

Effect of Military operations on Political security

Military interventions by democracies are associated with improvements of human rights. However, if the conflict escalates, this has an offsetting effect on human rights observation.

Geographical region: Global

Effect: Large effect ($g = 0.34$)

Confidence in study findings: Low confidence (1 study with 1 effect sizes)

Short summary

Military operations are expected to improve political security, particularly political rights and civil liberties. Interventions by democratic states are associated with a positive effect on these rights, though this effect may be offset if the conflict worsens.

Long summary

The intervention

Any efforts that involve the use of a state's armed forces to prevent, de-escalate or resolve a violent conflict or atrocity. This could be operations where armed forces are engaged in combat and those that do not have primary objectives to engage in combat (e.g.. the presence of armed forces in specific locations, or training). This also includes cyberwarfare operations when delivered by a state's armed forces.

How is the intervention expected to work?

Third-party military interventions may influence political security by improving political rights and civil liberties which are more likely to be observed if there is a foreign presence. These interventions may lead to restrictions on freedoms due to heightened security measures or governance shifts. However, when conducted by democratic states, they may contribute to the protection or enhancement of political rights.

Evidence base

The cell contains 1 quantitative study: Postmus and Rrustemi (2023) evaluates the impacts of third-party military interventions on human rights and political rights, using a large-N quantitative approach with data from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) and the CIRI Human Rights Data Project.

Evidence findings

Military interventions have a large positive effect on political rights and civil liberties. The intervention carried out by democratic states are generally associated with a positive effect on political rights. This effect may be offset by an escalation in the conflict.

Included studies

Postmus and Rustemi (2023) evaluate the impacts of third-party military interventions since the adoption of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine in 2005, which justifies interventions to prevent violations of humanitarian and international human rights laws. The study examines how these interventions influence human rights practices in target states over a five-year period, focusing on "core rights" (e.g., right to life, freedom from torture) and "political rights and civil liberties" (e.g., freedom to participate in politics, religion, and unions).

Using a large-N quantitative approach with 852 cases from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) and the CIRI Human Rights Data Project, the researchers analyzed the relationship between interventions (independent variable) and human rights outcomes (dependent variables) via a Complex General Linear Model (CSGLM). Control variables included democracy status, GDP per capita, ethnic fragmentation, and conflict intensity. Results indicate that military interventions improve core human rights in conflict states over five years, while conflict intensity negatively affects these rights if the conflict escalates to war. Conversely, interventions negatively impact political rights and civil liberties, with significant adverse effects from GDP per capita and conflict intensity. However, interventions by democracies positively affect both core and political rights. Across all models, conflict intensity remains a key factor reducing respect for core human rights.

The study is rated low confidence.

Confidence assessment

Overall, the cell is rated low confidence.

Other outcomes in the study/cell:

- Violence and atrocity prevention/Nature and scale of violence or atrocities