



Mains Practice Question

Q. Analyze the ethical challenges involved when states employ military force in global affairs, specifically concerning humanitarian interventions. (150 Words)

15 Feb, 2024 GS Paper 4 Theoretical Questions

Approach

- Write a brief introduction about the humanitarian intervention by use of military force in global affairs.
- Mention the ethical challenges associated with the humanitarian intervention by the use of military force.
- Write a conclusion.

Introduction

Humanitarian interventions, involving the use of military force by states to address grave human rights violations or humanitarian crises in other countries, present complex ethical dilemmas. The intention behind such interventions is often noble to protect civilians and alleviate suffering. They also raise significant ethical concerns.

Body

Humanitarian intervention, particularly when executed through military force, presents a complex web of ethical challenges. Some of these issues:

- **Just Cause and Right Intentions:**
 - Ethical military intervention requires a just cause, typically centered around preventing or addressing severe human rights abuses. However, determining what constitutes a "just cause" can be subjective and open to interpretation.
 - For example, the 2011 NATO intervention in Libya aimed at protecting civilians from the Gaddafi regime, but the aftermath raised questions about the true intentions and the subsequent power vacuum.
- **Proportional Means and Likelihood of Success:**
 - Ethical considerations also involve the proportionality of military force used and the likelihood of success in achieving humanitarian objectives. Unrestrained military actions may lead to unintended civilian casualties and long-lasting damage to infrastructure, raising concerns about the proportionality of the means employed.
 - **Example:** The U.S.-led intervention in Iraq in 2003, while claimed to be addressing human rights concerns, faced criticism for its disproportionate use of force and the subsequent destabilization of the region.
- **Legitimate Authority and Consent:**
 - The legitimacy of the authority behind the intervention and the consent of the international community play crucial ethical roles. Actions taken without proper authorization from international bodies, such as the United Nations Security Council, may be seen as violating the principles of collective decision-making and international law.
 - **Example:** The 2003 invasion of Iraq lacked explicit UN Security Council

authorization, leading to debates about the intervention's legitimacy and adherence to international norms.

▪ **Last Resort and Exhaustion of Non-military Options:**

◦ Ethical justifications for military interventions often require demonstrating that non-military means have been exhausted and that military force is a last resort. Rushing into military action without exploring diplomatic or economic alternatives raises concerns about the ethics of the decision-making process.

• **Example:** The debate surrounding the Syrian Civil War brought attention to the challenges of finding non-military solutions and the difficulties in determining when military force becomes the only viable option.

▪ **Long-term Consequences and Post-intervention Responsibility:**

◦ Ethical considerations extend beyond the immediate intervention, encompassing the long-term consequences and the responsibility of the intervening states in rebuilding and stabilizing the affected region. Inadequate planning for the post-intervention phase can lead to prolonged instability and worsen humanitarian conditions.

• **Example:** The aftermath of the NATO intervention in Kosovo in 1999 highlighted the challenges of post-conflict reconstruction and the need for sustained international involvement.

Conclusion

States use military force for humanitarian interventions, they face ethical challenges involving sovereignty, just cause, proportionality, accountability, and impartiality. While these interventions aim to protect vulnerable populations, it's crucial to navigate these dilemmas to uphold human rights and minimize harm. Biocentrism, rooted in religious and philosophical traditions like Buddhism and Jainism, emerged as a key environmental ethic in the late 20th century, addressing concerns such as animal welfare, biodiversity, climate change, and conservation.

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