

# *When Is Invading Another Country Ever Be Justified?*

The number of human conflicts around the world seems to dominate the news these days. Armies are used to suppress public dissent within their own country or to invade another country in the name of peace and national security. These conflicts extract a terrible price from the people caught in middle – starvation, disease, rape, pillaging and death.

Public outcry over the atrocities committed and the sufferings of the people in countries such as the Sudan, Myanmar and Rwanda speaks to the seriousness of the problems. Some quarters of public have suggested that the international community or a few select countries should stop these conflicts and end the human suffering. They believe that under certain circumstances, it should be permissible for a country or a group of countries from the international community to *force* a country embroiled in an internal conflict, to accept foreign assistance to stop the conflict in the name of human rights or humanitarian relief efforts. This argument is just an extension of the doctrine that leaders of powerful countries have been using throughout human history to justify their invasion of another country in the name of peace and national security.

This raises an interesting question – can crossing the borders of a sovereign nation without permission (i.e., invading another country) ever be justified in the name of national security, human rights violations or for humanitarian relief efforts?

If a *sovereign* nation is defined as an independent country having dominion over all its lands and people, and every country has the right to manage its internal affairs as it sees fit, then what is our rationale for believing that “our” leaders are somehow a better judge of how that foreign country should be governed than its own leaders? What makes us think that our beliefs

and value system are better than theirs? Why do we think that we are right and they are wrong? Is it our *divine right* and *manifest destiny* to tell the rest of the world what is right and wrong, and what to do about it? Or is it because *might is right*?

If we collectively agree, as a nation, that it is permissible for the United States, either by itself or with its allies, to invade another country without permission from its leaders (e.g., the invasion of Iraq) for reasons of national security, human rights violations, or humanitarian relief efforts, then we must be prepared to accept all the intended and unintended consequences of our choices and actions. We may come to rue the day that we created such a precedent.

Simply put, what would be our thoughts and feelings if some day in the not so distant future a group of countries were to get together to invade our country because they perceived the United States to be a threat to their national security, or they believed that we were violating the human rights of our own citizens and were hampering their humanitarian relief efforts after a major natural catastrophe had hit the United States? The choices and consequences cut both ways, not just the way we want them to.

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