

Questioning Foreign Intervention's Legitimacy

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When we hear another country is somehow intervening in the internal affairs of another country, we are generally inclined to perceive this as a big problem. Foreign intervention is seen as a concept that is always problematic which disrupts the natural set of events. In this article, I want to question whether there can be some instances and conditions that make foreign intervention legitimate.

Perceiving foreign intervention as problematic has two different roots. The first one focuses on practical concerns; we have seen how foreign intervention in internal affairs can create catastrophes from examples throughout history. Just thinking briefly about the history of the Middle East makes us feel like foreign intervention can never end well. The second one is a rather theoretical approach; it asks whether it is legitimate for the will of the people and national sovereignty to be ignored by foreign intervention. The ordinary people of the country are the group that is most affected by foreign intervention, however, they do not get a say in whether it will be conducted or not.

Nevertheless, I believe we can still create a situation in which foreign intervention can be perceived as legitimate, even if not practical. Legitimacy is a concept that is not directly related to the practical consequences of an act. It is about whether an action is perceived to be acceptable or not by people, the concept depends on the acceptance of people.

In some situations, a foreign intervention can be the *only* option for changing the system within a country. Ordinary people might want to change the system, but they might be deprived of their means because of their authoritarian regime. Think of a country where people want a democratic regime but are arrested when they say even the smallest thing against their government. People's will in such a situation probably would be in favor of foreign intervention since they see it as the only way of discarding the authoritarian system.

People are the group that is mostly affected by the decisions of the governors, so they must have the right of deciding how they want to be governed. This also creates the basis of the idea of national sovereignty. If foreign intervention is in line with national sovereignty and the will of the people, in theory, it could be legitimate and acceptable.

In practice, however, it is impossible to determine whether the general will is in favor of or against foreign intervention, you can only make a guess. This is because it is simply impossible to hold a referendum in such a country to vote for or against foreign intervention. This idea is not only impossible but also absurd. The best we can do might be to conduct surveys or use social media. Still, they are also far from representing the whole population.

The practical concerns about foreign intervention do not end here. People are far from understanding the true meaning and consequences of foreign intervention. When they support foreign intervention to get rid of their authoritarian regime, it is not probable for

vast populations to truly understand what they are supporting. In other words, they have limited data that prevent their rational decision-making skills from working. If people's acceptance of foreign intervention is not based on rationality, is this consent still meaningful? I believe if we say no to this question, it will come to the point where people can have no meaningful decisions. If my idea about foreign intervention is not important because of my lack of data, my idea about the healthcare or education system cannot be any more important, considering how we will always have a limited data set about these social policies as well. Stating a limited data set must prevent people from taking decisions about governance would mean leaving all the decision-making processes to the hands of a privileged group with all the data.

Whether foreign intervention can really be a solution for a country in practice is another aspect of the issue. There are some instances where foreign support and influence have seriously affected the country for the better, think about the case of South Korea or Japan. Still, this kind of influence does not directly include military intervention. Military intervention generally proved to have catastrophic consequences. Still, foreign military intervention can still be the only option for stopping an aggressor. Balkans of the 1990s, the intervention of NATO are examples of this. Besides, foreign powers can act as mediators in regional conflicts otherwise could not be resolved. Consider how the progress in resolving the issue of the Sudanese civil war accelerated only after the true intervention of the USA. To sum up, the practical effectiveness of the foreign intervention is open to debate and depends on the nature of the case and intervention.