

Defending States and Protecting Individuals:
A Critical Examination of the Principle of Nonintervention

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Abstract

It is widely accepted that individuals have rights. It is also widely accepted (though less so) that states have rights, including a right against intervention. Yet, sometimes the rights of individuals become threatened by their own states or by other threats their state is unwilling or unable to prevent. So, this leads us to ask if it can ever be right to intervene into some other state to protect people *within* that other state. (Evans, 2006) In this dissertation, I argue that states actually do typically have a right against intervention, even when we, as Christopher Wellman suggests, “take human rights as seriously as we should”. (Wellman, 2012, p. 119) I argue that a state’s specific right against intervention is best determined according to whether the state in question is adequately respecting and protecting the rights of those within the state. In making this argument, I accept what we might call the individualist turn in international relations. That is, I endorse the view that a state’s right against intervention is uniquely linked to the protection of the rights of individuals.