

Key term

Is state sovereignty still significant in the 21st century global politics?

The nature of sovereignty has significantly changed over the course of the last few decades. Sovereignty refers to the ability of a state to exercise supreme control over what happens inside its borders. It is often thought as internal where the state is able to exercise a legitimate control over its population and manage its affairs independently and external where the state is recognized as sovereign by other states and its borders are respected. However, various factors have undermined the concept of sovereignty and have changed the way how sovereignty is viewed in the 21st century global politics. Therefore, this essay is going to argue that state sovereignty is less significant in the 21st century global politics. This thesis will be supported by the rising importance of international conventions, the rise of violent extremist groups and the emergence of Intergovernmental organizations (IGOs).

International conventions, such as the responsibility to protect have made state sovereignty less significant in the 21st century global politics. The responses to human rights abuses in the 21st century global politics have fundamentally changed the way how sovereignty is viewed. The United Nations Security Council has taken responsibility to authorize interventions in states where gruesome abuses of human rights take place. Therefore, state sovereignty is conditioned upon responsible behavior of the state. This argument is supported by liberalism, which argues that sovereignty can be challenged when states fail to exercise their sovereignty responsibly and in accordance with international law and human rights regulations. One example where such convention was invoked in order to protect civilians from mass atrocities is Libya. As a result of the Arab Spring in 2011 many anti-governmental protests took place in Libya in order to overthrow Muammar Gaddafi who has ruled the country for 41 years. As a result, Gaddafi authorized his forces to eliminate the rebels. Frightened by the possibility of yet another genocide, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 1973 which authorized states to take all necessary measures in order to protect civilians under the responsibility to protect framework. Therefore, international conventions, such as the one invoked in Libya do not regard state sovereignty as absolute and make sovereignty less significant in the 21st century global politics. On the other hand, the international community has become more reluctant to intervene in the internal matters of other states under the framework of international conventions. States can still abuse human rights or break international law with impunity and keep their sovereignty, both internal and external intact. This is because decisions regarding humanitarian interventions are taken very carefully and are dependent on international consensus. One example where such convention was not invoked despite the violations of human rights is Syria. The United Nations has confirmed the use of chemical weapons in the eastern part of Damascus in 2013. Several states within the United Nations, such as the USA, UK and France accused Bashar al-Assad's government for using chemical weapons against its own citizens. However, Russia as a member of the United Nations Security Council strongly disagreed with the notions presented by the three western powers, accusing them of rash conclusions. As a result, there was no consensus among the different states within the United Nations Security Council and no resolution was adopted. The example of Syria highlights the reluctance and the difficulty of achieving agreement between major powers for international intervention, and underlines the significance of state sovereignty in 21st century global politics. However, due to the difficulty of achieving international consensus for intervention, some states decide to intervene unilaterally under the framework of responsibility to protect in order to uphold human rights, thus making state sovereignty less significant in the 21st century global politics.

Thesis statement

Definition of key terms

Naming the arguments

Explanation of the argument

Theoretical perspective

Topic sentences

Example for the argument

Explanation of the counterargument

Link to topic sentences

Example for the counterargument

Evaluation of the counterargument

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In conclusion, this essay has argued that state sovereignty is less significant in the 21st century global politics. This was shown by the use of international conventions, such as the responsibility to protect which do not regard sovereignty as absolute; the rise of terrorist groups which often challenge state sovereignty by redefining state borders; and the emergence of intergovernmental organizations which can make laws and enforce them on member states often eroding their internal sovereignty.

Thesis statement

Naming the arguments