

Blockades: Justification, Effectiveness, and Impact

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Abstract

Blockades have traditionally been an operation navies take during war yet are used today when no declared war is taking place. Today blockades have been used due to the security threats posed to a belligerent if one were not in place and as a display of power within the region. They are by far an extremely effective operation compared to other options given such as an occupation. Blockades almost always create some sort of humanitarian crisis when enacted for an extended period of time and humanitarian support isn't allowed access.



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Potential Blockades

Potential blockades include regions where a large-scale conflict has a likelihood of taking place with a subsequent blockade being a likely strategy taken by one of the belligerent states. North Korea is one such example.



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Traditional vs. Humanitarian Law

Generally, two approaches are taken concerning blockades under international law: Humanitarian law and traditional law. Humanitarian law, as one could guess, has a greater emphasis on the humanitarian impact blockades have on a civilian population and emphasises the responsibilities of the belligerent state if a blockade is creating a humanitarian crisis.

On-Going Blockades

There are several on-going naval blockades taking place in the world today. Most notable are both the blockade of Gaza by Israel and the blockade of Yemen by Saudi Arabia. Both of these blockades are condemned under international humanitarian law while only Saudi Arabia can be accused of breaking the law of blockades in naval warfare mentioned in the Sam Remo Manual.



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Conclusion

Blockades are an extremely useful military option when there is a need for one to be implemented. Under traditional law they can be seen as a more justified act compared to humanitarian law of today. They do, however, almost always lead to the suffering of a civilian population and become unjustified if the belligerent state is indifferent to this suffering.