement, compounded by the plethora of uncoordinated plans of actions from international actors.

> *"The U.S. reconstruction effort in Afghanistan could be described as 20 one year reconstruction efforts, rather than one 20-year effort."*
>
> - Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, 2021, p. viii

In Afghanistan, many initiatives were driven by external actors without adequately incorporating local needs and capacities. This disconnect often resulted in projects that were culturally inappropriate or unsustainable once foreign aid diminished. When interventions lacked civilian ownership or participation, they had a tendency to fail due to not addressing the needs of the population (Molier & Nieuwenhuys, 2009, p. 204). The lack of local participation in decision-making processes led to initiatives that didn't align with the cultural and social dynamics of Afghan society. For instance, the imposed Western models of governance and economic development often clashed with local traditions and practices, undermining their legitimacy and effectiveness (Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, 2021, p.

xi). The continued reliance on foreign aid without building local capacities fostered a dependency culture, where the Afghan government and local institutions were not prepared to sustain progress independently. Humanitarian efforts ended up facing fluctuating funding and political will. The short-term focus on immediate security and visible reconstruction projects ended up neglecting long-term goals like institution-building and economic self-sufficiency (Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, 2021, p. 37). This accumulation of failures led to mistrust and dependence, rather than empowerment and resilience of affected communities.

A holistic approach combining efforts in security, governance, health, education, and economic development was insufficiently implemented. The lack of coordination among international actors, NGOs, and local stakeholders led to fragmented efforts that did not reinforce each other effectively. Regular assessment, monitoring and adaptation of strategies based on ground realities were severely lacking, and a poor understanding of the local contexts ended up exacerbating the conflict, rather than alleviating it (Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, 2021, p. 77). This rigidity in plans meant that interventions could not evolve and adapt to meet the changing needs and conditions in Afghanistan.

Considering the example of Afghanistan, achieving effective follow-through in humanitarian interventions involves comprehensive planning, with detailed post-conflict recovery plans developed in coordination with local stakeholders, international organisations, and governments. This approach requires a *long-term* commitment, including sustained financial, logistical, and human resource support, as short-term efforts are insufficient for deep-rooted recovery. Local engagement is critical, prioritising the involvement of local communities in decision-making processes to ensure the development of culturally appropriate interventions that address actual needs. This local involvement is essential to avoid neo-colonial or neo-imperial conduct from the typical intervening actors and international organisation, ensuring that interventions do not impose external values or control but rather support the autonomous development of the region. These strategies are not limited to reconstruction in Afghanistan, but should be implemented as part of the humanitarian imperative of armed humanitarian interventions during the post-intervention phase.

A multisectoral approach combines efforts in security, governance, health, education, and economic development to tackle various aspects of post-conflict recovery. This comprehensive strategy ensures that all critical areas are addressed in order to promote a balanced and sustainable recovery. Regular monitoring and evaluation of interventions would be necessary to assess progress and to make adjustments to strategies as needed depending on developing circumstances. Being open to adjusting plans based on feedback from local stakeholders and evolving ground realities ensures that the interventions remain relevant and effective over time. As a plus, regular monitoring can help to maintain accountability of all actors and help to prevent different forms of exploitation or misuses of humanitarian efforts, a concern raised by John Mearsheimer (2003) and Carl Scmitt (2007, p. 54), by ensuring transparency and responsiveness to the actual needs of the affected population. By focusing on these ideas and incorporating moral responsibility and the principle of actors 'taking responsibility' for their actions, effective follow-through not only aids in the immediate recovery but also supports long-term stability and development all while respecting the cultural integrity of the region.

The strategies used are deeply important to the success of the humanitarian mission. For instance, according to a study conducted by Elizabeth Babister (2019, p. 124) on recovery of shelter and settlements after humanitarian crises, approaches which prioritised local ownership such as "self-build" and "people-centred housing reconstruction" demonstrated the best benefits of empowering local communities. Local participation should thus not be limited to their voices being heard, but rather include the active participation of the affected communities in the reconstruction of their homes.

The strategies addressed above could ensure that global actors support rather than dictate the recovery process, leading to more resilient and self-sufficient communities in the aftermath of humanitarian crises. The failure in Afghanistan underscores the critical importance of effective follow-through in humanitarian interventions and should serve as a cautionary tale and as a guide on what to avoid for future interventions. By integrating insights such as these, humanitarian interventions can be better designed to meet the needs of affected populations, and tackle the irony of armed humanitarian interventions.

VI. Conclusion

This thesis has explored the complex and multifaceted nature of armed humanitarian interventions by focusing on the existence of their inherent and extrinsic ironies. Mainly, it has come to the conclusion that there are two essential types of ironies that are attached to the concept of armed humanitarian interventions. First, its intrinsic irony is tied to the inherent contradictions within the concept itself: the tensions between concepts as well as its oxymoronic terms juxtaposing the violent means of "armed" with the peaceful ends of "humanitarian." This contradiction lies at the core of AHIs, creating a tension between the stated humanitarian goals and the military actions taken to achieve them, no matter in which ways. And secondly, its extrinsic irony which involves the external implementation and consequences of armed humanitarian interventions, often resulting in unintended and counterproductive outcomes. By acknowledging the existence of these two types of irony, we can come to the understanding that there is little we can do to address the intrinsic ironic nature of armed humanitarian interventions; however, there is still the possibility to mitigate the effects of its extrinsic irony.

Addressing the impact of neoliberalism and neorealism on armed humanitarian interventions through ideological analyses helped us come to the finding that neoliberal perspectives often frame armed humanitarian interventions as purely altruistic efforts. However, this perspective comes with the dangers of falling into patterns of the ‘white saviour’ complex which is colonial in nature. Additionally, this complex has a tendency to undermine local customs and traditions, leading to paternalistic attitudes that can exacerbate existing problems rather than solve them. The neoliberal framing of armed humanitarian interventions also undermines criticisms of interventions in the name of humanitarianism, which adds to the extrinsic irony when the purportedly noble intentions of armed humanitarian interventions are often used to deflect legitimate critiques, and mask ulterior motives and problematic outcomes of these interventions.

Through our neorealist ideological analysis, we were offered a more critical perspective of armed humanitarian interventions, viewing them more as tools for advancing the strategic objectives of powerful states. This perspective reveals that humanitarianism often serves as a guise for pursuing national interests, such as gaining access to resources, establishing allies or bases in other regions, and generally enhancing geopolitical influence. The realist lens in part explains the

frequent lack of follow-through post-intervention, as the intervening states' primary goals are often achieved once their strategic interests are secured. Through neorealism, we can also highlight the existence of the double standards in the practice and deployment of armed humanitarian interventions, which created new ethical challenges by intensifying the impact of the extrinsic irony of armed humanitarian interventions.

Similarly, the issue of selectivity in armed humanitarian interventions also exacerbates their ironic identity. The inconsistent application of interventions highlights the double standards in the practice, and undermines the perceived legitimacy of armed humanitarian interventions when some humanitarian crises are intervened in, and others blatantly ignored. Selective interventions accentuate the extrinsic irony, as they reveal the bias and hypocrisy of the international community. By decolonising selectivity, we addressed the problem of acknowledging the purposeful complicity and blindness of some typical intervening actors in perpetuating these double standards. By addressing that issue, we were able to see where we could begin to mitigate the ethical problems posed by the intensification of the extrinsic irony of armed humanitarian interventions.

It is crucial to acknowledge that the irony of armed humanitarian interventions can never be completely eradicated. The inherent contradiction and the geopolitical realities that shape these interventions ensure that ironies will always exist. Nonetheless, their impact can be mitigated. This thesis turns towards the concept of state responsibility as a first step towards creating a strategy that could help mitigate the extrinsic irony of armed humanitarian interventions. However, legal responsibility alone is insufficient to address this issue because the scope of existing legal frameworks is too narrow, and often fails to encompass the broader ethical issues and unintended consequences of military interventions. Considering this, we turned towards the establishment of moral responsibility of states to offer a more comprehensive approach to addressing the extrinsic irony of armed humanitarian interventions. Acknowledgement, transparency, and accountability are crucial in mitigating some of the negative impacts of these interventions. Through transparency for example, monitoring processes can be established which help ensure that the interventions align with their humanitarian goals, and that intervening actors are held liable for their actors, reducing the gap between rhetoric and reality. By reducing this gap, we reduce the presence of extrinsic irony.

Reparations and compensation are also vital in addressing the harm caused by military force. These actions represent the moral responsibility of intervening states to help redress the injustices inflicted on affected populations.

Finally, in this thesis we addressed that the importance of follow-through cannot be overstated. Ensuring that humanitarian ideals are upheld in the aftermath of interventions is an essential tool towards mitigating the extrinsic irony of armed humanitarian interventions. This involves a sustained commitment to rebuilding and supporting the affected regions in ways which incorporate local agency to promote long-term sustainable stability and development.

To address this thesis' impact on the debate, it is essential to reflect on how the developed theory of the irony of armed humanitarian interventions interacts with and diverges from the established theories of some other ethical-political theorists such as Michael Blake, Eric Heinze and Thomas Nagel. Michael Blake's (2013) analysis emphasises the comprehensive human, economic, and social costs of war, aligning with my critique of the often neglected long-term impacts of intervention. However, Blake's Pottery Barn rule focuses mainly on immediate and quantifiable costs, whereas my theory hopes to extend this to include socio-political destabilisation and the perpetuation of dependency that interventions can create. This perspective underscores the impacts of interventions beyond just the immediate costs, while specifically critiquing the neo-imperial tendencies and selective nature of armed humanitarian interventions.

The engagement with Heinze and Nagel's work further illuminates the contrasts and intersections with my theory. Heinze's (2004) framework for justifiable interventions highlights the necessity of stringent ethical guidelines to prevent misuse, which aligns with my argument for rigorous criteria governing interventions. However, while Heinze has a heavy focus on theoretical justifications for these interventions, my theory places a heavier emphasis on political realities by arguing that even with such guidelines in place, interventions are susceptible to political manipulation, a factor that Heinze does not fully address.

Thomas Nagel's (1972) "War and Massacre" is an ethical criticism on the morality of wartime actions which uses absolutism as a base. Both works highlight the ethical paradoxes of using violence for humanitarian purposes, critique utilitarian justifications for mass casualties, and stress the importance of moral consistency. However, by grounding these ethical discussions in

concrete case studies and expanding the scope to include political and cultural implications, this thesis offers a more comprehensive critique of humanitarian interventions. This approach not only underscores the theoretical insights of Nagel but also extends them to address the practical and often politically charged realities of contemporary humanitarian interventions, rather than limiting them to wartime circumstances.

This engagement with established theories underscores the nuanced understanding this thesis brings to the discourse on armed humanitarian interventions. By addressing both ethical and practical dimensions, it provides a richer analysis of the ironies inherent in such interventions, no matter the guidelines and practices put in place. This thesis acknowledges that there will always be ironies present in the practice of armed humanitarian interventions, but that these ironies should not stop us from attempting to use interventions in ways which help mitigate human suffering, particularly when ethical guidelines and practices of moral responsibility are in place to minimise the ironies.

In conclusion, this thesis has examined the intrinsic and extrinsic ironies of armed humanitarian interventions through the analysis of case studies, thought experiments, and conceptual and ideological analyses. The inherent contradictions within the concept of armed humanitarian interventions creates an intrinsic irony, while the selective application, strategic motivations, and inadequate follow-through of these interventions contribute to their extrinsic irony. Addressing these issues requires a commitment to moral responsibility, transparency, accountability, and a genuine focus on humanitarian outcomes. Only through such measures can we hope to align armed humanitarian interventions more closely with their stated essence, and reduce the paradoxes that currently define them.

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