

Theoretical Perspectives on Humanitarian Governance: A Comparative Analysis of Realism, Constructivism, and Liberal Internationalism

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Abstract

Humanitarian governance refers to the set of principles, institutions, and policies that guide global responses to humanitarian crises. This paper examines humanitarian governance through the lens of three major international relations theories: realism, constructivism, and liberal internationalism. While realism emphasises state interests and power dynamics, constructivism highlights norms and identities, and liberal internationalism focuses on multilateral cooperation and institutional frameworks. Through an analysis of three case studies—the US invasion of Iraq (2003), the international response to the Rwandan genocide (1994), and the global management of the COVID-19 pandemic—this study evaluates how these theoretical approaches explain humanitarian interventions and their effectiveness. The findings reveal that humanitarian governance is often shaped by political considerations rather than purely humanitarian motives. The paper concludes by offering policy recommendations for strengthening humanitarian governance through a more integrated theoretical framework that balances state interests, global norms, and institutional mechanisms.

Keywords: Humanitarian Governance, Realism, Constructivism, Liberal Internationalism, Crisis Management.

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Introduction

Humanitarian governance refers to the policies, institutions, and actors that organise responses to international crises, such as conflicts, natural disasters, and pandemics. Although the field has developed greatly, it continues to be shaped by competing theoretical approaches that determine how states and international organisations are involved in humanitarian action. This paper aims to address the following research question: Which theoretical approach—realism, constructivism, or liberal internationalism—best explains the successes and failures of humanitarian governance? Humanitarian rule continues to be shaped by contesting theoretical viewpoints that influence how states and global institutions practice humanitarianism. Recent literature focuses on the dynamic relationship between state interests, changing norms, and institutional structures in conditioning responses to crises (Sommerer, 2022). This article compares realism, constructivism, and liberal internationalism using case studies, examining how modern crisis stretch paradigms (Weiss, 2008).

The complexity of humanitarian governance arises from the involvement of multiple actors, including states, international organisations, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), each with distinct motivations. While realism posits that states engage in humanitarian efforts primarily to advance strategic interests, constructivism emphasises the role of international norms in shaping humanitarian action. In contrast, liberal internationalism argues that global cooperation and institutions such as the United Nations and the World Health Organisation (WHO) play a crucial role in managing humanitarian crises. This research examines three case studies to evaluate these theoretical perspectives: the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, the Rwandan genocide of 1994, and the international response to the COVID-19 pandemic. These cases represent varied examples of humanitarian governance functioning in various settings—military intervention, prevention of genocide, and public health emergencies. By analysing the reasons for humanitarian interventions, the extent of international cooperation, and the effects of these interventions, this paper assesses the strengths and weaknesses of each theoretical framework.

One of the central problems of humanitarian governance is conflict between humanitarian norms and political expedience. While the humanitarian debate often focusses on moral obligations, geopolitical imperatives frequently dictate the practice. For instance, the US justified its 2003 invasion of Iraq as a humanitarian intervention, but realist scholars have contended that strategic interests were more important. Likewise, in Rwanda, failure to act there demonstrates the constraint of norm pressures to drive action. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic shows both the potential and limitations of international cooperation for meeting global emergencies. This paper argues that no single theoretical framework fully captures the complexities of humanitarian governance. Instead, a synthesis of realism, constructivism, and liberal internationalism is necessary to develop a more effective approach to humanitarian crises. The conclusion offers policy recommendations aimed at strengthening humanitarian governance through a more balanced integration of state interests,

international norms, and institutional coordination. By addressing these theoretical perspectives and case studies, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of humanitarian governance and provides insights for improving international responses to future crises.

Realist Approach: In the Context of Humanitarian Governance

In foreign policy, realism revolves mostly on power, state interests, and anarchy. Realists hold that countries shape world affairs in order to further their own agendas including security (Waltz, 2010). Realists view humanitarian interventions as a means for states to reach strategic objectives rather than moral ones. Nations are driven by self-interest realistically, so political, economic, and military elements can influence humanitarian effort. Realist theory holds that countries will only engage in humanitarian crisis if their national interests are at risk or if they see an opportunity to acquire power. Humanitarian relief to a vital area might improve relations, access to resources, and influence. Selective action by strong governments in humanitarian governance usually overlooks certain crisis and addresses others depending on their strategic relevance (Mearsheimer 2001). Realism also reveals how often government objectives shape humanitarian efforts, therefore polarising and distorting them (Dodge, 2010).

Case Study: Iraq Invasion by the US(2003)

One might learn from the 2003 US invasion of Iraq a realist perspective on humanitarian government. The purported justification for the strike was to disarm Iraq of WMDs and release the Iraqi people from Saddam Hussein. The US government offered the intervention as a humanitarian effort to provide Iraq democracy and freedom (Dodge, 2010). Although no WMDs were found, the invasion resulted in great damage, human casualties, and protracted instability in Iraq. Realist critiques of the Iraqi invasion have evolved, with scholars emphasising how interventions continue to serve strategic interests under the guise of humanitarianism. Krieg argues that post-9/11 the US interventions, including Iraq, reflect a “security-first” realist logic, where humanitarian rhetoric masks power consolidation (Krieg, 2016). Similarly, Buzan and Lawson contextualised the invasion within broader shifts in global power structures, highlighting how unipolarity enabled unilateral action (Sterling-Folker 2015).

Realists point to government interests and authority to help to justify the invasion. The US aimed to safeguard its national security, increase its Middle East dominance, and seize control of Iraq's enormous wealth of resources. Realists contend that US geopolitics and regional hegemony drove more of the invasion than humanitarian considerations (Posen, 2003). Additionally, the US used force to demonstrate its military might and deter future foes. The invasion lacked humanitarian objectives. Along with destroying Iraq's infrastructure, the fighting killed hundreds of thousands of people and displaced millions (Fawn, Rick and Hinnebusch, Raymon (Eds), 2006). Extremist organisations, like ISIS, emerged and destabilised the region

when Saddam Hussein's government collapsed. The invasion also strained US allied ties as many questioned its legitimacy and goals (Dodge, 2010).

Analysis from a Realist Perspective

The 2003 Iraq invasion really reveals how often geopolitical objectives of governments surpass humanitarian governance. Though its major objectives were power and security, the US used humanitarian rhetoric to justify its actions and win support from other countries. The intentional focus of the intervention on a central area confirms the realist theory that governments behave according to their own interests, and humanitarian considerations come second. The humanitarian objectives of the invasion are, realistically, challenging. The lack of international agreement, the deployment of military action without UN sanction, and the prioritisation of US strategic objectives over Iraqi well-being caused the intervention to fail to provide long-lasting peace or improve the humanitarian situation in Iraq (Mearsheimer 2001). The limits of military approaches for humanitarian purposes are shown by the use of force and political change devoid of post-war reconstruction plans (Krasner S. D., 2004). The situation in Iraq demonstrates how strong countries could co-opt humanitarian governance to advance their own goals, usually detrimental to the affected population. Realism emphasises the struggle between state sovereignty and humanitarian intervention as well as the difficulties of ensuring that humanitarian operations are driven by human welfare rather than political or strategic concerns (Waltz, 2010).

Criticism of Realism in Humanitarian Governance

Recent critiques stress realism's inability to address non-state actors' roles. Pattison (2010) notes that NGOs and transnational advocacy networks increasingly influence humanitarian agendas, challenging state-centric realist assumptions. Emphasising power and state interests, realist humanitarian governance is attacked for causing selective and inconsistent interventions. Realism views humanitarian events through the prism of national security and strategic benefit, which detractors argue ignores ethical and moral issues (Finnemore M. , 2013). As in Iraq, this narrow focus on state goals might result in activities aggravating humanitarian issues (Dodge, 2010).

Furthermore, realism cannot account for the increasing participation in humanitarian governance by non-governmental organisations and foreign agencies, among other players. Usually motivated by humanitarian values, these players participate outside of political concerns (Barnett, M., & Weiss, T. G (Eds), 2018). The state-centric approach of realism overlooks global standards, ethics, and the rising interdependence of the world community in impacting humanitarian responses (Wendt, 1992). Therefore, realism is usually considered an inadequate paradigm for appreciating the complexity of modern humanitarian governance, which necessitates a more nuanced and diversified approach that goes beyond state interests and power politics.

Constructivist Approach: In the Context of Humanitarian Governance

Constructivism in international relations emphasises how ideas, beliefs, customs, and identities impact state behaviour and its international implications. Whereas constructivism maintains that social conceptions and shared understandings affect state behaviour, realism stresses material power (Wendt, 1992). Constructivism clarifies how principles of humanitarian intervention and human rights influence governments and other participants in humanitarian governance. Constructivists hold that humanitarian activity is inspired by global norms like R2P and the moral obligation to reduce suffering (Finnemore, Martha and Sikkink, Kathryn, 1998). It identifies the changes in humanitarian standards as well as their effects on nations and international agencies. Humanitarian values in international governance are driving more attention on safeguarding vulnerable groups (Bellamy, 2010). Constructivists hold that logical calculations of power and security, national identities, and international expectations all shape government actions. Thus, the response of the world to humanitarian crises usually reflects long-held standards and values (Barnett M. , 2018). Constructivism clarifies humanitarian intervention and the responsibility of international organisations in promoting human rights and protection through humanitarian governance. It emphasises on the shared concepts play in humanitarian responses and clarifies why countries could participate in crises without a strategic or financial incentive (Finnemore M. , 2013).

Case Study: Rwanda (1994 Genocide)

➤ UN and International Response

The Rwandan case remains pivotal for understanding norm evolution. Welsh (2013) examines the inconsistent application of the R2P doctrine since 2011 (e.g., Libya vs. Syria), exposing gaps between normative aspirations and political realities. Hofmann and Wisotzki (2014) highlight the role of grassroots movements in reshaping humanitarian norms, arguing that local actors often drive accountability where international institutions falter. A seminal constructivist case study for humanitarian governance, the 1994 Rwandan genocide claimed 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus. The UN and the international community fell short in halting the genocide (Barnett M. , 2012). Early warnings and UNAMIR notwithstanding, the world generally turned away from the carnage. Mass crimes impede humanitarian governance, as shown by the lack of quick response and peacekeeping troops leaving. Constructivism clarifies the Rwanda inaction of the international community.

The genocide took place before responsibility to defend and humanitarian intervention had developed. The international community was cautious about engaging in Rwanda due to its unclear mandate, worries about state sovereignty, and fear of repeating the 1993 UN intervention in Somalia (Barnett M. , 2012). States unwilling to participate actively in Rwanda were driven by values that gave national sovereignty and non-interference top priority. Crisis framing affected global response as well.

Reluctant to call it a “genocide” and react accordingly, the international world originally saw the genocide as a civil war rather than a planned extermination of an ethnic minority (Finnemore, Martha and Sikkink, Kathryn, 1998). Using the term “genocide” creates moral and legal challenges, as the 1948 Genocide Convention orders countries to prevent and punish genocide (Barnett M. , 2012). The failure of Rwandan humanitarian governance reveals how a weak normative framework and reluctance to challenge state sovereignty resulted in such outcome.

➤ **Analysis from a Constructivist Perspective**

From a constructivist perspective, the failure of the global response to the genocide in Rwanda can be attributed to poor and shifting humanitarian values. Constructivism asserts that societal ideas such as sovereignty and intervention influence state behaviour. In 1994, humanitarian intervention and the need to defend were still under development; the international community battled to decide whether and how to help with state affairs (Barnett, M., & Weiss, T. G (Eds), 2018). During the Rwandan slaughter, failure to provide a normative framework for action rendered the world community inert. Constructivism stresses international reactions' framing. The hesitation of the international community to label Rwanda's events as genocide reflected its rejection to accept moral and legal obligations (Finnemore, Martha and Sikkink, Kathryn, 1998). This hesitancy resulted from the necessity to avoid political and military entanglement and intervention risks.

Humanitarian governance standards underwent major transformation during the Rwandan massacre. Early in the 2000s, international leaders realised they could not stop genocide; hence, they created the "Responsibility to Protect" (R2P) idea (Bellamy, 2010). R2P changes humanitarian intervention guidelines by mandating that, in cases when governments cannot, the international community defend populations from mass crimes. This evolution of standards supports the constructivist theory that shared ideas define world behaviour and may change in reaction to major events and moral shocks (Finnemore M. , 2013). The Rwandan narrative illustrates how inadequate humanitarian governance might lead to a normative shift and affect next actions. Thus, constructivism shows how social constructs affect state and international organisation responses to humanitarian crises, thereby helping to explain failures and evolution in humanitarian norms (Wendt, 1992).

➤ **Criticism of Constructivism in Humanitarian Governance**

Although constructivism offers important new perspectives on how standards and concepts impact humanitarian governance, it has been attacked for not grasping the real problems with humanitarian aid. Critics of constructivism point out that it stresses standards and identities while neglecting practical constraints and power relations influencing humanitarian operations (Mearsheimer 2001). Weak policies and pragmatic considerations, including political will and strategic interests, kept governments in Rwanda from interfering (Krasner S. D., 1999). Constructivism has also come under

fire for not providing clear humanitarian crisis policy fixes. Although constructivism clarifies how standards change and affect behaviour, it usually lacks the analytical ability to handle material concerns and power inequalities that form humanitarian governance (Barnett M. , 2018). This limitation makes constructivist concepts difficult to implement for enhancement of humanitarian action. Therefore, constructivism is seen as a helpful but inadequate paradigm for comprehending humanitarian government; therefore, complementary approaches are necessary to sufficiently handle world humanitarian issues (Finnemore, Martha and Sikkink, Kathryn, 1998). Hehir (2019) critiques constructivism for overestimating the transformative power of norms, citing the international community's failure to prevent atrocities in Yemen and Myanmar despite R2P commitments.

➤ **Liberal Internationalism Approach: In the Context of Humanitarian Governance**

To uphold world order and address shared challenges, liberal internationalism advances cooperation, international institutions, and the rule of law. Liberal internationalism maintains that even in an anarchic environment, norms, institutions, and values may let countries collaborate (Keohane R. O., 2005). According to this view, states can benefit by cooperating through multilateral organisations and adhering to accepted standards and conventions to address problems involving group action and preserve world stability (Ikenberry, 2012). In handling humanitarian crises, liberal internationalism stresses the UN, WHO, and other multilateral agencies. These groups let states trade tools, information, and resources, including emergency response strategies (Slaughter, 2005). Strong international institutions are, according to liberal internationalists, necessary to legitimise, inspire, and coordinate several actors for effective humanitarian governance. Particularly focused on how global ideas like human rights and R2P influence state behaviour and foster world solidarity during humanitarian crises is liberal internationalism (Bellamy, 2010). Liberal internationalism advances democracy, human rights, and multilateralism to create a more fair and cooperative global system safeguarding underprivileged groups. Coordinating rules-based solutions for worldwide humanitarian problems like pandemics and climate change calls for international cooperation (Blechnan, 2004).

Case Study: COVID-19 Pandemic

➤ **Role of International Institutions and Global Cooperation**

A fascinating case study for liberal internationalism and humanitarian government is the late 2019 COVID-19 epidemic. A global health disaster, the disease devastated practically every nation and killed millions of people. COVID-19 revealed the need for global cooperation and international institutions in handling a complicated and far-reaching disaster (Frenk, J., & Moon, S, 2013). The pandemic underscored both the potential and limitations of liberal internationalism. Otenyo (2023) critiques

COVAX's inequitable vaccine distribution, attributing its failures to wealthy states' "vaccine nationalism." Palumbo, Picchio, Smallwood, Salvi, & Rockenschaub (2023) analyse the WHO's politicisation during COVID-19, arguing that underfunding and member-state competition weakened its authority. The WHO organised the global reaction to an outbreak. It advised on public health, disseminated knowledge, and planned vaccination campaigns and distribution. To guarantee fair vaccination access for every nation, especially low-income ones, WHO and Gavi, the Vaccination Alliance, developed COVAX (Frenk, J., & Moon, S, 2013).

Inspired by liberal internationalism's values of fairness, cooperation, and group action to address world issues, this project used the UN-offered humanitarian help to underprivileged areas and encouraged international collaboration. Designed by the UN, the Global Humanitarian Response Plan addressed the health, social, and financial consequences of COVID-19 in underdeveloped countries (Weiss, T. G., & Wilkinson, R., 2018). Additionally, assisting countries devastated by pandemics were the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). These projects demonstrated how international cooperation helped to alleviate the crisis and guaranteed that none of any nation would be left behind. The scientific response to the outbreak revealed international cooperation. Globally like minded researchers exchanged data, devised treatments, and rapidly produced immunisations. International collaboration and resource sharing enabled Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna, and AstraZeneca to quickly manufacture and distribute COVID-19 vaccines (Ikenberry, 2012). This cooperation illustrated how relevant liberal internationalist ideas are in addressing challenging worldwide health concerns requiring cooperation and information sharing.

➤ **Analysis from a Liberal Perspective**

The global response to the COVID-19 outbreak exposes liberal internationalists to the shortcomings of humanitarian governance in a tightly linked society as well as its advantages. The outbreak brought attention to how international agencies like the WHO and UN coordinate responses, justify themselves, and divide resources. These organisations supported underprivileged areas, offered technical advice, and helped generate global support (Keohane R. O., 2005). The worldwide vaccination campaign and distribution effort proved how strongly liberal internationalism stresses world cooperation. Seeking equitable vaccine availability, COVAX embodies liberal principles of justice and solidarity in addressing global issues (Frenk, J., & Moon, S, 2013). By pooling funds and organising activities, COVAX seeks to lower vaccine access disparities between high-income and low-income countries, thereby demonstrating that international institutions may support equity and justice in humanitarian governance. The outbreak also exposed the limits of liberal internationalism. Rich nations obtained most of the vaccination doses, leaving low-income states with minimal access even when international organisations attempted it (O'brien, R., & Williams, M., 2025). Implementing liberal principles is difficult, particularly in cases when strong governments prioritise their own interests over world

unity. The unequal distribution of vaccines and state competitiveness for limited resources demonstrated that national self-interest continues even in the middle of a global crisis, therefore subverting the liberal belief that states will always cooperate for the common good (Ikenberry, 2012). The outbreak also made clear how poorly international institutions could manage a worldwide health emergency. People attacked the WHO for its delays in announcing a worldwide public health emergency and for its coordination issues (Frenk, J., & Moon, S, 2013). These flaws show how urgently reforms are needed to enhance the crisis management of world institutions.

➤ **Criticism of Liberal Internationalism in Humanitarian Governance**

Critics have questioned the utopian ideas of liberal internationalism regarding state cooperation and the capacity of international institutions to address world issues. Critics claim that liberal internationalism undervalues state interests and power dynamics, therefore impeding cooperative action and equitable results (Mearsheimer 2001). Though COVAX, COVID-19 vaccines are not equitably distributed, which indicates that liberal internationalism cannot overcome strong states' self-interest (O'Brien, R., & Williams, M., 2025). Held and Roger (2013) argue that liberal internationalism's reliance on institutional cooperation is increasingly untenable in a multipolar world, as seen in the deadlock over climate finance and pandemic preparedness. Liberals have questioned the reliance of liberal internationalism on bureaucratic obstacles and inefficiencies that restrict the crisis response of international institutions. Critics of the WHO's COVID-19 epidemic response pointed out delays and insufficient authority to carry out advice (Frenk, J., & Moon, S, 2013). Particularly in cases of conflicting national interests and insufficient political will, international institutions may lack the competence and resources to adequately handle difficult humanitarian events.

➤ **Comparative Analysis of Three Theories**

In this research, humanitarian governance theories include realism, constructivism, and liberal internationalism. Each theory emphasises the goals, strategies, and effectiveness of humanitarian aid, despite their divergent approaches. All three theories hold that humanitarianism is affected by governmental conduct. Realists contend that nations seek their interests and power; hence, humanitarian intervention becomes strategic rather than humanitarian (Mearsheimer 2001). Constructivism emphasises social constructions in humanitarian governance by means of convention, identities, and shared ideas influencing state conduct (Wendt, 1992). Although liberal internationalism values nations, it favors international institutions and humanitarian aid (Ikenberry, 2012). Though in various ways, all three models agree that states control worldwide humanitarian response.

The methods and justifications for humanitarian endeavours vary most among these concepts. Realistically, humanitarian governance helps governments reach their objectives. Realism holds that governments only act in humanitarian situations when

they serve their own interests—as in the 2003 US invasion of Iraq, when strategic reasons dominated over humanitarian ones (Dodge, 2010). Constructivism maintains that states might engage in humanitarian crises to meet their worldwide citizenship or global norms (Finnemore, Martha and Sikkink, Kathryn, 1998). The inactivity of the world community during the Rwandan slaughter exposes the laxity of humanitarian norms (Barnett M. , 2012). As the COVID-19 epidemic response shows, liberal internationalism highlights the UN and WHO in planning collective action and promotes worldwide cooperation.

Every approach to humanitarian governance has advantages and drawbacks. Its focus on state strategy and power relations gives realism great strength. It clarifies how to keep objectivity in a politically charged international system and why humanitarian interventions are selective (Waltz, 2010). The emphasis of realism on state objectives could make humanitarian governance cynical and overlook real compassion and cooperation. It overlooks the increasingly important part international organisations and NGOs play in humanitarian operations (Barnett, M., & Weiss, T. G (Eds), 2018). The strength of constructivism is its emphasis on standards, concepts, and identities influencing state actions. It clarifies how humanitarian failures influence world standards and why countries find themselves in crises without strategic gains (Finnemore M. , 2013).

The emphasis of constructivism on norms and identities may ignore material constraints and power relations that affect humanitarian acts, therefore challenging policy changes meant to improve humanitarian governance (Mearsheimer 2001). Liberal internationalism relies on international institutions and cooperation to address world problems. WHO's COVID-19 response shows how multilateralism and cooperation might help enhance humanitarian responses (Ikenberry, 2012). Liberal internationalism's reliance on other countries is unrealistic as international institutions fight to reach consensus and overcome strong states' self-interest (Frenk, J., & Moon, S, 2013). Distribution of the COVID-19 vaccination reveals the shortcomings of liberalism despite worldwide attempts (O'brien, R., & Williams, M., 2025).

Challenges in Humanitarian Governance

➤ Faced by Realism in Humanitarian Governance

Realist humanitarian governance, prioritising state interests over impartiality, often leads to selective interventions that undermine neutrality and credibility. For example, the 2003 Iraq invasion, framed in humanitarian terms, prioritised oil and geopolitical influence fuelling instability and extremism (Dodge, 2010). Realism's short-term focus on power struggles also neglects post-conflict rebuilding, as seen in Iraq's institutional collapse after Saddam's fall (Fawn, Rick and Hinnebusch, Raymon (Eds), 2006). By subordinating civilian needs to strategic goals, realism struggles to align state interests with lasting humanitarian outcomes (Mearsheimer 2001).

➤ **Faced by Constructivism in Humanitarian Governance**

Constructivism's focus on norms and identities struggles to drive consistent humanitarian governance without political will, as norms like civilian protection often clash with state sovereignty or interests (Wendt, 1992). The 1994 Rwandan genocide exemplified this; weak normative consensus and sovereignty concerns stalled intervention despite early warnings (Barnett M., 2012). Normative change also lags crises—R2P emerged reactively post-Rwanda and Balkans atrocities, highlighting constructivism's inability to pre-empt disasters (Finnemore, Martha and Sikkink, Kathryn, 1998) and (Bellamy, 2010). Overreliance on moral shocks risks leaving humanitarian action fragmented and delayed.

➤ **Faced by Liberal Internationalism in Humanitarian Governance**

Liberal internationalism's reliance on multilateral institutions faces challenges from bureaucratic inefficiencies, competing state interests, and weak enforcement. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed these flaws: despite WHO coordination, vaccine nationalism and unequal COVAX distribution prioritised state self-interest over global equity (O'Brien, R., & Williams, M., 2025). Institutions like the UN and WHO lack binding authority, leading to fragmented responses—evident in Syria's crisis and uneven pandemic policies (Weiss, T. G., & Wilkinson, R., 2018). While promoting cooperation, liberal internationalism struggles to reconcile state sovereignty with humanitarian imperatives, risking diluted norms of justice and collective action (Keohane R. O., 2005).

Policy Recommendations

➤ **Strengthening Humanitarian Governance**

To transcend the limitations of realism, constructivism, and liberal internationalism, humanitarian governance should adopt a hybrid “pragmatic constructivist” framework that merges realist incentives (security, economic gains), constructivist norm-building, and liberal multilateral coordination. For example, states could receive debt relief or trade benefits for prioritising humanitarian aid in crises, while regional bodies like the African Union institutionalise norms like R2P to balance localised accountability with global commitments. This approach integrates geopolitical pragmatism with sustained normative progress.

To address systemic inequities, international institutions require reform: the UN Security Council could adopt a rotating “Humanitarian Crisis Review Panel” to bypass veto gridlock (Weiss, 2008), while the WHO should establish a “Global Health Equity Fund” financed by pharmaceutical levies to prioritise low-income nations. Localising humanitarian action is critical—mandating 30% direct funding to NGOs by 2030 (Grand Bargain 2.0) and deploying blockchain systems for transparency (Pulichintha, 2024). Post-COVID, binding treaties penalising resource hoarding and AI-driven early-warning partnerships (e.g., OpenAI) could preempt crises (Otenyo, 2023).

Accountability demands a “Global Humanitarian Court” targeting R2P violations and annual rankings to shame non-compliant states (Hehir, 2019). Climate integration requires expanding refugee protections to climate-displaced populations, financing resilience projects (e.g., mangrove restoration), and conditioning aid on adaptation (Held 2013). Innovative financing—Humanitarian Impact Bonds, debt-for-aid swaps, and Universal Basic Emergency Income—could diversify funding and empower crisis-hit communities (Pattison, 2010).

➤ **Implementation Roadmap**

To shift humanitarian governance from reactive to proactive, prioritise 2024–2026 pilot projects like Sudan’s blockchain aid tracking and the “Global Health Equity Fund”, aiming for systemic reforms by 2030 (e.g., a “Global Humanitarian Court” and 30% localised funding). Hybrid models, such as Chandler, Rothe, Müller & Giménez González (2022) “adaptive humanitarianism” (merging realist donor alignment with constructivist local empowerment) and Gómez & Gasper’s (2022) tech-driven equity frameworks (e.g., blockchain in refugee aid), highlight interdisciplinary solutions. Balancing political and humanitarian goals requires stressing long-term stability benefits, incentivising states via diplomatic/economic ties and linking aid to security outcomes (e.g., framing peacebuilding as counterterrorism).

➤ **International Norms and Accountability Mechanisms**

Constructivism stresses in humanitarian operations standards and identities. Encourage and institutionalise humanitarian values, such as the need to protect (R2P), to transcend inadequate or contradictory standards (Bellamy, 2010). Working together, international institutions, NGOs, and civil society organisations should help to enhance humanitarian intervention standards. This might call for increased public awareness campaigns, activist activities, and educational programmes advancing world humanitarianism. Reiteration of state responsibility policies will help to ensure adherence to humanitarian values. A committed worldwide organisation tracking R2P and other humanitarian values might help to increase responsibility and stop crisis idleness (Finnemore, Martha and Sikkink, Kathryn, 1998).

➤ **Capacity and Effectiveness of International Institutions**

Under Liberal Internationalism, international organisations organise group projects and advance cooperation. To address these issues, the UN and WHO need better capacity and efficiency. We should increase funding for these groups to enable them to respond swiftly to humanitarian tragedies (Frenk, J., & Moon, S, 2013). The decision-making processes of these institutions have to be strengthened in order to accelerate responses and lower bureaucratic inefficiencies. UN quick response teams able to be sent right away in catastrophe situations might assist to increase humanitarian efforts (Weiss, T. G., & Wilkinson, R., 2018).

➤ **Equitable Access to Resources**

Unfair resource distribution under the COVID-19 outbreak underlined the need for an equitable humanitarian assistance strategy. Particularly in low-income nations, international organisations should offer crisis aid systems for vulnerable populations (O'brien, R., & Williams, M., 2025). This might mean building worldwide immunisation, medical supply, and disaster relief reserve funds for every nation depending on need rather than economic capability. Governments, international organisations, and the corporate sector should cooperate if they are to equitably divide resources and expertise (Ikenberry, 2012).

➤ **Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration**

Humanitarian governance needs to involve countries, international organisations, NGOs, and the corporate world. Sharing resources, knowledge, and skills across several stakeholders helps to enhance humanitarian responses (Barnett, M., & Weiss, T. G (Eds), 2018). International agencies could set locations where participants may work together and share best practices. Decision-making has to involve local communities so that humanitarian solutions satisfy the needs and priorities of affected people (Duffield, 2007).

➤ **Resilience and Focusing on Prevention**

At last, prevention of crises and resilience should take the stage. Underlying causes of vulnerability include poverty, inequality, and poor government; so, humanitarian governance ought to solve them (Fassin, 2011). Projects on community resilience, climate adaptability, and disaster risk lowering should be funded by international institutions and governments. By encouraging resilience and prevention, humanitarian governance may lower emergency interventions and increase sustainability. To ensure the successful application of these recommendations, a phased implementation approach is necessary:

Short-Term (2024–2026)	Long-Term (2027–2030)
- Pilot blockchain aid tracking in Sudan and Yemen.	- Fully operationalize the Global Humanitarian Court.
- Launch the Humanitarian Compliance Index.	- Achieve 30% localized funding targets.
- Establish the Global Health Equity Fund.	- Integrate Universal Basic Emergency Income into UN humanitarian protocols.

Conclusion

Contemporary humanitarian governance demands going beyond individual paradigms through embracing hybrid models that are inclined toward local agency and innovative financing, thus allowing policymakers to overcome ideological schisms and adopt effective, context-specific solutions. Future research should focus on building

stronger strategies to help communities deal with climate change, new technologies, and shifts in global power, especially in countries affected by conflict and climate issues. This can be done through flexible funding, debt relief, and insurance to reduce economic impacts. Preventive measures should look into using AI for predicting conflicts, early warnings, and climate resilience, applying machine learning to foresee issues like displacement, food shortages, and health crises for timely action, while also exploring how NGOs, businesses, and public-private partnerships can contribute to crisis management through corporate social responsibility, technology-driven aid, and resource mobilisation.

Preventive actions must investigate AI-based conflict forecasting, early warning, and climate resilience measures, utilising machine learning to predict displacement, food shortages, and health emergencies for early intervention, as well as investigating the growing role of NGOs, businesses, and public-private partnerships in crisis management through CSR efforts, technology-enabled aid delivery, and resource mobilisation. Innovations in technology—like blockchain for transparency, big data for disaster analysis, and drones for medical supply logistics—require hard scrutiny to realise their humanitarian potential, as well as immediate questions about the cascading effects of climate change—displacement, resource constraints, etc.—which require aid approaches that incorporate climate resilience through sustainable infrastructure, eco-agriculture, and carbon-offset funding. Through the integration of these dimensions, science can guide adaptive, anticipatory forms of governance that can steer unfolding global challenges with flexibility and vision.

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