

MAX WEBER MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH WORKSHOP

Humanitarian intervention: the invention of a tradition?

Online - via Zoom | 20 April 2021 | 4 May 2021 | 12 May 2021

Workshop Organizers

Orfeas Chasapis Tassinis (MWP - LAW), Andrés María Vicent Fanconi (MWP - HEC), Josef Ostřanský (MWP – LAW)

What is the ideological background behind the birth of humanitarian interventions? What legal theories have been employed to support it? And how have various political and economic interests interacted with and drawn upon the normatively appealing concepts of humanitarianism? Conversely, how has the notion of humanitarianism been used in resistance to powerful actors?

The aim of the workshop is to explore humanitarian intervention as a key phenomenon in the birth and development of internationalism from diverse disciplinary perspectives. The workshop will critically examine the historical, political, and legal implications of humanitarian interventions from the past to the present.

The workshop is organized as a series of three discussions with renowned speakers who have worked on the topic of humanitarian intervention from different angles with the co-conveners acting as discussants.

Location

Zoom.us (the link will be disseminated by email).

Housekeeping

- The Zoom meetings will be accessible around 5 minutes before the beginning of each session. For security reasons, please do not circulate the zoom link without prior authorization.
- Video and audio: we strongly encourage everyone to keep their video on in order to retain a feeling of presence and community; however, everyone but the presenter should mute their microphones. The presenter should open their presentation on their laptop and share their screen. In case of a video-recorded event, only the speakers will appear in the recording before the Q&A. In that specific case, we invite you to switch off your video and audio when not intervening.
- Questions: only clarification questions should be asked during a presentation; more general questions should be asked during the Q&A or privately to the presenter. You can write your question in the chat during or after the presentation; alternatively, use the “raise hand” feature of Zoom (by clicking on “participants” in the bottom of your screen and then on “raise hand” in the bottom right corner), wait for the acknowledgement by the presenter (during the presentation) or the chair (during the discussion), then unmute your microphone, and speak up.

Program

Session 1 - From Greece to Armenia: discourses and practices in the development of Humanitarian Interventions (1820s-1910s)

Andrés María Vicent Fanconi (MWP) & Orfeas Chasapis Tassinis (MWP) interview

Daive Rodogno (Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies Geneva)

Tuesday, 20 April 2021 | 4:00-5:00 PM

Since early nineteenth century, Humanitarian interventions have been a key instrument in the international politics of the powers. In this interview with Davide Rodogno, we will discuss the late 19th century and early 20th century instances and practices of humanitarian intervention. In particular, we will centre on the often-observed tensions between the pronounced goals and justifications of the various humanitarian campaigns and the actual practices and achievements.

Registration: Please register [here](#)

Session 2 - Humanitarian interventions, capitalism, and international law

Josef Ostránský (MWP) & Orfeas Chasapis Tassinis (MWP) interview

Ntina Tzouvala (Australian National University)

Tuesday, 4 May 2021 | 11:00AM - 12:00PM

In this session, we talk with Ntina Tzouvala about the links between humanitarian interventions and international law in global capitalism. Taking off from Ntina's work, we will zero in on the instances in which interventions using force have drawn on normatively appealing notions, such as humanity and civilisation. In particular, we will delve into how international law —often portrayed as a neutral and horizontal system governing relations between equal sovereigns— has been shot through with hierarchies and distinctions. These hierarchies and distinctions have allowed more powerful actors intervene into the affairs of the less powerful states and communities. Ntina will discuss how international law is implicated in the reproduction of racial domination and exploitation, despite often being couched in the language of humanitarianism.

Registration: Please register [here](#)

Session 3 - *In the interests of humanity? Reflections on the history of the International Committee of the Red Cross.*

Andrés María Vicent Fanconi (MWP) & Josef Ostřanský (MWP) interview
Irène Herrmann (University of Geneva)

Wednesday, 12 May 2021 | 11:00AM – 12:00PM

In this interview, we talk with Irène Herrmann about her latest book: Humanitarian action may be considered as one of the most popular phenomena of our time. But what exactly does it cover? Where does it come from? What are its objectives? What obstacles does it encounter? And what does the dominant position it occupies today mean? The history of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) provides answers that are as counter-intuitive as they are enlightening. By recounting four key moments in the history of this institution, it is clear that the humanitarian movement has only recently become very much in vogue. The ideal of compassion is inseparable from nationalism and colonialism. Moreover, it is not totally disinterested, and it is this characteristic that has enabled it to endure. Likewise, it is subject to many limitations, which constitute the very condition of its existence. Finally, the current notoriety of the concept is mainly the result of lexical overuse, which can alter the political game or... scientific research.

Registration: Please register [here](#)