

# HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTIONS: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS AND GEOPOLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Adil YILDIZ\*

**Abstract.** Are the “naming and shaming” activities of Human Rights Organizations (HROs) robust to geopolitical factors? While Murdie and Peksen (2014) provide empirical evidence that such HRO activities increase the likelihood of humanitarian intervention, the existing literature on geopolitics indicates a variable effect, which can be associated with both positive and negative directions regarding intervention onset, although the geopolitical effect remains consistent and significant. Hence, I formulate a hypothesis proposing a correlation between geopolitics and the initiation of interventions. I further suggest that this link could influence the empirical evidence, indicating that HRO activities have a statistically significant impact on the probability of intervention onset, potentially introducing a confounding factor. Using the replication data from Murdie and Peksen (2014) covering the period from 1990 to 2005, however, I find that even when accounting for a geopolitical factor (i.e., being a United States ally), the substantial positive influence of HRO activities on the intervention onset remains empirically robust.

**Keywords:** Humanitarian Interventions, Human Rights Organizations (HROs), Geopolitical Factors

“Geopolitics is about broad impersonal forces that constrain nations and human beings and compel them to act in certain ways.”

— George Friedman (2009: 12)

## Introduction

ARE THE CERTAIN ACTIVITIES (I.E., NAMING AND SHAMING) OF HUMAN rights Organizations (HROs) robust to geopolitical factors? This is the research question of this paper. Murdie and Peksen (2014) argue and find empirical evidence that the engagement of HROs in activities that involve naming and shaming increases the chances of humanitarian interventions. Although they include

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\* Adil Yildiz, PhD student in Political Science at the University of Mississippi. ORCID ID: 0009-0005-0020-3726. Email: ayildiz@olemiss.edu; ayildiz@go.olemiss.edu

certain political and economic factors, like regime type and state capacity, in their empirical models, they do not account for geopolitical factors. This has been the central motivation behind my research. Thus, I replicate the empirical research conducted by Murdie and Peksen (2014) to assess the robustness of the significant impact of HROs by empirically controlling for geopolitical considerations.

As discussed later, the existing literature indicates that geopolitics plays a crucial role in the context of decisions on humanitarian intervention. However, its influence is not consistently uniform and can take on various forms. While it consistently factors in the likelihood of humanitarian interventions, the impact of these geopolitical factors can vary, either positively or negatively, influencing whether interventions become more or less likely. Therefore, I develop a hypothesis suggesting a correlation between geopolitics and intervention onset. I estimate that this correlation may introduce complexity to the statistical finding that HRO activities have a significant impact on the likelihood of interventions, potentially confounding the results.

The data obtained from Murdie and Peksen (2014) pertains to the period spanning from 1990 to 2005, a period in which the United States held a prevalent position as the world's hegemonic power (Layne and Schwarz, 1993; Ikenberry, 1998). Consequently, I argue that a country's alignment as a United States ally during this specific timeframe should be considered as holding greater geopolitical significance in comparison to being an ally with any other country. As a result, I devise a metric to assess whether the countries subject to intervention were in an alliance with the United States and employ this as a geopolitical measure.

Between 1990 and 2005, there were, on average, nearly 16 military interventions conducted annually, driven by humanitarian objectives (Pickering and Kisangani, 2009: 597). My findings indicate that having an alliance with the United States raises the likelihood of armed humanitarian missions. This implies that countries aligned with the United States are more prone to being subjected to humanitarian interventions based on the observations between from 1990 to 2005. Nonetheless, even after factoring in this crucial geopolitical factor, the notable positive influence of HRO activities on the initiation of interventions remains robust.

The remainder of the paper proceeds with a concise overview of the prior research concerning the explanations for the decisions of third parties to engage in humanitarian interventions. Subsequently, I conduct a comparison between the influence of HROs and geopolitical factors on the intervention onset, leading to the formulation of a hypothesis. Next, I outline the replicated data employed to assess this hypothesis and present the empirical results, which demonstrate

whether the findings through rare-events logistic regression analysis hold significance. Finally, the paper presents a concluding section.

## What Explains Humanitarian Intervention

A wide array of political and economic factors have been suggested as potential explainers of the likelihood of humanitarian interventions. More specifically, current research reveals differing viewpoints on whether the degree of the ongoing crisis or the strategic and economic importance of the crisis location carries greater weight in determining the occurrence of intervention. For example, De Jonge Oudraat (1996), Fortna (2004: 288), Doyle and Sambanis (2006: 4), Ruggeri et al. (2018) reveal that interventions tend to be more frequent in the most severe and violent situations, whereas Gilligan and Stedman (2003: 51-52) find that peacekeeping operations exhibit a preference for specific global regions, notably Europe and the Western Hemisphere. Gilligan and Stedman's (2003) findings nonetheless also indicate that these operations are still motivated by humanitarian and security considerations.

Moreover, there are many scholars who demonstrate that peacekeeping missions are more likely to be sent to conflicts where the national interests of the major powers (i.e., typically P-5 members) of the Security Council are involved (Fortna, 2008; Andersson, 2000; Gibbs, 1997). This is because, as Mills and McNamee (2009: 59) observe, the UN often prioritizes the political will of its most influential members and its own bureaucratic interests over those of the conflict parties. For example, Fortna (2008) reveals that peacekeeping interventions, whether under the UN or not, are rare in conflicts situated within or neighbouring the territories of P-5 members. She attributes this trend to the notion that major powers are highly protective of their sovereignty and of immediate areas of influence. As they are highly sensitive to sovereignty concerns, they typically choose to keep a certain distance from the UN. However, Beardsley and Schmidt (2012) discover that although the alignment of the national interests of P-5 members does have an impact on the UN's response to humanitarian crises, the severity of these plays a more crucial role in predicting intervention.

Another popular determinant of intervention is considered to be the "CNN effect," that is, media attention to humanitarian crises is what drives where and when the UN takes action to intervene (Jakobsen, 1996: 206). Scholars of the "CNN effect" overall argue that media coverage can influence government policies, especially when the media portrays a situation in a manner that evokes public sympathy (i.e., media coverage becomes influential when linked to public opinion). This influence can further expedite the foreign policy-making

process and shape policy conduct regarding humanitarian intervention (Gilboa, 2005: 336-337). While there are coherent theoretical arguments suggesting that media coverage can drive interventions, the empirical evidence found in the literature is not strong; such influence is not transformative (Robinson, 2011: 5). This may be possible because media companies often have partisan leanings, are influenced by elites, and are driven by the pursuit of profits (Entman, 2004: 156).

Earlier studies, such as those by Gilboa (2005), Jakobsen (2000), and Robinson (2000), indicate a limited impact of news coverage of humanitarian crises on interventions. For instance, Robinson's (2000) policy-media interaction model demonstrates that policymakers tend to resist media influence when there is policy certainty. Precisely, news coverage is unlikely to affect policy outcomes when a clear policy direction is in place. More recent research, such as that by Doucet (2018) and Murdie and Peksen (2014), presents findings that suggest we cannot discount the media effect, although it may be more instrumental than independent. For example, Doucet (2018) demonstrates how the CNN Effect continues to hold influence over foreign policy, although its impact varies significantly depending on the broader strategic context of different administrations in power. On the other hand, Murdie and Peksen (2014) reveal that an external factor like the influence of human rights organizations is contingent on the level of media exposure.

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## The Impact of Human Rights Organizations vs. Geopolitical Considerations on Humanitarian Interventions

The majority of prior literature on the factors influencing intervention decisions often adopts a state-centric perspective, with a primary emphasis on geopolitical and economic considerations. Previous discussions predominantly overlook the significant role that nonstate actors can play in shaping foreign policy decisions on humanitarian intervention. This is the primary motivation of Murdie and Peksen (2014: 215), who emphasize the role of non-state actors, particularly human rights organizations, in humanitarian intervention decisions. While the literature on geopolitical and economic considerations is abundant, there is also a substantial body of literature on human rights organizations. In fact, the current literature on human rights organizations is consistent that these organizations disseminate information about human rights conditions to the international community, with a particular focus on periods of intense conflict and human rights crises (Meernik et al., 2012: 238; Murdie and Davis, 2012; Keck and Sikkink, 1998). By doing so, they attract the attention of both intergovernmental

organizations (IGOs) and third-party states using a strategy commonly quoted as “naming and shaming” or “shaming and blaming” (Park et al., 2021: 169).

While it is evident that HROs inspire public opinion and encourage action in support of vulnerable populations, nuanced arguments exist regarding their effectiveness in shaping foreign policy decisions on intervention. For example, realists often perceive HROs as tools of the states, arguing that the information they generate should only have rhetorical influence on foreign policy choices as soon as the essential national security, political and economic considerations are factored in (Mearsheimer, 1994; Manan, 2017: 176-179). In contrast, with a specific emphasis on information produced by HROs, Murdie and Peksen (2014) argue that HROs should influence decisions on humanitarian intervention. Such an argument is fundamentally sourced in the credibility of HROs and the public confidence in them.

HROs are perceived as highly credible sources in a world filled with misinformation. Reports citing HROs are more likely to be believed, leading to a change in public and elite opinion and pressure for action on behalf of oppressed populations (Wong, 2012: 86-88). This is because they face genuine limitations when it comes to exaggeration, as they fundamentally rely on maintaining credibility to attract supporters (Gourevitch and Lake, 2012: 3-5). People tend to have more confidence in HROs and related organizations than in television or government. The World Values Survey results demonstrate that a substantial percentage, significantly higher than those who trust TV and government, have a high level of trust in “charitable or humanitarian organizations,” similar to HROs globally. This trust can influence public opinion and action (Murdie and Peksen, 2014: 218). In fact, the empirical evidence by Ausderan (2014) and Davis et al. (2012) suggests that HRO shaming can lead to shifts in public perception of human rights.

These arguments collectively undergird the possible influence of HRO information on shaping decisions related to intervention. Additionally, Murdie and Peksen (2014) provide statistical empirical evidence that HRO shaming increases the likelihood of humanitarian intervention, impacting both IGO-led missions and interventions by third-party states. While they do incorporate some political and economic factors, such as regime type and state capacity, into their empirical model, I argue that their model could be extended to include geopolitical factors. Considering that many existing explanations for intervention decisions predominantly emphasize geopolitical factors, the omission of such factors in their model could have a substantial impact. I deduce that if measures of geopolitical factors were included in their empirical model, their findings regarding the significant impact of non-state actors (i.e., HROs) on intervention may lose their robustness.

Geopolitics, according to scholars, Cohen (2015: 16) and Flint (2016: 36), refers to the study of the interaction between geographical contexts and political processes. It investigates the dynamic relationship between these elements, where each has an impact on and is influenced by the other. Moreover, it is concerned with exploring the results of this interplay, with a particular emphasis on the competition for dominance over globally significant geographical regions and the strategic use of these regions to gain political advantages. In the context of humanitarian issues and intervention, scholars typically employ geopolitical relational factors when analysing decisions related to humanitarian intervention. These factors commonly involve geopolitical affinity versus hostility (Terman and Byun, 2022; Zarpli and Zengin, 2022; Terman and Voeten, 2018) and geographical proximity versus distance (Ruggeri et al., 2018; Rost and Greig, 2011). While geopolitical affinity refers to a situation in which two or more countries share common interests, values, or alliances, geographical proximity pertains to the spatial closeness of countries or regions to each other. Many scholars, including Mullenbach and Matthews (2008), Fordham (2008), and Mullenbach (2005), use military alliances and assistance, such as weapons and aid, as proxy measures for geopolitical affinity.

While these variables almost always hold explanatory power concerning the probability of humanitarian interventions, the direction of their effects varies. Not all scholars, particularly with regard to geopolitical affinity, find evidence supporting the same direction. This suggests that the decision to intervene may be influenced by geopolitical factors in various ways. Before delving into such evidence and its underlying theoretical arguments, I need to clarify the United States bias that this paper carries. This bias is due to the time frame of the data used, which is drawn from Murdie and Peksen (2014). The replication data used in this paper covers the time period from 1990 to 2005, a period during which the United States was commonly regarded as the world's hegemon 'without an enemy,' a consensus held by many international relations (IR) scholars, although it has faced significant challenges in recent times (Layne and Schwarz, 1993; Ikenberry, 1998; Choi, 2013: 134; Yildiz, 2023). In accordance with prior literature, I employ the formation of military alliances as a proxy measure for a geopolitical factor. Previously scholars (Terman and Byun, 2022: 394; Terman and Voeten, 2018: 11-12; Rost and Greig, 2011: 176-177; Fordham, 2008: 744; Mullenbach, 2005: 542) measured geopolitical importance by examining military alliances, generally by determining whether a country is aligned with major global powers, typically the P-5 members (i.e., China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States) of the UN Security Council. However, given the specific time frame considered in this research, it becomes evident that the United States held overwhelming influence on a global scale (Cafruny and Ryner, 2007: 1). Therefore, I argue that a country's status as a United States ally (between

1990-2005) should be seen as carrying greater geopolitical significance compared to being an ally with any other country.

Terman and Byun (2022) and Terman and Voeten (2018) both delve into the impact of geopolitics and military alliances on state behaviour in relation to the international human rights regime. The former provides insights into the impact of geopolitical factors, shedding light on different politicization patterns across various human rights issues. The authors observe that certain human rights matter, including free expression, physical integrity, and migration, are often weaponized by states to disparage their geopolitical adversaries. Conversely, issues considered less contentious, such as education, women's rights, and trafficking, tend to be enforced more frequently among geopolitical friends and allies. The latter on the other hand, addresses the influence of military alliances. The authors argue that states sharing a formal military alliance tend to be more lenient toward each other. However, they find mixed support for this hypothesis, with the significance of the alliance only emerging when ideological convergence is excluded from the model. This suggests that military alliances can be multifaceted. The nature of the alliance, the specific goals, the historical context, and the extent of dependence on the alliance partner can be more crucial. This complexity can make it difficult to generalize the impact of military alliances on state behaviour.

Zarpli and Zengin (2022) and Rost and Greig (2011) offer complementary insights into the role of geopolitical factors in shaping international responses to specific humanitarian issues. Zarpli and Zengin focus on human rights violations in China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR), highlighting the importance of geopolitical affinity in influencing how governments respond. In contrast, Rost and Greig (2011) provide a broader perspective on peacekeeping missions and state behaviour, emphasizing how states' strategic interests, including military alliances and historical ties, shape their deployment of peacekeepers. More specifically, Zarpli and Zengin demonstrate that geopolitical affinity is a robust predictor of how governments respond to China's actions. Governments tend to respond more positively to China if they share geopolitical interests. On the other hand, Rost and Greig (2011) show that when states act independently, they have more flexibility to consider their own interests and strategic goals. They are more likely to deploy peacekeepers to regions where they have former colonies, military alliances, trade partnerships, or ethnic ties. Mullenbach and Matthews (2008) share a similar focus with Rost and Greig (2011) by also revealing how ideological and ethnic linkages significantly influence intervention decisions. These insights collectively emphasize the role of geopolitical factors, shared interests, and historical connections in shaping state behaviour.

Choi (2013) focuses on the motivations behind U.S. humanitarian military interventions and examines whether national interests, including alliance relationships or economic considerations, are the primary drivers behind these decisions. His empirical findings challenge the realist notion, suggesting that these interventions are primarily motivated by a genuine desire to save lives and protect people facing starvation and death due to political violence in other sovereign states, rather than geopolitical interests. This perspective aligns with the liberal view that U.S. leaders are more likely to respond to humanitarian crises and engage in military interventions when they feel a moral obligation to help, especially with the support of the international human rights community. In contrast, Fordham (2008) demonstrates the significant impact of alliance commitments and the actions of rival states on the likelihood of intervention decisions. He highlights the policymakers' emphasis on national security considerations, and the evidence presented supports the importance of these security concerns, with geopolitical allies and adversaries playing a pivotal role. Mullenbach (2005) shares findings that align with Fordham (2008), suggesting that the past and current behaviour of major global and regional powers, along with their influence on global and intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), such as the permanent members of the UN Security Council, strongly predict future peacekeeping missions. Additionally, Mullenbach (2005) reveals that the establishment of a third-party peacekeeping mission is significantly less likely if the target state has a military alliance with a major global or regional **power. Top of Form**

Like Mullenbach (2005), Beardsley and Schmidt (2012) also focus on the role of the United Nations (UN) in peacekeeping missions and the influence of the P-5 members of the UN Security Council on UN interventions. However, they find that while P-5 interests do shape UN behaviour, the relationship is not linear. The UN's actions remain consistent with its humanitarian and security mission, rather than being solely driven by the parochial interests of the P-5 members. Moreover, the level of UN involvement is influenced by the degree of preference overlap among P-5 members. For instance, conflicts involving direct P-5 members saw lower UN involvement during the Cold War but increased involvement after the Cold War, particularly when the U.S. became the hegemonic power. These findings align with empirical evidence from Mullenbach and Matthews (2008) suggesting that U.S. interventions, though in the context of interstate disputes, may have been more influenced by strategic and geopolitical considerations during the Cold War. Subsequently, the reduced intensity of superpower competition may have allowed the U.S. to base its intervention decisions more on nonstrategic motives, including concerns about civilian suffering and human rights abuses.

In short, in the realm of humanitarian intervention decisions, geopolitics plays a crucial role, but the direction of its influence is not always consistent and



can be multifaceted. While it consistently explains the likelihood of humanitarian interventions, the specific impact of these geopolitical factors varies. Scholars, particularly when considering geopolitical affinity, don't always find evidence supporting the same direction, indicating that geopolitical factors influence the decision to intervene in diverse ways. The prior literature on geopolitical factors affecting intervention decisions vis-à-vis non-state actors, particularly human rights organizations in this paper, yields the following testable hypothesis:

There is an association between geopolitics (e.g., being a U.S. ally) and the decision to intervene for humanitarian purposes, and this association could potentially confound the statistical finding that HRO activities significantly affect the likelihood of interventions.

## Research Design

This paper uses the replication data of Murdie and Peksen (2014), which was fully available. To extend their analysis, I also use the Formal Alliances (v4.1) dataset by Gibler (2009) to construct a measure that serves as a geopolitical factor. Here, I begin by illustrating the data from Murdie and Peksen (2014) first, and then I move on to my extension. To empirically investigate the effect of Human Rights Organizations on humanitarian interventions, the replication data consists of time-series and cross-section observations from 1990 to 2005, with the country-year as the unit of analysis. In an effort to ensure unbiased case selection, the data analysis omits Western liberal democracies, resulting in a dataset comprising 129 countries. This omission is grounded in the previous literature (e.g., Pickering, 2002: 318; Fearon and Laitin, 2003: 88) that liberal democracies are less prone to being the target of interventions due to their lower probability of encountering pressing humanitarian crises.

### *Dependent Variable: Armed Humanitarian Intervention*

The International Military Intervention (IMI) dataset by Pickering and Kisangani (2009) is used to determine the armed humanitarian intervention variable. In this dataset, following the definition provided by Pearson and Baumann (1993: 4), armed intervention is described as the deployment of conventional military units or forces (including those from air, sea, or artillery) from one state into the territory of another state. However, to exclusively focus on measures related to humanitarian intervention, Murdie and Peksen (2014: 220) introduced a binary variable named “humanitarian intervention.” This variable is defined based on criteria that encompass armed interventions aimed solely at alleviating and/or terminating existing humanitarian crises and addressing minority situations. The IMI dataset enables this

differentiation by providing data on various types of interventions, including those aimed at safeguarding minority groups and addressing humanitarian issues such as civil wars and genocides. Murdie and Peksen incorporated both aspects to create a more comprehensive measure. In summary, the constructed humanitarian intervention variable is assigned a value of 1 during the year when a humanitarian intervention commences within a country, and it is set to zero for all other years.

### *Explanatory Variables for Armed Humanitarian Intervention*

The shaming activity of Human Rights Organizations is measured in two distinct ways to assess the impact of HROs on humanitarian interventions. These two measures include HRO shaming as both a count and an intensity, as detailed in the works of Murdie and Peksen (2014) and Murdie and Davis (2012). These metrics encompass all adverse events involving Human HROs targeting a specific state within a particular year, as documented in the Reuters Global News Service. The data's primary source is the Integrated Data for Event Analysis (IDEA) project and was made available through Virtual Research Associates (Bond et al., 2003). More specifically, the variable "HRO Shaming (count)" records the quantity of shaming events reported in the Reuters Global News Service that are aimed at a government or its representatives. Meanwhile, "HRO Shaming (intensity)" measures the overall intensity of these shaming events. The intensity is assessed using the Goldstein (1992) scale, which has been inverted, assigning greater weight to more intensely negative shaming events on the scale. Murdie and Peksen (2014) employ these two measures to explore whether the condemnatory statements made by HROs raise the likelihood of a humanitarian intervention in the targeted states.

Based on the existing literature, other variables are also taken into consideration as controls. In order to account for the impact of the overall level of human rights violations, the study incorporates the "Human Rights Abuses" variable, measured through the Political Terror Scale (PTS) as developed by Gibney et al. (2010). According to prior research findings (e.g., De Jonge Oudraat, 1996; Fortna, 2004; Doyle and Sambanis, 2006; Ruggeri et al., 2018), the anticipation is that countries with significant human rights abuses are more prone to becoming the target of armed humanitarian interventions.

To investigate news media coverage impact, two different measures are used. The first one, "Media Exposure" variable, considers the total number of media reports regarding sampled states within a given year, as sourced from Reuters Global News Service (Bell et al., 2012; Murdie and Davis, 2012). The second measure, "Negative News Media Coverage" variable, concentrates

specifically on media reports related to human rights abuses. This variable takes into account the total number of media reports in publications such as the Economist and Newsweek that feature the keywords “human rights” (Ramos et al., 2007).

Economically and militarily capable states are less likely to face interventions. This is because these states have the capacity to deter unwelcome military actions from other states and to prevent domestic unrest (Fearon and Laitin, 2003: 80-81; Pickering, 2002: 317). Therefore, the “State Capacity” variable is included, utilizing the Composite Indicator of National Capability from the Correlates of War (COW) (Singer, 1988). Furthermore, military interventions are less commonly directed toward democratic states than their nondemocratic counterparts (Pickering, 2002: 318). Thus, the “Democracy” variable is incorporated, utilizing the polity score obtained from the Polity IV dataset (Marshall and Jaggers, 2000).

States that are oil producers due to economic interests (Choi, 2013: 124-125; Fordham, 2008: 741-742), ethnically fragmented due to the pathological nature of intercommunal differences (Horowitz, 1985: 46) and experiencing civil wars because of the significant human cost and the potential spillover effects (Regan, 2000) also possess explanatory value for a higher likelihood of humanitarian interventions. Hence, in the empirical analysis, three binary variables are used to account for specific country characteristics. The “Oil Producer” variable is assigned a value of 1 when a country generates more than one-third of its export revenues from oil exports, and it's set to 0 otherwise. Similarly, the “Ethnic Fractionalization” variable ranges from 0 (indicating complete homogeneity) to 1 (indicating total heterogeneity). Lastly, the “Civil War” variable is set to 1 if a country experiences a civil war with at least 25 battle-related deaths per year, and it's designated as 0 if no such conflict occurs. Data regarding the oil and ethnic fractionalization variables are obtained from Fearon and Laitin (2003), while the civil war variable is sourced from the UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset (Gleditsch et al., 2002).

In the context of severe humanitarian crises attracting more attention and consequently a higher likelihood of interventions, whether states undergoing large-scale massacres and the forced displacement of ethnic groups are also addressed. To investigate this, the binary variable, “Genocide” is incorporated, where 1 indicates the presence of genocide, and 0 signifies its absence. The empirical model sources this variable from Marshall et al.'s (2012) Political Instability Task Force dataset. The model additionally incorporates the “Economic Sanctions” variable, which is assigned a value of 1 for the years when a country faces economic coercion, and 0 for all other years. This variable is included to investigate whether the likelihood of military intervention increases, particularly in countries where economic coercion proves ineffective in addressing an ongoing

humanitarian crisis (Murdie and Peksen, 2014: 221-222). The sanctions data is sourced from Hufbauer et al. (2007). Finally, to control for unobserved conditions particular to different regions, region-specific dummy variables are also added into the model, covering Asia (used as the reference category), Latin America, Eastern Europe, Sub-Saharan Africa, and the Middle East/North Africa.

### *An Extension: 'U.S. Alliance' as a Proxy Measure of Geopolitical Influence*

To examine the impact of HROs on the initiation of armed humanitarian interventions, Murdie and Peksen (2014) incorporate a multitude of variables into their model, as demonstrated in the previous section. However, they do not address any critical geopolitical determinant. I firmly believe that this omission could be significant, considering the extensive literature highlighting the significance of geopolitical factors in decisions on humanitarian intervention. This serves as the primary motivation for this paper. Consequently, I am introducing a new variable to the existing model, labelled as "U.S. Alliance," to serve as a proxy measure of geopolitical influence.

In the past literature, scholars (Terman and Byun, 2022: 394; Terman and Voeten, 2018: 11-12; Rost and Greig, 2011: 176-177; Fordham, 2008: 744; Mullenbach, 2005: 542) assessed the significance of geopolitical factors by investigating military alliances. This typically involved evaluating whether a nation was aligned with major global powers. Therefore, I use the formation of military alliances as a proxy measure for assessing geopolitical importance, a measure consistent with previous research. However, I need to acknowledge a bias towards the United States, primarily stemming from the time frame of the data it relies on (1990-2005). During this period, the United States was widely accepted as the leading dominant global power, and many international relations scholars, including Layne and Schwarz (1993) and Ikenberry (1998), considered it the world's hegemon. Given the exceptional influence of the United States during 1990-2005, I expect that being an ally of the United States should have a greater geopolitical weight compared to aligning with any other country.

Accordingly, I use the Formal Alliances (v4.1) dataset developed by Gibler (2009) to construct a variable that assesses a country's status as a United States ally. This variable, denoted as "U.S. Alliance," is set to 1 when the target/intervened state is engaged in a military alliance with the United States and is coded as 0 if such an alliance does not exist. It's crucial to emphasize that, within the scope of this study, the term "military alliances" exclusively refers to what are conventionally categorized as "defense pacts," falling under Type I category in the alliances dataset.

## *Methodology*

As Murdie and Peksen (2014) did previously, I also employ rare-events logistic regression. This method is elaborated by King and Zeng (2011: 141), where they illustrate that the estimates should be adapted to account for biases that arise in cases of small sample sizes or when observed events are infrequent. This is especially relevant when the dependent variable exhibits a substantial imbalance between 1s and 0s. In the analysis presented in this paper, the dependent variable, “humanitarian intervention,” is assigned a value of 1 for the year when a humanitarian intervention commences within a country, and it is set to 0 otherwise. The occurrence of intervention initiation is exceedingly rare, comprising only approximately 1 percent of all observations, highlighting its significant rarity.

The “Past Intervention” variable is incorporated into all the models, to take into consideration the time passed since the previous humanitarian intervention in a country. This variable serves two key purposes: it allows for the adjustment of the increased likelihood of a country being targeted for a new intervention after experiencing a recent one, and it helps address the issue of temporal dependence, which often arises when working with cross-sectional time-series data (Beck et al., 1998: 1263).

Before expanding upon Murdie and Peksen’s (2014) models, I assessed the Variance Inflation Factors (VIF)\* to detect any signs of multicollinearity in relation to my extension variable, “U.S. Alliance”. By doing so, I determined that no multicollinearity issues existed, which allowed for the direct incorporation of the extension variable. Lastly, all models are computed using Huber-White adjusted robust standard errors (clustered by country) to address the issue of heteroskedasticity (White, 1980).

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## **Empirical Results**

Table 1 illustrates the models that depict the impact of HRO shaming and U.S. alliance status on the initiation of humanitarian intervention. These models are defined by incorporating the counts of HRO shaming and HRO shaming intensity in separate models, while also ensuring that media exposure and negative media coverage measures are controlled for in relation to both HRO measures. This approach was taken to maintain consistency with Murdie and Peksen’s (2014) models and avoid any manipulation in the specification of the models.

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\* See Marcoulides and Raykov (2019) for an evaluation of Variance Inflation Factors (VIF) in regression models.

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**Table 1: HRO Shaming, U.S. Alliance, and Humanitarian Interventions**

Source: This table was prepared using the replication data by Murdie and Peksen (2014). Additionally, the Formal

	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>	<i>Model 4</i>
U.S. Alliance	0.864*	0.862**	1.095**	1.021**
	(0.338)	(0.283)	(0.334)	(0.287)
HRO shaming (count)	0.979**	1.322**		
	(0.280)	(0.440)		
HRO shaming (intensity)			0.463**	0.433**
			(0.070)	(0.106)
Human rights abuses	1.206*	1.918**	1.505**	1.795**
	(0.521)	(0.424)	(0.437)	(0.326)
Media exposure	0.090		0.034	
	(0.341)		(0.339)	
Negative news media coverage		-0.005		-0.036
		(0.069)		(0.100)
State capacity	-0.698*	-1.626**	-0.653*	-1.281**
	(0.319)	(0.478)	(0.303)	(0.310)
Democracy	-0.038	-0.049	-0.024	-0.028
	(0.057)	(0.065)	(0.059)	(0.069)
Ethnic fractionalization	-5.627	-1.804	-5.295	-4.747
	(6.238)	(7.545)	(7.011)	(7.447)
Ethnic fractionalization squared	6.102	0.401	6.548	5.109
	(7.134)	(9.178)	(7.704)	(8.624)
Civil war	0.399	0.142	0.080	0.012
	(0.874)	(1.230)	(0.844)	(1.210)
Oil producer	-1.110	-0.078	-0.511	0.200
	(0.811)	(0.553)	(0.655)	(0.555)
Economic sanctions	1.075	1.842	0.818	1.410
	(0.576)	(0.801)	(0.359)	(0.573)
Genocide	0.317	-0.642	0.570	-0.078
	(0.877)	(1.102)	(0.830)	(0.968)
Past intervention	-0.018	-0.001	-0.018	0.001
	(0.019)	(0.034)	(0.024)	(0.035)
Region dummies	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Constant	-13.064**	-22.669**	-13.017**	-18.321**
	(3.909)	(6.089)	(3.369)	(3.951)
Observations	16,712	12,186	16,712	12,186

Robust standard errors shown in parentheses are clustered by country. Regional dummies do not appear to save space. \*\* p<0.01, \* p<0.05.

Alliances (v4.1) dataset by Gibler (2009) was utilized to construct the "U.S. Alliance" variable. The analysis was conducted using the Stata software program. All the data used in this research are accessible to the public.

I hypothesized that a correlation exists between geopolitical factors, such as having an alliance with the U.S., and the decision to engage in humanitarian interventions. Furthermore, this correlation has the potential to introduce a confounding element in the statistical results, which point to the significant impact of HRO activities on the likelihood of interventions, as found in Murdie and Peksen's (2014) main discovery. The empirical findings presented in Table 1 strongly support both of these arguments, showing that U.S. alliance status and HRO activities, especially shaming, increase the probability of armed humanitarian missions. In simpler terms, these results partially support my hypothesis, specifically the part regarding the relationship between geopolitics and the onset of humanitarian intervention. However, this does not negate the significance of HRO activities, underscoring that HROs remain influential entities, and their actions matter even when accounting for a key geopolitical factor.

One important point to note is that I had only formulated a non-directional hypothesis. While the results suggest a positive correlation between U.S. alliance and the initiation of interventions, signifying that countries with a defence alliance with the U.S. are more likely to be the target of humanitarian interventions, according to the existing literature, this relationship could work in both directions. My findings align with Choi's (2013) research, which explores the motivations behind humanitarian military interventions and investigates whether national interests, including formal alliance relationships, deter these decisions. He finds that they do not, therefore our empirical results challenge the realist perspective, driven by e.g., geopolitical national interests that discourage intervention.

If we consider the timeframe of the replication data used in this paper, covering the period from 1990 to 2005, a period when the United States was commonly seen as the world's hegemon, one can interpret the positive relationship between U.S. alliances and humanitarian intervention as aligning with the liberal perspective. During this time, the United States played a central role in establishing and upholding a liberal international order, which also necessitates an international human rights community. Deudney and Ikenberry (1999: 193-194) perhaps best shed light on this by their emphasis on the importance of shared principles for the existence of a lasting political order. A crucial aspect of a liberal political order is the widespread promotion of values, with individual human rights at its core, reflecting and disseminating Western norms concerning individuals. For the liberal international order to endure, it is imperative that crises related to human rights be managed in a manner that fosters greater international integration.

Table 1 also offers empirical support for the assertion that "human rights abuses" and the "capacity of a state" are pivotal factors influencing the probability of international interventions. This aligns with earlier studies (Fearon and Laitin, 2003; Pickering, 2002) that show states with strong military and economic capabilities are less likely to face interventions. Conversely, when a state is marked by

significant human rights abuses, it tends to attract more humanitarian missions, consistent with previous research (De Jonge Oudraat, 1996; Fortna, 2004; Doyle and Sambanis, 2006; Ruggeri et al., 2018). In other words, states that possess the ability to deter external military threats and maintain internal stability are less likely to be intervened upon. On the other hand, states experiencing large-scale massacres and the forced displacement of ethnic groups are more prone to interventions due to the severity of the crisis.

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## Conclusion

In this paper, I replicated Murdie and Peksen's (2014) research, which laid the foundation for investigating the influence of HROs on humanitarian intervention decisions. Their research highlighted the pivotal role of HROs in disseminating information about human rights conditions to the international community, particularly during periods of intense conflict and human rights crises. These organizations employ strategies like “naming and shaming” or “shaming and blaming” to draw the attention of intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) and third-party states. They found that engaging in shaming activities by HROs raises the likelihood of humanitarian interventions. However, while their research incorporates some political and economic factors, such as regime type and state capacity, into their model, I argued that the model could be enhanced by including geopolitical factors.

Previous literature reveals that geopolitics plays a vital role within the context of decisions on humanitarian intervention, but its influence is not consistently uniform and can be multifaceted. Although it reliably explains the likelihood of humanitarian interventions, the specific effects of these geopolitical factors can differ. Scholars, particularly when examining geopolitical alignment, do not consistently discover evidence supporting a uniform direction, underscoring the varied ways, whether positive or negative, in which it can impact intervention decisions. This further led to a hypothesis that suggests a correlation between geopolitics and the decision to engage in humanitarian interventions. Additionally, I predicted that this correlation might confound the statistical finding that HRO activities have a significant impact on the likelihood of interventions.

The data drawn from Murdie and Peksen (2014) covers the period from 1990 to 2005, a time during which the United States was widely perceived as the world's hegemonic power. Therefore, I contended that a country's status as an ally of the United States during this time should be regarded as carrying more significant geopolitical importance compared to being an ally with any other country. Accordingly, I constructed a measure to determine whether the intervened countries were U.S. allies and used it as a geopolitical variable. I found that the presence of an alliance with the United States is shown to increase the probability of armed



humanitarian missions. This suggests that countries with defense alliances with the United States are more likely to be the target of humanitarian interventions based on the data from 1990 to 2005. However, even when accounting for this key geopolitical factor, the significant impact of HRO activities on the likelihood of interventions remained evident.

In essence, I conclude that the initiation of humanitarian interventions is characterized by multifaceted nature, in which both geopolitical factors and the actions of HROs play significant roles. I underscore the continued importance of HRO activities in influencing public opinion and driving actions in support of vulnerable populations and human rights issues, even in the presence of geopolitical considerations.

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