

When should we intervene abroad?

Lane Kenworthy

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Outline

Why intervene?

How to decide

The future of humanitarian intervention

Why intervene?

Why intervene?

There is no democratically-elected supranational government to police the world

Consequently, since the early 1800s the default principle has been national sovereignty ("self-determination")

But virtually no one believes the national sovereignty principle should be absolute

Why intervene?

Traditional justifications for intervention

National interest of the intervening country

Preemptive self-defense

Why intervene?

From 1945 to 1989, cold war considerations dominated U.S. decisions about intervention, covert operations, and foreign aid

The justification was a combination of national interest and preemptive self-defense

The guiding question: What will be the impact on the USSR's strength and reach, and therefore on its ability to harm us?

The chief exception was Jimmy Carter's attempt to make human rights a key consideration

Why intervene?

With the end of the cold war in 1989-91, the U.S. and other rich countries began to consider other motivations for intervention

Humanitarian: genocide or some other significant violation of human rights

Democracy

Reactive: reverse the overthrow of a democratic government

Proactive: remove an authoritarian government

Why intervene?

Address a humanitarian crisis

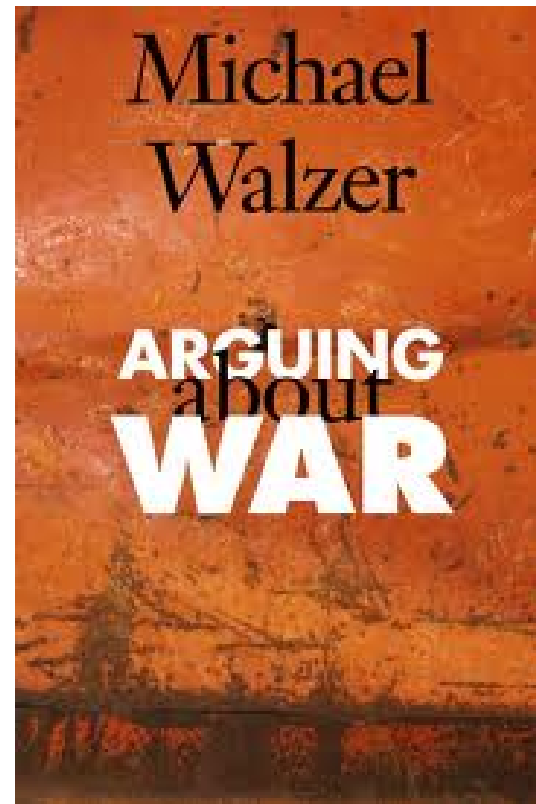
Massacres of civilians, forced displacement of populations, large-scale sexual violence

Before and during the cold war: Turkish killing of Armenians 1915, USSR under Stalin 1917-54, Chinese nationalists 1927-49, Nazi Germany 1940s, Chinese Communists 1950s-60s, Indonesia 1965, Burundi massacre of Hutus 1972, Cambodia's Pol Pot regime 1975-78, Uganda's Idi Amin regime 1972-79, Guatemala massacre of Mayans 1981-83

Post-cold war: Rwanda slaughter of Tutsis 1994, Congo war 1996ff, Serb massacre of Bosnians 1995, Darfur 2003ff

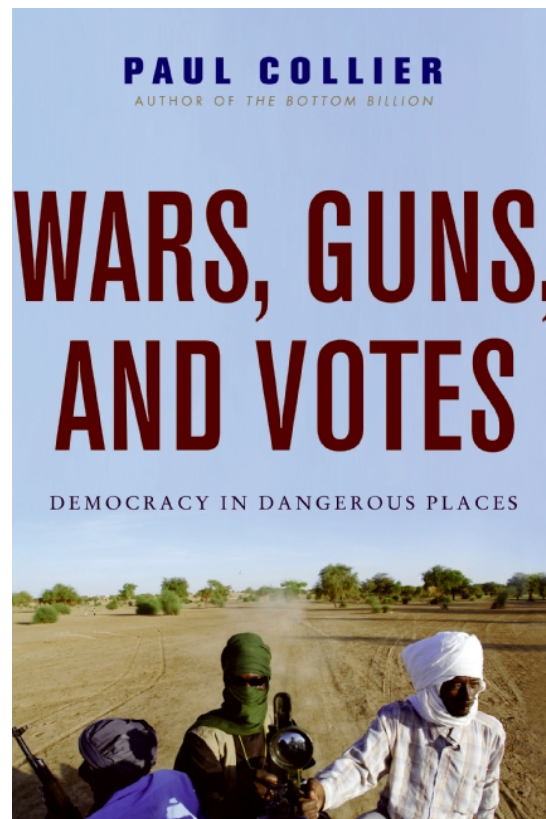
Why intervene?

Address a humanitarian crisis



Why intervene?

Reverse the overthrow of a democratic government



Why intervene?

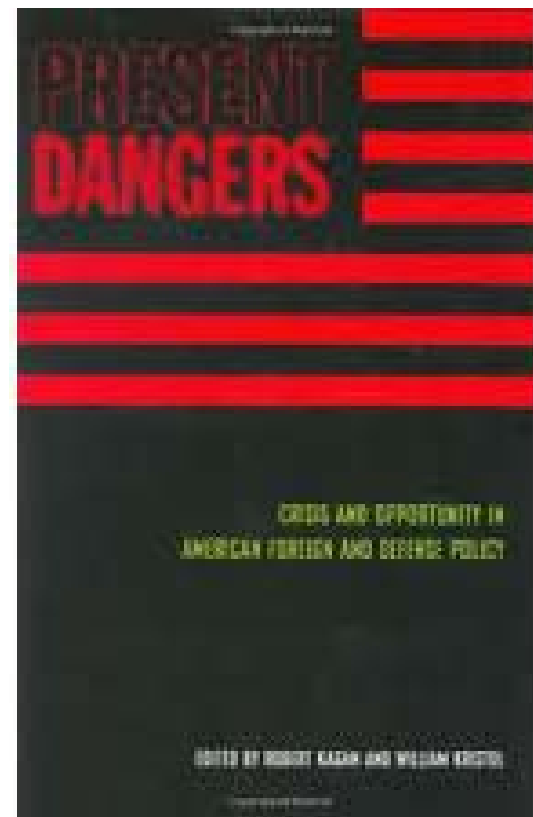
Proactive installation of democracy

This was George W. Bush's post-hoc rationale for our 2003 invasion of Iraq (the original justification was preemptive self-defense)

It's much more controversial than the other two

Why intervene?

Proactive installation of democracy



How to decide

How to decide

Considerations

1. How serious is the harm?
2. Can intervention solve the immediate problem?
3. Is the medium- and long-run impact likely to be positive?
4. Is the likely cost to Americans bearable?
5. Is external authorization needed?

1. How serious is the harm?

Stalin's regime in the former USSR is estimated to have caused the death of more than 60 million people

The number of Bosnian civilians killed by Serbs in the early 1990s is estimated at around 50,000

What about a military leader who overthrows a democratically-elected but corrupt president and promises elections within six months?

2. Can intervention solve the immediate problem?

Can the bad guys be defeated?

Will intervention result in increased death, injury, or displacement of the good guys? (Iraq?)

William Easterly: military presence makes it easier for the bad guys to obstruct efforts by humanitarian aid providers

2. Can intervention solve the immediate problem?

Our successes in Grenada 1983, Kuwait 1991, and Bosnia 1995 suggested grounds for optimism

But our struggles in Iraq 2003-11 and Afghanistan 2003ff have produced a return to the pessimism of the post-Vietnam years

3. Is the medium- and long-run impact likely to be positive?

Reconstruction difficulties

Severe economic disruption

Shortage of capable and honest political leaders

Destruction of civil society

3. Is the medium- and long-run impact likely to be positive?

Impact on neighboring countries and the region

For instance, our invasion of Iraq may have enhanced Iran's influence in the region

On the other hand, if Iraq can form a stable democracy it might increase pressure for democracy in nearby countries ("Arab spring")

Our invasion of Afghanistan has increased instability in Pakistan

3. Is the medium- and long-run impact likely to be positive?

Uncertainty

Societies are complex systems

It's problematic to predict based on past experience, because each case is unique

3. *Is the medium- and long-run impact likely to be positive?*

Uncertainty

The New York Times
nytimes.com

THANK YOU
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February 19, 2006

After Neoconservatism

By FRANCIS FUKUYAMA

As we approach the third anniversary of the onset of the [Iraq](#) war, it seems very unlikely that history will judge either the intervention itself or the ideas animating it kindly. By invading Iraq, the Bush administration created a self-fulfilling prophecy: Iraq has now replaced Afghanistan as a magnet, a training ground and an operational base for jihadist terrorists, with plenty of American targets to shoot at. The United States still has a chance of creating a Shiite-dominated democratic Iraq, but the new government will be very weak for years to come; the resulting power vacuum will invite outside influence from all of Iraq's neighbors, including Iran. There are clear benefits to the Iraqi people from the removal of [Saddam Hussein's](#) dictatorship, and perhaps some positive spillover effects in Lebanon and Syria. But it is very hard to see how these developments in themselves justify the blood and treasure that the United States has spent on the project to this point.

The so-called Bush Doctrine that set the framework for the administration's first term is now in shambles. The doctrine (elaborated, among other places, in the 2002 National Security Strategy of the United States) argued that, in the wake of the Sept. 11 attacks, America would have to launch periodic preventive wars to defend itself against rogue states and terrorists with weapons of mass destruction; that it would do this alone, if necessary; and that it would work to democratize the greater Middle East as a long-term solution to the terrorist problem. But successful pre-emption depends on the ability to predict the future accurately and on good intelligence, which was not forthcoming, while America's perceived unilateralism has isolated it as never before. It is not surprising that in its second term, the administration has been distancing itself from these policies and is in the process of rewriting the National Security Strategy document.

4. Is the likely cost to Americans bearable?

Dead and wounded U.S. soldiers

World War 1	117,000 dead, 204,000 wounded
World War 2	405,000 dead, 671,000 wounded
Korea	37,000 dead, 103,000 wounded
Vietnam	58,000 dead, 153,000 wounded
Bosnia and Kosovo	32 dead, 8 wounded
Iraq	4,000 dead, 32,000 wounded
Libya	0 dead, 2 wounded

4. Is the likely cost to Americans bearable?

Money

	Share of GDP in war's peak year
World War 1	14%
World War 2	36%
Korea	4%
Vietnam	2%
Bosnia and Kosovo	?
Iraq	1%
Libya	0.01% (\$2 billion)

4. Is the likely cost to Americans bearable?

If things don't go quickly and smoothly, domestic political support can erode

TV and the internet have greatly increased citizens' access to information about the nature and progress of wars

A lengthy humanitarian intervention is harder to justify domestically than one based on national interest

It helps to spread the personnel and financial burden across a coalition of countries

5. Is external authorization needed?

U.S. interventions authorized by a supranational body

United Nations

Kuwait 1990

Somalia 1993

Haiti 1994

Bosnia 1995

Regional alliance, such as NATO

Kosovo 1999

Libya 2011

5. Is external authorization needed?

U.S. interventions not authorized by a supranational body

Pre-1990 interventions

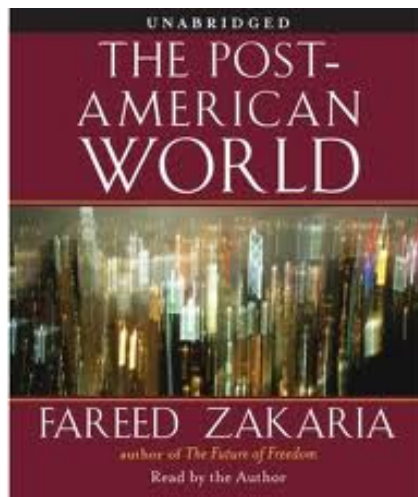
Afghanistan 2001

Iraq 2003

5. *Is external authorization needed?*

Some favor forming a new "League of Democracies" to replace the United Nations

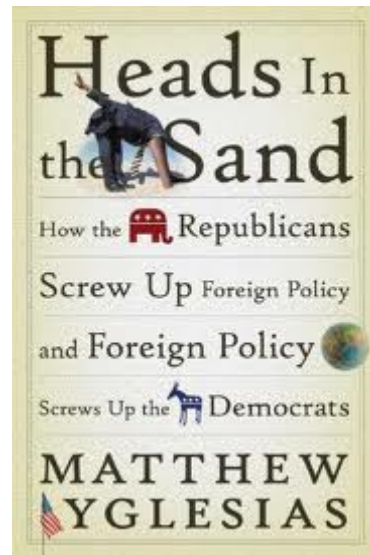
But this would formally split the world into two camps, and many experts believe the best way to deal with China and other nondemocracies is to work with them rather than against them



5. Is external authorization needed?

Matthew Yglesias argues that the dominant consideration guiding any intervention decision should be whether it will strengthen international institutions and rules

He suggests that this aim guided much of post-WW1 Democratic presidents' foreign policy, from Woodrow Wilson to Bill Clinton



5. Is external authorization needed?

But there are difficult cases

Kosovo 1999: the UN refused to authorize, so we acted through NATO

Iraq 2003: Suppose the UN had authorized Bush's request to invade? Would it have been the right thing to do?

Darfur 2004: Because of China's objection, the UN refused to authorize troops on the ground. Africa is beyond NATO's orbit. Would it have been wrong for the U.S. to go in alone to stop the genocide?

Humanitarian intervention's future

Humanitarian intervention's future

There is

Need

Precedent

Moral justification

Authorization by the United Nations (as a general principle)

Humanitarian intervention's future

At the moment, prospects are mixed

Dimmed somewhat by skepticism and pessimism, due to Iraq and Afghanistan

Reinvigorated by the Arab spring and Libya

Humanitarian intervention's future

Need

Iraq occupation of Kuwait, 1990

Somalia, 1993

Haiti coup, 1994

Rwanda genocide, 1994

Congo civil war, 1996ff

Sierra Leone attempted coup, 2000

Darfur (Sudan) genocide, 2003-present

Myanmar cyclone devastation, 2008

Various other less well-known situations in Africa and Asia

Suppression of democratic movements in the Middle East

Humanitarian intervention's future

Precedent

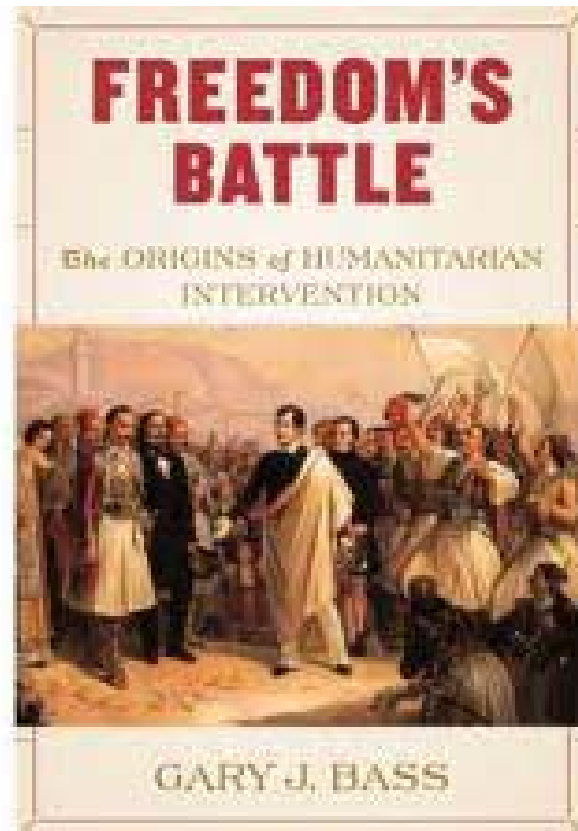
Though the question seems a new one (a product of the end of the cold war), actually there were several humanitarian interventions by Britain and France in the 1800s

In the 1990s there were successful multinational UN-authorized interventions in Kuwait and Bosnia

Libya in 2011

Humanitarian intervention's future

Precedent



Humanitarian intervention's future

Moral justification

Most agree that intervention is morally justified in cases of humanitarian crisis

Humanitarian intervention's future

Authorization by the United Nations

In 2005 the General Assembly of the United Nations ratified a new approach to humanitarian intervention, commonly referred to as "responsibility to protect"

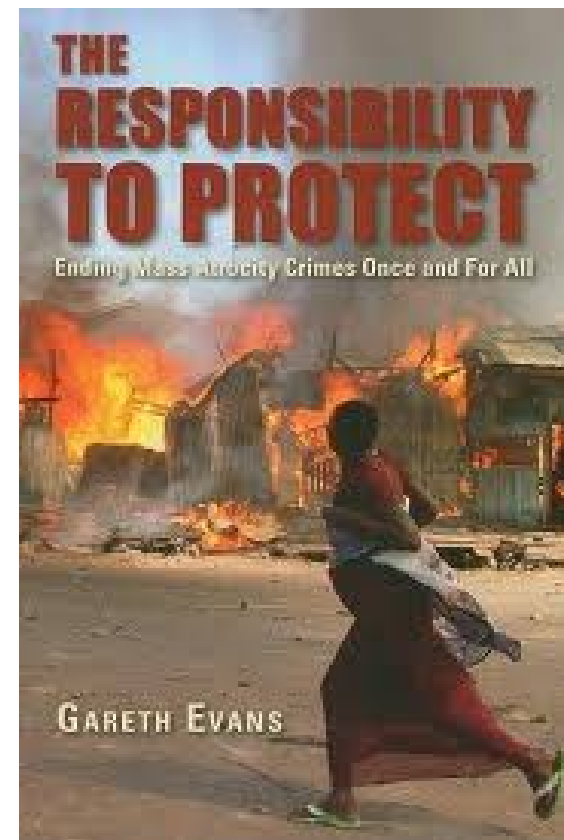
"The international community, through the United Nations, has the responsibility ... to help to protect populations."

This formally overrides the principle of national sovereignty

But each individual intervention still needs a specific authorization

Humanitarian intervention's future

Authorization by the United Nations



Humanitarian intervention's future

But there is now less support for humanitarian intervention than in the 1990s

9/11 turned the focus of rich countries toward domestic security and anti-terrorism

Our "weapons of mass destruction" mistake in Iraq has heightened concern about whether the quality of information we typically have is sufficient to justify intervention

The economic and political ascendance of China and Russia reduce the likelihood of UN Security Council approval of humanitarian intervention

Humanitarian intervention's future

But there is now less support for humanitarian intervention than in the 1990s

The U.S. action in Iraq has shifted sentiment against unilateral intervention

The results of the Iraq and Afghanistan invasions have reduced confidence in humanitarian intervention's potential to improve well-being

The verdict on Libya isn't yet in

Humanitarian intervention's future

But there is now less support for humanitarian intervention than in the 1990s

THE NEW REPUBLIC 

The Truth Will Not Set You Free

Everything we know about Darfur, and everything we're not doing about it.

Richard Just, *The New Republic* Published: Wednesday, August 27, 2008

The Devil Came on Horseback: Bearing Witness to the Genocide in Darfur

By Brian Steidle and Gretchen Steidle Wallace
(PublicAffairs, 237 pp., \$14.95)

War in Darfur and the Search for Peace

Edited by Alex de Waal
(Global Equity Initiative, Harvard University and Justice Africa, 431 pp., \$24.95)

Darfur's Sorrow: A History of Destruction and Genocide

By M.W. Daly
(Cambridge University Press, 368 pp., \$22.99)

Darfur: The Long Road to Disaster

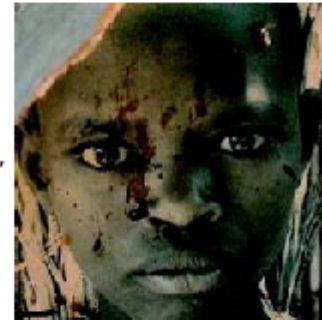
By J. Millard Burr and Robert O. Collins
(Markus Wiener Publishers, 340 pp., \$28.95)

The Translator: A Tribesman's Memoir of Darfur

By Daoud Hari, as told to Dennis Michael Burke and Megan M. McKenna
(Random House, 204 pp., \$23)

Heart of Darfur

By Lisa French Blaker
(Hodder & Stoughton, 348 pp., \$37.51)



Thomas Dworzak/Magnum Photos

Humanitarian intervention's future

The Obama administration is generally supportive of humanitarian intervention

President Obama, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, UN Ambassador Susan Rice

Libya

Summary

Summary

The world would be a better place if there were more well-done humanitarian intervention

Summary

The end of the cold war, the 1990s Kuwait and Bosnia precedents, and the UN's 2005 "Responsibility to Protect" resolution have made this possible

But there are big obstacles

- The UN's limited effectiveness hinders efforts

- The decision about whether to intervene hinges on a host of complex considerations

- The threat of terrorism, China's rising prominence, and the U.S. experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan have, for the moment, acted as a brake