

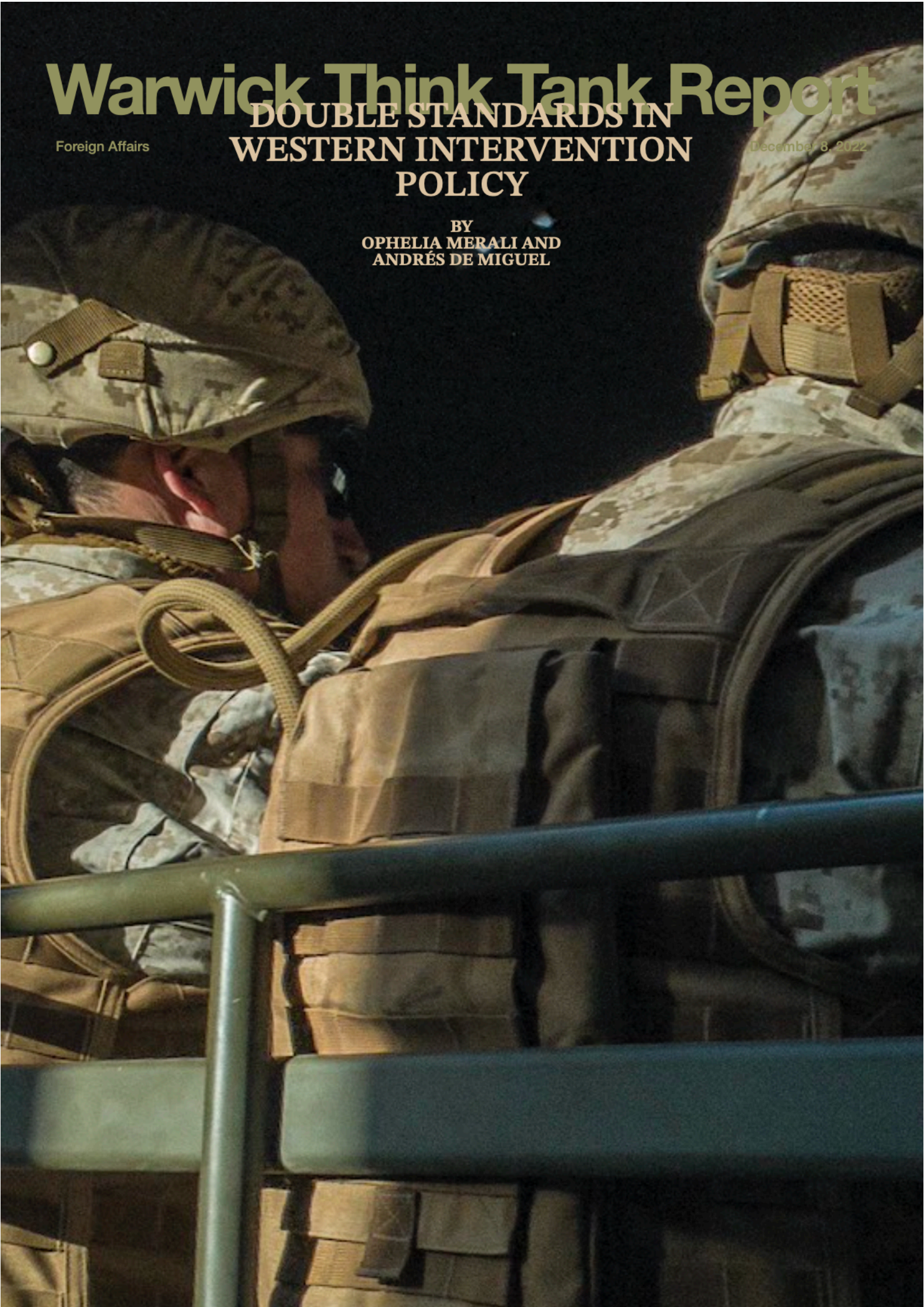
# Warwick Think Tank Report

Foreign Affairs

## DOUBLE STANDARDS IN WESTERN INTERVENTION POLICY

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BY  
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# BRIEFING NOTE

## DOUBLE STANDARDS IN WESTERN INTERVENTION POLICY

This briefing note aims to illuminate the double standards perpetuated by dominant states in international affairs and foreign policy. The current patterns of foreign policy demonstrate certain power imbalances that are influenced by economic power, historical precedent, and the role of the media in determining acceptable and unacceptable instances of intervention.

Overview:

- Economic factors play an enormous role in whether or not a state chooses to intervene, whether this intervention is perceived as righteous or dangerous, and the ability to pick and choose in which situations to intervene.
- The precedent set by the Cold War of Western democracy and neoliberalism succeeding over communism in the battle for a guiding global order has become a modern justification for certain interventions and behaviours, a mechanism of demonisation for others, and a method for removing accountability.

Media attention, or lack thereof, influences national politics and approaches to foreign policy, and the decisions made by policymakers and international bodies reflect this increasingly globalised approach to foreign intervention.

# The economics of double standards

DOUBLE STANDARDS IN  
WESTERN INTERVENTION  
POLICY



# The Economics of Double Standards:

**There is a guise of righteousness underpinning intervention carried out by Western powers, disguising other motivations.**

- NATO, including the UK, decided to intervene in Libya, assassinating Colonel Gaddafi, a strong supporter of pan-Africanism and the nationalisation of natural resources.<sup>12</sup>
- Belgium, despite being the de facto capital of the EU, remains strongly in control of its colonies' natural resources in the Congo through the Societe Generale de Belgique, making for a hypocritical development considering the EU's tenet of freedom and autonomy.<sup>3</sup>
- Despite this idea of Western powers supporting regimes ensuring peace and democracy, the USA and UK provide economic aid for the Saudi Arabian government, who are involved in human rights violations in Yemen.<sup>4</sup>
- Syria has received soft aid from the UN but the intervention in Iraq merited a full-scale invasion for 'weapons of mass destruction' that didn't exist under Saddam Hussein.<sup>56,78</sup>

**Double standards in the use of economic influence as a means of intervention.**

- China is denounced for their Belt and Road Initiative while France can maintain its FranceAfrique sphere of influence with its former colonies.<sup>9,10</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> David Brunnstrom and Roger Atwood - Reuters - 21st October 2011, <https://www.reuters.com/article/nato-libya-gaddafi-idAFL5E7LL2L820111021>

<sup>2</sup> Carole Collins - MERIP Reports - Imperialism and Revolution in Libya <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3011335>

<sup>3</sup> Williams, Susan (2016) - Spies in the Congo. New York: Public Affairs ISBN:9781610396547

<sup>4</sup> Owen Jones - 22nd January 2022 - The Guardian - <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/jan/20/uk-government-yemen-war-saudi-arabia-westminster>

<sup>5</sup> Said Benarbia - OpinioJuris - 28th April 2021 <http://opiniojuris.org/2021/04/28/syria-and-the-un-security-council-a-decade-of-abysmal-failures/>

<sup>6</sup> UN News - Syria - <https://news.un.org/en/focus/syria>

<sup>7</sup> The White House Archives - 22nd March 2003 - <https://georgewebush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2003/03/20030322.html>

<sup>8</sup> Meetings Coverage and Press Releases - United Nations - 5th June 2003 - <https://press.un.org/en/2003/sc7777.doc.htm>

<sup>9</sup> Dr Yu Jie & John Wallace - Chatham House - 13th September 2021 <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2021/09/what-chinas-belt-and-road-initiative-bri>

<sup>10</sup> Chafer, Tony - February 2005 - The University of Portsmouth - <https://researchportal.port.ac.uk/en/publications/chirac-and-la-francafrigue-no-longer-a-family-affair>

- The USA also criticises China's use of economic power in its attempt to strong-arm Taiwan in their political relations while the US simultaneously places economic tariffs on Venezuelan oil and bans the country's access to financial markets.<sup>11,12</sup>
- The USA accuses Russia of interfering with its elections when the US has used its economic power to fund political parties and influence foreign elections since the 1940s, the most topical being the 1996 Russian Election in support of Boris Yeltsin.<sup>13</sup>

**Economic influence generates spheres of power imbalances which determine who is or isn't allowed to carry out intervention.**

- South American regimes have been constantly destabilised by the USA but are unable to influence the UN or NATO to do anything because they simply do not hold enough power, such as Chile, El Salvador, and Guatemala.<sup>14</sup>
- Iraq is also unable to call out the USA for its double standards when denouncing their invasion of Kuwait in 1990 because it doesn't have enough economic power.<sup>15,16,17</sup> Iraq poses no tangible threat to the USA and so cannot impact it in any meaningful way due to the relative sizes of their economies.

NATO and the UN have publicly declared that the actions of the USA 'breaches international law' but due to the USA's economic power, nothing is done and double standards are perpetuated, for fear of losing trade links with the USA

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<sup>11</sup> Venezuela-Related Sanctions - US Department of State (2017) - <https://www.state.gov/venezuela-related-sanctions/>

<sup>12</sup> Jason Li - The Diplomat - 12th April 2019 - <https://thediplomat.com/2019/04/chinas-surreptitious-economic-influence-on-taiwans-elections/>

<sup>13</sup> David Shimer - June 26 2020 - The Washington Post - <https://www.washingtonpost.com/history/2020/06/26/russian-election-interference-meddling/>

<sup>14</sup> Mary M. Throver - The Journal of Third World Studies - October 1986 - Background to Revolution, U.S. Intervention in Central America <https://www.jstor.org/stable/45197225>

<sup>15</sup> Andres T. Parasiliti - International Political Science Review - January 2003 - The Causes and Timings of Iraq's Wars <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1601336>

<sup>16</sup> Colin Warbrick - The International and Comparative Law Quarterly - April 1991 - The Invasion of Kuwait by Iraq <https://www.jstor.org/stable/759738>

<sup>17</sup> David C. Gompert, Hans Binnendijk, and Bonny Lin - Blinders Blunders and Wars: What America and China can Learn - 26th November 2014 - [https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7249/j.ctt1287m9t.21?searchText=US+approach+to+Iraq%27s+invasion+of+Kuwait&searchUri=%2Faction%2FdoBasicSearch%3FQuery%3DUS%2Bapproach%2Bto%2BIraq%2527s%2Binvasion%2Bof%2BKUWAIT&ab\\_segments=0%2Fbasic\\_search\\_gsv2%2Fcontrol&refreqid=fastly-default%3A6b6f5d333f41b40e0f22b0267480e28c#metadata\\_info\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7249/j.ctt1287m9t.21?searchText=US+approach+to+Iraq%27s+invasion+of+Kuwait&searchUri=%2Faction%2FdoBasicSearch%3FQuery%3DUS%2Bapproach%2Bto%2BIraq%2527s%2Binvasion%2Bof%2BKUWAIT&ab_segments=0%2Fbasic_search_gsv2%2Fcontrol&refreqid=fastly-default%3A6b6f5d333f41b40e0f22b0267480e28c#metadata_info_tab_contents)

and possible economic retaliation which individual countries' economies cannot withstand.<sup>18,19</sup>



<sup>18</sup> United Nations General Assembly Resolutions - 2nd November 1983 - [https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/38/7](https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/38/7)

<sup>19</sup> BBC News - 24th October 2006 - 'France Accused on Rwandan Killings' <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/6079428.stm>



# The Legitimisation of Double Standards

**The 'defeat' of communism legitimised Western-style democracy as a liberating force, and others as threats to 'neoliberal' freedoms except in the case of friendly authoritarian regimes.**

- Foreign policy approaches towards China are increasingly taken with a zero-sum perspective as China emerges as a leading world power, such as the implementation of the Taiwan Relations Act.<sup>20</sup>
- China's own foreign policy with regards to Taiwan is viewed as totalitarian and threatening, and the global perception of Western neoliberalism as the only legitimate ideology paints Chinese-Taiwanese relations as purely coercive instead of nuanced.<sup>21,22</sup>
- The Arab Spring was met with extreme concern and disapproval by the US, due to the fall of traditional authoritarian Arab allies and the rise of political Islam, affecting US control over the Middle East.<sup>23</sup>
- In contrast, Russia's aggressive measures and direct opposition to NATO, the UN and Western interests in the Russian-Ukrainian conflict have been responded to with zero-tolerance foreign policy.<sup>24,25</sup>

**(Non)intervention based on precedent removes accountability for consequences.**

- French humanitarian intervention in Rwanda following decades of support for the Hutu regime in 1994 failed to stop the genocides and human rights violations and was instead used as an opportunity to further French interests.<sup>26</sup>
- Illegal attacks by Israel, a close US ally, on Iranian nuclear facilities which threaten to destabilise US-Iranian diplomatic relations are allowed to occur without punishment as a result of years of anti-Iranian US foreign policy.<sup>27,28</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> The White House, 2021, [President Biden Delivers Remarks at the Virtual Munich Security Conference](#)

<sup>21</sup> Richard Haass, 2022, [The Dangerous Decade: A Foreign Policy for a World in Crisis](#)

<sup>22</sup> The White House, 2021, [President Biden Delivers Remarks at the Virtual Munich Security Conference](#)

<sup>23</sup> Mohamed Metawe, 2013, [How and Why the West Reacted to the Arab Spring: An Arab Perspective](#)

<sup>24</sup> Richard Haass, 2022, [The Dangerous Decade: A Foreign Policy for a World in Crisis](#)

<sup>25</sup> Michael Kofman, 2018, [Great Power Competition in 21st Century](#)

<sup>26</sup> BBC News, 2006, [France Accused on Rwanda Killings](#)

<sup>27</sup> Assal Rad, 2021, [The Unmistakable Double Standard of US Foreign Policy](#)

<sup>28</sup> Jeffrey Goldberg, 2012, [Obama to Iran and Israel: 'As President of the United States, I Don't Bluff'](#)

- The capture and killing of Muammar Gaddafi set a precedent for Western intervention by any means necessary, so long as it furthers the goals of the West, but the humanitarian aid mission launched by NATO and the UN failed to protect those truly threatened by the regime.<sup>29,30</sup>
- The US speaks to a long-standing history of destabilising Latin American regimes to further its own causes, such as the intervention in Chile in the 1970s, and these interventions have been justified by the US through the 1947 'Rio Treaty'.<sup>31</sup>

### **The threat of nuclear warfare in a West-dominated global order legitimises Western intervention on Western terms.**

- The Iraq intervention, despite a lack of proof of possession of weapons (and the eventual discovery that there were none to begin with) was justified on the basis that certain states and types of regime could not be allowed to possess nuclear weapons under any circumstances.<sup>32,33</sup>
- Ukrainian attempts to codify Western promises of support and a longer-term security relationship in a US-Israel style defence agreement have been met with reluctance.<sup>34</sup>
- Allyship with Israel is prioritised despite controversy caused by conflict with Palestine and Iran in part due to its ambiguous possession of nuclear weapons.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> TeleSUR, 2018, [How the West Murdered Gaddafi Twice](#)

<sup>30</sup> Matthew Green, 2019, [To What Extent Was the NATO Intervention in Libya a Humanitarian Intervention?](#)

<sup>31</sup> James L. Dietz, 1984, [Destabilization and Intervention in Latin America and the Caribbean](#)

<sup>32</sup> Esther Pan, 2005, [IRAQ: Justifying the War](#)

<sup>33</sup> Marcus N. Heinrich, 2015, [One War, Many Reasons: The US Invasion of Iraq](#)

<sup>34</sup> Amy Mackinnon, 2022, [Ukraine Wants to be NATO's Friend - With Benefits](#)

<sup>35</sup> Jeffrey Goldberg, 2012, [Obama to Iran and Israel: 'As President of the United States, I Don't Bluff'](#)

# The role of the media in Double Standards:

## Media attention and a lack of it often dictate instances of intervention.

- Problems in Colombia and the Central African Republic are ignored by the media while issues like Hong Kong are promoted, with incomparable levels of human suffering.<sup>36</sup>
- This media attention therefore covers instances where intervention is not beneficial for Western Powers as with the 3.2 million person protest in Chile in 2019.<sup>37</sup>
- Lack of media attention is also perpetrated by the task of the media in general. If the media's objective is to get clicks and views, they are liable to only report news that has dramatism, whilst ignoring more impactful crises that perhaps are less 'interesting' to viewers, such as famine in Malawi.<sup>38</sup>

## Biased or misleading media portrayals lend differing levels of justification and humanisation to instances of intervention

- The differences in the portrayal of Syrian refugees vs. Ukrainian refugees make double standards in international intervention justified in the public eye since Ukrainian refugees are deemed 'more human'.<sup>39,40</sup>
- Biased and misleading representation of the Hong Kong protests and the extradition laws that sparked them also gave the USA an excuse to frame China as the villain and fund the Hong Kong protests themselves, despite being weary of Chinese influence at home.<sup>41</sup>
- The simplification of complex and nuanced International Affairs allows Western powers to turn public opinion against a country and to turn a blind eye against

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<sup>36</sup> Laurie Lee - CARE - 30th September 2021 - [The Most Under-Reported Humanitarian Crises of 2021](#)

<sup>37</sup> EL PAIS - 25th September 2019 [Estallido social en Chile, de la rebelión a la revolución por una mejora social](#) - Reporteros

<sup>38</sup> Laurie Lee - CARE - 30th September 2021 - [The Most Under-Reported Humanitarian Crises of 2021](#)

<sup>39</sup> By Agencies - Daily Sabbah - 2nd March 2022 - [Double standard: Arab refugees watch as Europe embraces Ukrainians](#) | Daily Sabah

<sup>40</sup> Zeena Saifi - CNN - 16th March 2022 - <https://edition.cnn.com/2022/03/16/middleeast/mideast-summary-03-16-2022-intl/index.html>

<sup>41</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC - April 2019 - [Fact Sheet on the National Endowment for Democracy](#)



actions the western country does which are comparable. Such is the case with China and Taiwan.<sup>42</sup>

- Biased portrayals of countries' roles on the world stage also allows Western powers to frame comparable breaches of international law and security as completely different, as is observable in the digital security debate between Huawei, Facebook and Cambridge Analytica.<sup>43,44</sup>

**The media industry is dominated by systemic corruption and inequality, perpetuating the double standards seen in the content produced.**

- The main way to enter the media industry is through unpaid internships, a luxury only the wealthy can afford, thereby silencing minority and working class voices.<sup>45</sup>
- The UK government and the media industry are inseparably linked; visible through how Tony Blair was the godfather of Rupert Murdoch's daughter.<sup>46</sup>
- The revolving door between the media and government is further made evident as Boris Johnson was the political correspondent for 'The Telegraph' and further edited 'The Spectator'.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Yinan He - Political Science Quarterly - November 2014 - [https://www.jstor.org/stable/43828438?searchText=History%20of%20China%20and%20Taiwan%20Relations&searchUri=%2Faction%2FdoBasicSearch%3FQuery%3DHistory%2Bof%2BChina%2Band%2BTaiwan%2BRelations&ab\\_segments=0%2Fbasic\\_search\\_gsv2%2Fcontrol&refreqid=fastly-default%3A52bd8c7c90e0e332538d499745e7a215](https://www.jstor.org/stable/43828438?searchText=History%20of%20China%20and%20Taiwan%20Relations&searchUri=%2Faction%2FdoBasicSearch%3FQuery%3DHistory%2Bof%2BChina%2Band%2BTaiwan%2BRelations&ab_segments=0%2Fbasic_search_gsv2%2Fcontrol&refreqid=fastly-default%3A52bd8c7c90e0e332538d499745e7a215)

<sup>43</sup> Project Syndicate - 19th December 2019 - [Is Huawei really more dangerous than Facebook? | Blavatnik School of Government](#)

<sup>44</sup> Nicholas Confessore - The New York Times - 4th April 2018 - [Cambridge Analytica and Facebook: The Scandal and the Fallout So Far - The New York Times](#)

<sup>45</sup> Owen Jones - The Guardian - 15th December 2014 - [Unpaid internships rig the system. Curb them, now | Owen Jones | The Guardian](#)

<sup>46</sup> BBC - 28th February 2012 - [Tony Blair 'godfather to Rupert Murdoch's daughter' - BBC News](#)

<sup>47</sup> Archie Bland - The Guardian - 23rd February 2021 - [Boris Johnson says he feels guilty about his journalism](#)

# NEWS

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# INSIGHT

## OVERVIEW

As one begins to research the dynamics of global politics and the history of relations on an international level, one unequivocal truth emerges; not everyone plays by the same rules. The themes presented in this insight will help to explain why and how these double standards play out on the world stage. From the protection economic power provides (from being held accountable for committing the same violations of international law that other countries are punished for) to the underlying economic interests of western powers' history of intervention (despite their promotion of altruism).

Furthermore, this insight will delve into how the media and overarching narratives in international thinking have played a role in the perpetuation of double standards on the international stage. Misinformation, biased reporting, the simplification of nuanced and complex issues as well as the intrinsic connection between media outlets and the ruling establishment help make the industry a buffer against criticisms of western intervention. More broadly, the leading narrative after the collapse of the U.S.S.R has been instrumental in portraying some global players as the 'good guys' and others the 'bad guys', allowing international law to be more flexible in favour of those powers considered to be in defence of neoliberal ideas.



## The Economics of Double Standards:

Underpinning the globalised current of intervention policy is the most influential player in the game: money. Economic power acts as a buffer to any attempts at holding countries accountable for their actions, causing some states to be punished while others remain untouched for doing the same or worse. Further, economic interests very often are the underlying truth to Western countries' aims for foreign intervention, despite their guise of benevolence and righteousness. These factors create a cycle preserving global hegemony in the hands of western powers, since their interventions on foreign soil very rarely fail to reap economic benefit. The West is allowed to carry out intervention while others are punished, and perpetually helps itself to the fruit of the global south without consequence.

As self-purported neoliberal harbingers of moral politics, the West lays claim to the duty to undertake any means necessary to fight threats to democracy, particularly since 9/11. It was precisely such language surrounding the capture and killing of Muammar Gaddafi, who sought to bring about an independent hard African currency which would have provided Francophone Africa with an alternative to the French franc.<sup>48</sup> On paper, the aim of military intervention was to respond to the civil war of 2011, implement a ceasefire and end the attacks on civilians which might constitute "crimes against humanity".<sup>49</sup> In reality, France, the US and other Western economic powers likely felt threatened by Gaddafi's innovation and the potential for African financial independence, and they acted violently under the pretence of humanitarianism. Not only did Western intervention worsen situations in Libya, it also brought Africa back under the thumb of Western petro-colonialism. Similar patterns of maintaining colonial control over resources can be seen in the example of Belgium, who, as the de facto capital of the EU, flagrantly subverts the values of democracy and freedom universal to the EU through its assertion of economic power over the Congo.

Such hypocrisy is mirrored in Western intervention in the Middle East. The tenets of democracy upon which the West has built its throne of morality are absent in US support of Saudi Arabia, one of the world's worst states on record for human rights violations and restriction of freedoms, in their intervention in Yemen. Such violence and flouting of the democratic mission are easy to overlook when Saudi Arabia is the largest importer of US arms from the period of 2015-2019.<sup>50</sup>

Furthermore, the double standards persist when considering which countries *possessing* economic influence are permitted to use it in intervention. For instance, China's Belt and Road Initiative has been met with suspicion from the US and its major allies, labelling it 'debt trap diplomacy' and a threat to Western interests.<sup>51</sup> Largely, the

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<sup>48</sup> Ellen Brown, IAI News, 19/02/2021, [Why they killed Gaddafi](#)

<sup>49</sup> Security Council, United Nations, 17/03/2011, [Security Council Approves 'No-Fly Zone' over Libya, Authorizing 'All Necessary Measures' to Protect Civilians, by Vote of 10 in Favour with 5 Abstentions](#)

<sup>50</sup> Joseph Stepansky, Aljazeera, 07/02/2021, [US ending aid to Saudi-led forces in Yemen, but questions persist](#)

<sup>51</sup> Explainer, Chatham House, 13/09/2021, [What is China's Belt and Road Initiative \(BRI\)?](#)

West feels threatened by China's pledge to expand the BRI into Europe through Greece and Italy, though the concept of China expanding its sphere of influence in Africa also poses an economic threat to the West. In comparison, France's economic domination over FranceAfrique is not only tolerated, but accepted and supported by other Western states.

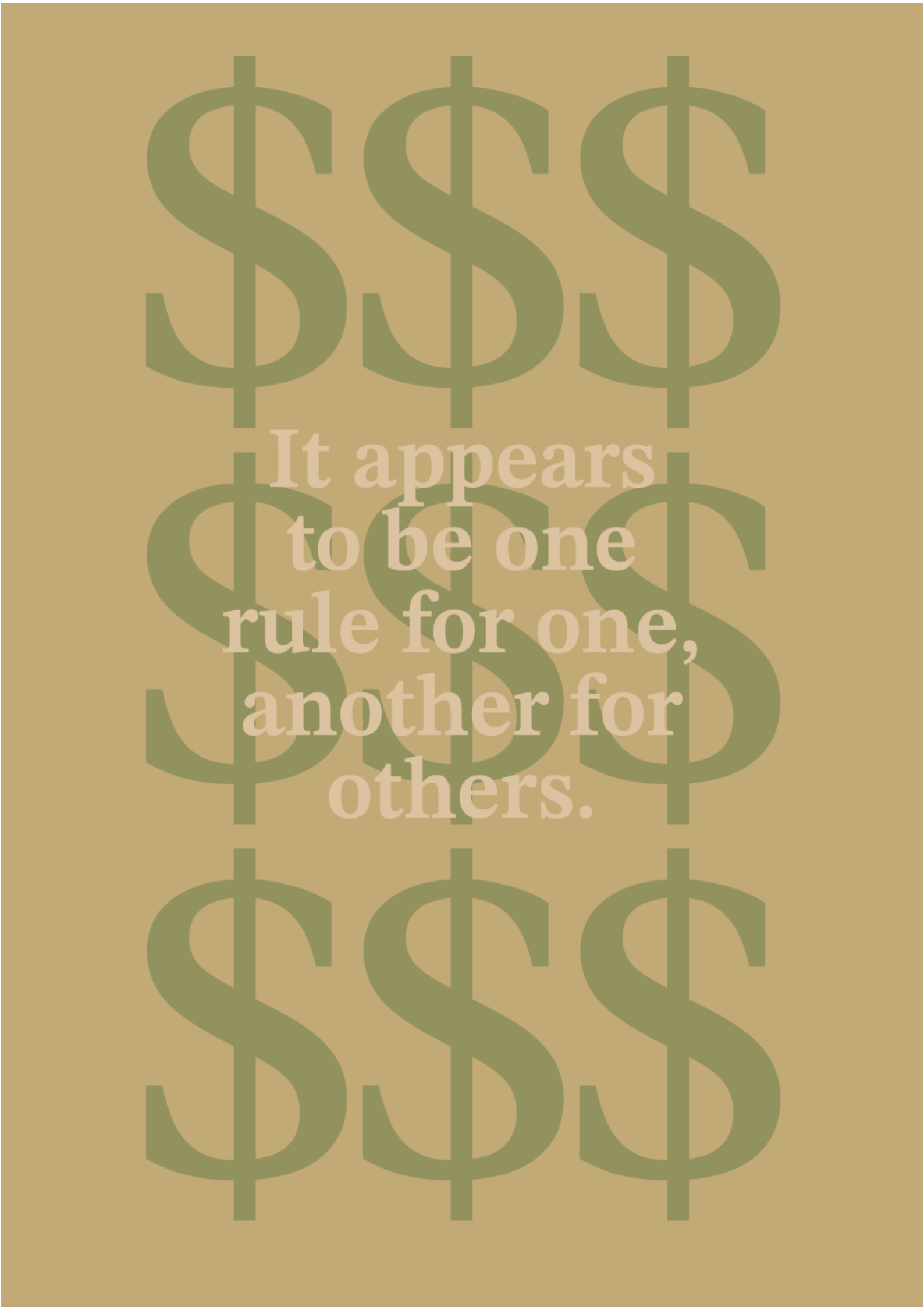
Similarly, US political intervention between Chinese-Taiwanese relations symbolises the Western opposition to China's attempts to manipulate Taiwan's politics through economic means. China and Taiwan have a long and convoluted territorial history, and Taiwan, small next to China, is losing the economic battle for power. Through tactics such as poaching young Taiwanese talent and restricting tourism to Taiwan through various economic measures, China's intervention is perceived as nothing short of malicious bullying in the eyes of the West.<sup>52</sup> It is ironic that countries such as the US's own tactics to strong-arm countries to their political gain through economic influence, such as placing tariffs on Venezuelan oil sales, are comparatively predatory. Along the same vein, Russia has been criticised by the West for using its economic power to meddle in US elections, though the US speaks to very similar acts of interference in elections through political party funding and other means since the 1940s, not only in Latin America, but also in the election of Boris Yeltsin.<sup>53</sup>

It appears to be one rule for one, another for others. Southern American countries who might seek to further their own political interests in the forum of the UN and NATO lack the financial might to do so, due to a long-standing history of economic destabilisation and structural adjustment policies. Countries such as Iraq lack the fiscal manpower to wield any real influence next to economic hegemony, and as such are unable to call out the dangerous double standards of West, including the invasion of Kuwait in 1990. Most significantly, the UN and NATO, which in theory are in place to act as a system of checks and balances on the international stage, refuse or are unable to impose any real consequences on the US when it breaches international law. It appears that money speaks loudest; as long as the US remains the global economic hegemon with influence over trade, foreign economics, and the stability of banks and governments, it is unlikely that they, or the West, will be held accountable for its double standards.

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<sup>52</sup> Jason Lee, The Diplomat, 12/04/2019, [China's Surreptitious Economic Influence on Taiwan's Elections](#)

<sup>53</sup> David Shimer, The Washington Post, 26/06/2020, [Election meddling in Russia: When Boris Yeltsin asked Bill Clinton for help](#)



It appears  
to be one  
rule for one,  
another for  
others.



## The Legitimisation of Double Standards:

Francis Fukuyama might not have been totally accurate in labelling the end of the Cold War 'the end of history', but his work indicates a measurable trend in international foreign policy: the Cold War's end triggered the process of legitimising Western style neoliberalism and democracy as the singular political force capable of engaging in liberatory intervention.<sup>54</sup> The defeat of communism served as a legitimising swing in the balance of power toward the Western Bloc. Nowadays, it is almost impossible to conceive of intervention policy without acknowledging the West as a system of checks and balances against the rest of the world.

Not only the Cold War, but also events such as 9/11 have permanently shaped Western thinking with regards to intervention. These events have given Western intervention policy an apparent legitimacy and precedent for actions, meaning that the West can escape accountability for its intervention decisions. Additionally, the looming threat of nuclear weapons and nuclear projects in possession of states residing outside the realm of neoliberal doctrines justifies Western intervention in order to prevent nuclear warfare, even when such intervention is unfounded or supports totalitarian and 'friendly' authoritarian regimes.

It was in US' interests to implement an economic foothold in Taiwan through the 2007 Taiwan Relations Act in order to temper China's power and prevent a precedent for China imposing force to subjugate other lands.<sup>55</sup> However, despite maintaining good diplomatic relations with Taiwan and providing aid such as military assistance, the US has not recognised Taiwan as a country since 1979.<sup>56</sup> In contrast, whilst it benefits the US to intervene in Chinese-Taiwanese relations through the lens of restricting the spread of communist rule, the US' close ties with Israel, which is increasingly becoming seen as a threat by the peoples of other Arab nations for its aggressiveness and human rights violations regarding Palestine, indicate its willingness to ally with forcefully coercive states when it furthers US' interests.<sup>57</sup>

Similarly, the Arab Spring triggered Western concern because of its impacts on US economic and political control over the Middle East, regarding its relationships with 'friendly' authoritarian regimes. Petro-colonialism, containment of rogue states and terrorist groups, and political friendship with Israel were significant aspects of the strategic interests maintained by the West in the Middle East under Arab despot rule.<sup>58</sup> The rise of early-stage democracy in the Middle East has been stifled, in part (as the situation in the Middle East is grossly complex), due to the fact that "there isn't a despot reigning in the Middle East in the last 50 years that Britain hasn't armed to the teeth."<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Francis Fukuyama, The National Interest, 1989, [The End of History?](#)

<sup>55</sup> Taiwan Relations Act, Congress.gov, 1979-1980, [Summary: H.R.2479 — 96th Congress \(1979-1980\)](#)

<sup>56</sup> n.a., World Population Review, 2022, [Countries that Recognize Taiwan 2022](#)

<sup>57</sup> Imad K. Harb, Arab Centre Washington DC, 03/08/2022, [A Developing Authoritarian-Israeli Nexus in the Middle East](#)

<sup>58</sup> n.a., The Economist, 2020, [Why democracy failed in the Middle East](#)

<sup>59</sup> Letters, The Guardian, 05/09/2011, [Western intervention in the Arab spring](#)

In flagrant contrast, Russia's aggression toward and invasion of Ukraine, though not a NATO member, triggered interventionist measures from Western states. Whilst this report recognises that the conflict is well deserving of support against veritable humanitarian crises, why isn't this also true of Palestine? Why does this conflict, between a historical enemy of the West and an ethnically white nation, deserve sanctions, humanitarian and military aid and legislative response from major international governing bodies, but the Yemeni Civil War received only arms sales through Saudi Arabia?<sup>60,61</sup>

Precedent plays an enormous role in Western intervention or lack thereof, and its legitimising function enables Western states to escape accountability for the fallout. Not only can France's extraordinary humanitarian failure in Rwanda in 1994 be traced to decades of supporting the Hutu regime, but France escaped accountability for worsening the crisis with minimal real consequences. Similarly, precedent set by years of anti-Iranian foreign policy meant that the US failed to react appropriately to illegal attacks by ally Israel on Iranian nuclear facilities, which threaten emerging US-Iranian relations. Indeed, the US has a very long history of destabilising regimes in Latin America, a precedent which enables hypocrisy such as supporting the UK in its war with Argentina over the Falklands, yet invoking the Rio Treaty in 2001 for the War on Terror, to go unchecked.<sup>62</sup>

Another dimension is the perception of nuclear threat. Over 90% of nuclear warheads are owned by the US and Russia.<sup>63</sup> For the West, there is a fine line between not provoking Russia into nuclear warfare, and allowing the threat to go unchecked. This Cold War-era relationship darkens the growing spread of nuclear programs, and massively impacted the decision to invade Iraq in 2003 - the tension of nuclear threat at its peak only ten years prior lending legitimacy to an essentially retaliatory attack, a power assertion following 9/11. The justification for the invasion, despite there being no evidence of WMD existing, was that under no circumstances could certain types of states be allowed to own such powerful weapons. Some argue that the West learned from its mistakes, and for this reason allyship with Israel is currently prioritised despite unsettlingly aggressive conflicts with Iran and Palestine, due to the ambiguity of its WMD possession. Yet this relationship is also coloured by hypocrisy. Despite Ukrainian interest in developing an agreement codifying Western promises of support and longer-term security, the West has been reluctant to commit long-term.<sup>64</sup> Simply put, Western interests win out in intervention policy, disallowing any alternatives.

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<sup>60</sup> Gabriel Gatehouse, BBC News, 11/09/2015, [Inside Yemen's Forgotten War](#)

<sup>61</sup> n.a., Aljazeera, 25/02/2022, [NATO to deploy thousands of commandos to nations near Ukraine](#)

<sup>62</sup> Encyclopaedia of Latin American History and Culture, Encyclopaedia.com, 15/11/2022, [Rio Treaty \(1947\)](#)

<sup>63</sup> n.a., Arms Control Association, 01/2022, [Nuclear Weapons: Who Has What at a Glance](#)

<sup>64</sup> Taras Fedirko & Volodymyr Artiukh, 18/10/2022, [No, the West Didn't Halt Ukraine's Peace Talks With Russia](#)

# legitimising

Precedent plays an enormous role in Western intervention or lack thereof, and its legitimising function enables Western states to escape accountability for *the fallout.*

## The Role of the Media in Perpetuating Double Standards:

An action taken by a world power in another country cannot pass by unquestioned without the help of the media outlets that are responsible for shaping our perceptions of the world around us. The people who work within the media, be that television news or print media, are a fundamental component to the perseverance of double standards in international intervention. Without the omitting and misrepresenting of information, western powers' capacity to interfere on the world stage would come with far more scrutiny and accountability than it does today.

A country cannot be held accountable for its inaction in certain parts of the world with similar problems to the places they intervened in if the general population is unaware that there even was a similar problem occurring somewhere else. It was very beneficial for the U.S.A to report extensively upon the Hong Kong protests in 2019, whilst simultaneously ignoring the 3.2 million strong protest in Chile<sup>65</sup> which was caused by a domino effect of events following the CIA financed coup of President Salvador Allende in 1973<sup>66</sup>. The silencing of appalling consequences deriving from Western intervention on foreign soil allows these countries to continue with their behaviour unchecked, as was the case with French intervention in Rwanda through Operation Turquoise in 1994, an endeavour that at best did nothing to rescue Tutsi refugees and at worst aided the Hutus in the massacre of their Tutsi neighbours.<sup>67</sup>

This under-representation of key issues exposing the double standards of Western powers is also driven by the dynamic of the media industry. As media has become digitised<sup>68</sup> and increasingly harder to monetise, investigative journalism is posing more of a challenge for media outlets to invest in, meaning it is becoming harder to expose the unlawful actions of western countries. This further results in a lack of exposure for human crises such as famine in Malawi or climate crisis in Zambia that may not provide enough *excitement* for readers to be interested.

A biased or misleading portrayal of a foreign issue can also be just as damaging (or even more so) to our capacity to hold global powers to account on their double standards. The description of Ukrainian refugees as 'expats' and 'civilised people' who 'look like us' compared to Syrian refugees who 'swarm' to European countries and are branded 'dirty' and 'uncivilised' is the perfect foundation for a government to welcome displaced Ukrainians with open arms but be more sceptical to do the same for Syrians

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<sup>65</sup> Cooperativa - 12/11/2019 - [Más de 3,7 millones de personas han asistido a manifestaciones durante la crisis, según Carabineros - Cooperativa.cl](#)

<sup>66</sup> Central Intelligence Agency - Archived 2007/ Original 18/09/2000 - <https://web.archive.org/web/20070612225422/https://www.cia.gov/library/reports/general-reports-1/chile/index.html>

<sup>67</sup> Ross Conroy - RealClear - 14/05/2018 - [Assessment of Opération Turquoise: The Paradoxical French-led Humanitarian Military Intervention During the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda | RealClearDefense](#)

<sup>68</sup> Bran Adgate - Forbes - 20/08/2021 - [Newspapers Have Been Struggling And Then Came The Pandemic](#)

and not be challenged when it does so.<sup>69</sup> The simplification of complex geopolitical issues in media outlets to fit an overarching narrative of 'good guys' and 'bad guys' again allows western countries to paint other powers as bastions of totalitarianism when in fact clearly defined theories on right and wrong are almost non-existent in global affairs.

Take again the example of China and Taiwan, an issue that the US has denounced China for on multiple occasions. The reality of the situation is very different from the image of great powerful authoritarian China beating on little Taiwan. The legitimacy of each country is a complex issue spanning back to Mao Zedong's victory over the Republic of China after WW2, after which the Kuomintang government moved its capital city to Taipei and Taiwan declared itself the true Republic of China as opposed to Mao's People's Republic of China.<sup>70</sup> Let it be noted that the U.S.A doesn't even recognise Taiwan as the legitimate Republic of China as of 1979. The omitting of this historical nuance on media outlets allows for the world to be understood by people in clear narratives, providing those framed as the 'good guys' liberties to act in the same manner as the entities they criticise. After all, despite being critical of Chinese influence at home, the USA had no issue with funding Hong Kong protest groups through the NED totalling \$11 million from 1994-2018<sup>71</sup> and didn't move against Facebook after the Cambridge Analytica scandal when proven records of data collection for political advertising were uncovered<sup>72</sup>, whilst companies were banned from using Huawei networking equipment in 2012 for fear of intelligence breaches.<sup>73</sup>

These double standards are perpetuated by the inherently unequal structure of the media, especially in the UK. When the leader of a country is the godfather of Rupert Murdoch's daughter, or the mayor of London has direct links to political newspaper articles, it is hard to imagine that the portrayal of the government's actions would be negative or exposing of their double standards. The main paths to getting into the media industry also perpetuates this corruption. Having to first pass an unpaid internship to become a journalist, a large proportion of the media industry in the UK is privately educated (44% of Journalists) meaning the views of this tiny elite (just 7% of the total population) are displayed above all others again only allowing for a small sliver of criticism to the ruling establishment.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> David Shariatmadari - The Guardian - 10/08/2015 - [Swarms, floods and marauders: the toxic metaphors of the migration debate](#) | David Shariatmadari | The Guardian

<sup>70</sup> Robert R. Simmons - Current History Vol.65 - [Taiwan and China: The Delicate Courtship](#)

<sup>71</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC - April 2019 - [Fact Sheet on the National Endowment for Democracy](#)

<sup>72</sup> Nicholas Confessore - The Wall Street Journal - 04/04/2018 - [Cambridge Analytica and Facebook: The Scandal and the Fallout So Far](#) - The New York Times

<sup>73</sup> David Kirton - Reuters - 27/10/2022 - [China's Huawei slows its long decline under U.S. sanctions as revenues improve](#) | Reuters

<sup>74</sup> Social Mobility Commission - GOV.UK - 24/07/2019 - [Elitism in Britain, 2019](#) - GOV.UK

**Breaking from Ukraine**

# **Look Like Us**

**The unequal divide in representation across the media**

# **Immigrants**

**Breaking for Syria**



## **Conclusion:**

- Economic dominance prevents countries from being held accountable for their actions and economic interests are the only real interest behind Western Intervention.
- Post-Cold War narratives of 'good guys' and 'bad guys' legitimise western countries' actions and abstain them from criticism.
- The media, through its support of the ruling establishment and its mis and underrepresentation of global issues, upholds these historical trends and prevents the citizens of western countries from challenging their governments' practices.
- These factors create a cycle of global hegemony centred in the west, with the structures of international politics serving to benefit western nations while suppressing others for employing the same initiatives.

# POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

## OVERVIEW

Our policy recommendations are structured to indicate the changes and suggested reforms, some of which are already being put in place, that can be made both on a state level and on the international stage. The recommendations centre upon the implementation of a new Council for the Scrutiny of Intervention Policy, which aims to provide a critical sounding board for intervention policy to bring accountability to state foreign policy, as well as legitimise intervention on the basis that it has been scrutinised both by the Council and by the people. There is also a key focus placed upon a new publicly owned international political news body, encouraging the impartial and informative reporting of events. Additionally, this report recommends a further strategy to remove bias from news outlets at the state level. The intention is to bring the true story to the fore, and prevent Western interests from dominating the discourse.

- Action 1 - A Council for the Scrutiny of Intervention Policy should be created and managed on the international stage, with the purpose of illuminating potential biases, economic interests, ulterior motives and double standards in proposed intervention policies.
- Action 2 - The formation of an independent, international Public News Outlet, which would aim to bring professional journalists to report on circumstances in their specialist or home country in order to present the objective truth to the public.
- Action 3 - Debias the news industry through the removal of unpaid internships and the banning of journalism by politicians in order to improve intersectionality and break down elitism within hierarchical media structures and enable a variety of discourses.

# ONE

A Council for  
the Scrutiny of  
Intervention  
Policy



***Action 1: A Council for the Scrutiny of Intervention Policy should be created and managed on the international stage, with the purpose of illuminating potential biases, economic interests, ulterior motives and double standards in proposed intervention policies.***

The Intervention Council would act as the highest form of legal accountability for countries wishing to conduct intervention on foreign soil. The role of the intervention council would be to adjudicate and evaluate countries' aims for intervention through its three-step system.

The first step for countries wishing to carry out their intervention would be to submit a report to the council detailing their goals, reasoning and method for intervention, which would be heavily scrutinised by the intervention council composed of experts from relevant fields with no allegiances to any country to keep the evaluation objective. Should the council approve the intervention plan, the country who carried out the intervention would also have to provide a debrief on the outcomes and process of the intervention both as it is being carried out and after it has been completed.

This scrutiny of plans for international intervention, as well as the briefs and debriefs provided by interested countries would all be published publicly to ensure absolute transparency and to begin the process of peeling back the political culture surrounding the benevolence of Western powers overseas.

As mentioned before, for this policy and council to carry out its objective it is imperative that it remains detached from the influence of individual countries and operates above this, otherwise it may simply strengthen the imbalances of power if it is western countries authorising their own plans for intervention. The council would be made up of experts from different fields of study such as economics, history and politics pertaining to the countries possibly affected by intervention.

A policy of such a scale will clearly come with its issues. Firstly, some may argue it is unlikely that countries would sign up to it in the first place, removing its potential for good. We believe this is not necessarily the case. Once the issue has been placed on the table it would be a lose/lose situation for western powers; either they join and their actions are heavily scrutinised, or they refuse to join, begging the question of whether they have something to hide or ulterior motives they don't wish to be uncovered. Furthermore, it is a possibility that countries will lie on their reports to the council about the intentions, methods and outcomes of their intervention and overall it would be very hard to ensure world powers are absolutely transparent about their plans for intervention. However, this isn't necessarily a loss for the council and its goals. The second that world powers are forced to provide justifications for their actions publicly, the political culture around the legitimisation of international intervention mentioned in theme two of the insight begins to get shifted. As more and more civilians see it as a possibility to question the actions of their governments overseas, this may act as the first step to a snowball of accountability in later years as the council finds its footing on the world stage. The prospect of countries ignoring the council is also a possibility as countries already ignore NATO, but again the public appeal of the council and the transparency of its operations would get political leaders to reconsider their bypassing

of the council if it means bad press at home and a fall in popularity in polls without hope of reelection.

The inclusion of local specialists on the council when intervention proposals affect less powerful countries helps grant these countries a voice where their lack of economic power prevents them from having one as discussed in the first theme.

**TWO**  
Form an  
independent, international  
Public News  
Outlet





***Action 2: The formation of an independent, international Public News Outlet, which would aim to bring professional journalists to report on circumstances in their specialist or home country in order to present the objective truth to the public.***

As discussed in theme 3, it becomes increasingly difficult for countries to be held accountable for their actions if information on crises happening in other parts of the world and the real background to reported crises are stifled.

In order to mitigate this, the newly-formed news outlet would be obliged to report stories from every continent on a regular, such as bi-weekly, basis to ensure civilians have a breadth of knowledge as to the political and economic circumstances in a wide range of countries across the world. Better armed with this information, people and organisations would be in an improved position to question why western governments intervene in some places and not others, cutting through the justifications they may give.

The public funding for the news outlet would come from pre-existing organisations such as NATO or the UN, perhaps even from the collaborative efforts of governments around the world which would benefit from having the truth of current affairs delivered to everyday newsreaders.

Journalists would be given specific target areas and issues to uncover and would provide these findings in a thorough style of investigative journalism. The public funding of the news outlet would overcome the issue of monetisation whereby companies are not working with tight profit margins reducing their capacity to invest in hard-hitting and profound pieces of journalism as discussed in theme three above.

The hiring practices of journalists for the international news outlet is also a point to be noted as, for the even dissipation of views and portrayals of different crises, there must be an even representation of voices to speak on said issues. Whenever reports for a particular part of the world are being formulated, people originating from that area of the world would have a hand in the writing and overview of the work produced to ensure it is sincere. The contributions of people from different backgrounds in the organisation would also put pressure on reporting more niche, yet nonetheless important, issues that are relevant to each journalist's background, again making sure that a wide breadth of countries and developments around the world are explored.

Of course, it would be naive to assume that the proposed news outlet could ever be objective in any sense of the word since everyone is subject to their own beliefs which will show through in their writing on political and economic issues. But this critique of the proposal misses its aim. Currently, bias is catered to benefit the global bastions of power centred in the west through the under and mis-representation of global issues painting certain countries as righteous in their actions while others are seen to be destabilising the balance of power for doing the same. This news outlet would even the distribution of bias present in the media to encompass other global players and at least provide a level battlefield where these views can be explored by viewers as well

as giving a voice to smaller countries which would otherwise not have a way to resist unjust intervention by more influential powers.

# THREE

De-bias the news industry through the removal of unpaid internships and the banning of journalism by politicians



***Action 3: Debias the news industry through the removal of unpaid internships and the banning of journalism by politicians in order to improve intersectionality and break down elitism within hierarchical media structures and enable a variety of discourses.***

Within the framework of double standards, it is pertinent to discuss ways to improve the media's portrayal of intervention politics through the removal of unpaid internships, and a restriction of politicians taking an active role in journalism.

It is critical that news suppliers are not only unbiased but factual and informative. With the proliferation of unpaid internships throughout Western media outlets, it is difficult to guarantee objectivity and diversity of opinions. Currently, young people with low to moderate income backgrounds are prevented from entering into news and media, particularly since the pandemic, due to the rising costs of living and inflation. The removal of unpaid internships would not only provide access for people of varying financial backgrounds, but it would also tackle the exploitative nature of the media industry by forcing them to remunerate their employees fairly.

Not only do unpaid internships prevent entry into desirable industry work, but they also reinforce the culture of economic influence discussed in theme 1. By filling the media industry with workers from well-off backgrounds, unpaid internships impact intersectionality within the media, and shape the political direction of a news outlet. Such media organisations tend to sympathise with governments, and it is possible that crucial stories become buried under unimportant headlines as news outlets prioritise certain discourses. With regards to this, removing unpaid internships is of utmost importance to the debiasing of the media in order to prevent certain stories, such as unfavourable intervention policy or critical viewpoints of foreign policy, from being quieted.

This is by no means a new idea, as the European Parliament itself does not offer unpaid internships and has called for a ban on such positions<sup>75</sup>, and the UK has submitted a second reading of the Unpaid Work Experience (Prohibition) Bill as of 2020.<sup>76</sup> There is certainly already the desire for such change, and the potential for it is evident in the European Parliament.

Within the realm of politicians themselves, this report would also recommend that politicians be barred from undertaking independent journalistic activities. Beyond providing a comment for a story, politicians should be one step removed from bipartisan, objective reporting. This is not outlandish by any means; the concept of a conflict of interest is evident, for example, in the prevention of civil servants from actively engaging in political activity.

With the aim of this recommendation to debias the media, it is important, then, to prevent biased or personally interested voices from cluttering objective journalism.

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<sup>75</sup> Alexandra Brzozowski, Euractiv, 12/10/2020, [European Parliament calls for ban on unpaid internships](#)

<sup>76</sup> N.a., FMP Global, 04/05/2021, [Unpaid Work Experience & Internships: What are the Laws?](#)

Not only are politicians elected to do a specific job, the whole purpose of the electoral system is to vote into power a representative for the views of the constituency. It is difficult to carry out such a role when these politicians are engaged in roles which might distract or break from the views of constituents. This recommendation would ensure that reporting and investigative journalism is conducted not only by professionals, but by professionals without a personal stake.

As mentioned in the previous recommendation, this report recognises that it is impossible to ever truly have an impartial media. However, critics should remember that the purpose here is to break apart and provide barriers to the enabling of double standards in Western intervention policy. If politicians are prevented from undertaking independent journalism, that would prevent a politically biased narrative about certain crises and situations and the intervention being carried out against them from entering the public consciousness. It would also ensure that politicians can focus their time on the true purpose of their job: acting as voices for the public in the Houses of Parliament, and acting as scrutinising agents.

## **Conclusion:**

The proliferation of Western double standards with regards to intervention are well-entrenched and have a long-standing history, which, combined with the attitude of the West as the baton-passer of morality since the end of the Cold War, makes such a phenomenon difficult to address. The spheres of influence dictated and dominated by economic powers reinforce and perpetuate a system of one rule for one, another rule for others, and accentuates the difficulties in tackling such a problem. Whilst a complete overhaul of the international economic power imbalance is certainly impossible, taking measures to bring accountability and transparency to intervention policy through an independent Council for the Scrutiny of Intervention Policy is an innovative notion which combines the purpose of international organisations such as the UN and NATO with an impartiality that is crucial for an overhaul of the system of double standards. Similarly, the implementation of a nonpartisan, independent political news outlet at an international level would ensure that a source for such non-biased information exists. Though this report acknowledges that not everyone in the world is privileged enough to have access to such an institution, the importance of its impact on the visibility of current events and political responses to them would not be overstated.

Furthermore, enabling citizens to have access to higher quality media less dominated by members of wealthier social classes and backgrounds on a state level is not only realistic and implementable, but the ball has already begun rolling in the UK and Europe in the removal of unpaid internships. It is paramount that such exploitative working contracts are abolished, in order to remove the possibility of partiality in the news through economic bias. In addition, returning politicians to the realm of political representation in Parliament as opposed to independent journalistic aspirations is essential for maintaining an effective level of scrutiny within the legislature, and preventing non-professional, biased narratives from dominating the media.