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## **Intervention or Inaction: Bridging the gap between realism and constructivism by examining American decision-making in humanitarian crises**

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# **Intervention or Inaction?**

## **Bridging the gap between realism and constructivism by examining American decision-making in humanitarian crises**

**By Tyler Purinton**

### **Abstract:**

In explaining the causes of humanitarian interventions, constructivism, an emerging international relations theory, emphasizes the power of humanitarian norms in prompting states to respond to humanitarian crises. Realism, in contrast, contends that norms have little influence; security and material interests drive foreign policy. These schools of thought are at an impasse. While it is clear that states have undertaken interventions to protect human rights and end crimes against humanity, it is also clear that states often forego humanitarian intervention when wide-scale atrocities are being committed. The purpose of this project is to examine when norms matter by identifying the conditions under which states are likely to intervene for humanitarian reasons. I will do this by looking at US decision-making during crises in Somalia, Darfur, and Libya. By doing this, I will attempt to bridge the gap between constructivism and realism by specifying precisely when norms matter enough to compel state action and when their influence is insufficient.

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**Introduction:***Humanitarian Intervention and the United Nations:*

While the international community has begun to play an increasingly active role in condemning humanitarian violations since the end of the Cold War, the “right to live norm” has been around for decades. The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights stated that “everyone has the right to life, liberty, and security of person,” and the 1949 Geneva Convention further reiterated this point by outlining humanitarian protections of civilians in war.<sup>1</sup> The growing power of international humanitarian and human rights law indicates a change in perceptions of the responsibilities of governments that has only gotten stronger since the fall of the Berlin Wall. Thomas Weiss explains that this emergence of UN humanitarian intervention in the post-Cold War world can be attributed to the end of a bipolar international system. During the Cold War the UN displayed hesitancy to side with either superpower, fearing that a larger conflict could erupt from any intervention in both internal and international armed conflicts. When interventions did occur in internal crises they often came in the form of a unilateral intervention, such as the United States in Vietnam, or as a U.N. mission authorized under Chapter VI, which requires the consent of the belligerents and emphasized peaceful settlements. With the United States emerging as the global hegemon in a unipolar world, greater legitimacy was given to intervention in domestic affairs as “the definition of international peace and security was continually expanded to include very domestic actions.”<sup>2</sup> Not only was intervention seen as legitimate, but the UN began to sanction the use of military force through Chapter VII interventions if there was a perceived threat to international security.

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<sup>1</sup> The Universal Declaration of Human Rights: Article 3.” Last modified May 5, 2013, <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Weiss, *Humanitarian Intervention* (Polity, 2012), 45

The responsibility of humanitarian intervention was further expanded with the 2005 Responsibility to Protect Initiative (R2P). While sovereignty had been the prevailing norm defining international relations since the Treaty of Westphalia, R2P challenged this by making sovereignty conditional.<sup>3</sup> According to Gareth Evans in his “When is it Right to Fight,” the UN explicitly asserted that sovereignty is a responsibility, not a right, and that states should intervene and act accordingly when there are mass atrocity crimes.<sup>4</sup> In other words, R2P suggested that norms could influence state behavior.<sup>5</sup> However, the trends in humanitarian intervention have not always supported this assumption. For example, since the end of the Cold War states have intervened to uphold humanitarian norms in crises such as Cambodia, Somalia, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Libya. Each of these interventions had objectives ranging from alleviating food shortages to ending violence and genocide. However, states have also been recalcitrant to the humanitarian norm in cases such as East Timor, Rwanda, and Darfur. Why does this inconsistency occur?

Before continuing, it is necessary to first answer a very important question: what exactly *is* humanitarian intervention? While many scholars disagree over a singular definition of the term, most agree on the following three characteristics: 1) A military force is utilized, 2) the force is sent into a sovereign body that has not “committed international aggression against another state (at least directly), and 3) the intervention has humanitarian motives that are independent from the intervening state’s self-interest.<sup>6</sup> Humanitarian intervention is also statist in nature; it involves a state actor (or group of states) making decisions and executing them within other states. According to this definition, a non-governmental organization assisting with

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<sup>3</sup> Indeed, there have long been challenges to sovereignty, and even the UN Declaration of Human Rights and other treaties constrain it. However, R2P was about sanctioning the use of force for enforcement, whereas others were more about obligations that states should recognize.

<sup>4</sup> Gareth Evans, “When is it Right to Fight?” *Survival* 46.3 (2004): 59-81

<sup>5</sup> It is important to note that R2P is itself a norm and not legally binding. The presumption is that the R2P norm itself will guide state behavior.

<sup>6</sup> Alton Frye, *Humanitarian Intervention: Crafting a Workable Doctrine*. (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 2000)

clean-water initiatives in Sudan would not constitute a humanitarian intervention, nor would the United States sending monetary aid to Greece during the Cold War. These could be considered attempts to alleviate a humanitarian crisis, but they are not in themselves humanitarian interventions. I will use the above definition for the purpose of this project, which will examine the conditions under which states agree to intervene in humanitarian crises.

*Theoretical Explanations of State Behavior:*

This project will examine why states intervene in humanitarian crises from a practical standpoint, with the ultimate goal of filling the gap between the existing theoretical explanations of state behavior. The three dominant theoretical paradigms that are used to explain why states undertake interventions are realism, liberalism, and constructivism. Since liberalism is most useful to describe democracy promotion and establishing economic interdependence, and many humanitarian interventions do not have these objectives, it is not particularly useful for the purpose of this study.<sup>7</sup> However, constructivism and realism both provide explanations of state decision-making in humanitarian crises.

With historical roots that date back to the writings of Thucydides, realism argues that states operate first and foremost according to their own self-interests. Most commonly, these interests refer to enhancing one's security in relation to other states. In his essay "Intervention in Historical Perspective," the historian Marc Trachtenberg suggests that interventions are primarily used by a state to either maintain the status quo, or expand its own power. Both of these objectives are rooted in increasing a state's security, which realists see as the main concern that shapes state behavior. For example, referencing the restraints put on Germany following World War I and the intervention in the Rhineland, Trachtenberg explains that this occurred "to provide

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<sup>7</sup> Certainly, some humanitarian interventions are geared toward democracy promotion, or have economic goals, yet many humanitarian interventions clearly do *not* pursue democratization (ie. Somalia, Kosovo, Libya).

for European security- to protect Germany from once again becoming a threat to the peace.”<sup>8</sup>

While his paper primarily focuses on when interventions are considered “legitimate,” his assertion that states intervene largely for security reasons is essential for understanding why states do or do not participate in humanitarian interventions. According to Trachtenberg’s argument, if a humanitarian intervention does not offer a means to enhancing one’s security, the state will not take it. Similarly, a state will not undertake a humanitarian intervention if it has negative security implications.

Why are states so concerned with maximizing their own security? As the realist John Mearsheimer posits, the anarchic nature of the international system gives states reason to fear the actions of competitors. Because there is no overarching authority to restrict state behavior, states therefore have incentive to maximize their power and seek hegemony in order to ensure their own security.<sup>9</sup> Other realists such as Robert Jervis explain that when states maximize their security, their competitors respond by doing the same. Each state perceives the other’s actions as hostile, which initiates a spiral dynamic known as the “security dilemma.”<sup>10</sup> This dynamic is perhaps best exemplified by the arms race between the US and USSR, during which each state’s attempts to increase its security inadvertently increased the chance of war. It is evident that according to realism, norms and values hold little weight in influencing state behavior.

An important subdivision of realism is the concept of *realpolitik*, which explains that states first and foremost seek “the continuation or survival of the state as an independent entity.”<sup>11</sup> According to *realpolitik*, strategic and material interests dominate state decision-

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<sup>8</sup> Marc Trachtenberg, “Intervention in Historical Perspective,” in *Emerging Norms of Justified Intervention*, ed. Laura W. Reed and Carl Kaysen. (Cambridge: American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1993), 15-36.

<sup>9</sup> John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, (New York: Norton, 2001), 29-54

<sup>10</sup> Robert Jervis “Cooperation under the Security Dilemma.” *World Politics* 30.2 (January, 1978): 167-214.

<sup>11</sup> Frederic S. Pearson, Robert A. Baumann., and Jeffrey J. Pickering, “Military Intervention and Realpolitik” in *Reconstructing Realpolitik*, ed. Frank Whelon and Francis Diehl. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1994) 206.

making, and intervention is a strategy that “entails reaching into another sovereign state’s territory to change or rectify conditions considered unacceptable to the intervener.”<sup>12</sup> A study conducted by Pearson, Baumann, and Pickering shows that states generally base their policy on power rather than ideals and norms, indicating the importance of security and strategic concerns in intervention. This falls in line with traditional realist thinkers, such as Hans Morgenthau and John Mearsheimer who see power and domination as dynamic forces shaping foreign policy. However, *realpolitik* completely ignores the reality of humanitarian intervention and normative behavior that has increased in the years since the study was conducted. While realists believe states act according to a “logic of consequences” rationale (rationally assessing the costs and benefits of every action), it does not explain why states sometimes undertake extremely costly interventions when the benefits seem to be insignificant or completely absent.

In contrast, humanitarian norms pressure states to act according to a “logic of appropriateness.” James Marsh and Johan Olsen describe this as “following internationalized prescriptions of what is socially defined as...right or good, without...calculation of consequences and expected utility.”<sup>13</sup> This explanation of state behavior echoes the theory of constructivism, made famous by Alexander Wendt in 1992, which posits that state interests and behavior reflect shared norms and values rather than inherent material benefits. In her book *The Purpose of Intervention: Changing Beliefs about the Use of Force*, Martha Finnemore points out the shortcomings of realism in explaining humanitarian intervention. She argues “realists would expect to see some geostrategic or political advantage to be gained by intervening states...these

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<sup>12</sup> Pearson, Baumann, and Pickering, “Realpolitik,” 205

<sup>13</sup> James Marsh, and Johan Olsen, “The Logic of Appropriateness” in *The Oxford Handbook of Public Policy*, ed. Michael Moran, Michael Rein, and Robert E. Gooden. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

are hard to find in most post-1989 cases.”<sup>14</sup> Thus, according to constructivism, there must be some motivation other than self-interest that brings about intervention, such as promoting equality and self-determination, or promoting human rights. While this explains why humanitarian interventions occur, it does not explain why states sometimes *do not* intervene even when human rights are being blatantly violated, thus not upholding what is socially defined as “good and right.” To be sure, constructivists concede that there are other factors that influence state behavior along with human rights norms: “humanitarianism competes with (or complements) other incentives states might have to intervene...all interventions are prompted by a mixture of motivations in some way...”<sup>15</sup> The important question to answer is under what conditions do norms constitute the principle motivation for intervention, and under what conditions will norms be ignored because of other interests. Sometimes, for example, states will intervene because of human rights norms, but other factors such as strategic or security concerns, or financial costs, can hinder a response.

*Hypothesis:*

In this paper, I will attempt to bridge the gap between these theories by specifying precisely when norms matter enough to compel state action in humanitarian crises, and when their influence is insufficient. This study will focus primarily on U.S. decision-making in the Somalia Crisis (1991-1993), the Darfur Conflict (mid-2000s), and the Libyan War (2011). Utilizing what John Gerring refers to as a “crucial case,” my study aims to compare three cases that fit closely to my theory.<sup>16</sup> For instance, Somalia and Libya are two crises in which the US chose to intervene despite the lack of apparent security or material interests. This seems to be an

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<sup>14</sup> Martha Finnemore, *The Purpose of Intervention: Changing Belief of the Use of Force*. (New York: Cornell University Press, 2004). 461

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 462

<sup>16</sup> John Gerring, “Is there a (Viable) Crucial-Case Method?,” *Comparative Political Studies* 40.3 (2007): 231-53.

"easy" case for constructivism to explain, as the conventional view is that norms influenced behavior, but a difficult case for realism given the lack of a security motive. By the same token, Darfur was a case in which the US failed to act, despite Colin Powell recognizing that genocide was underway. This should be an easy case for realism to explain, but a much harder case for constructivism. If my theory is to bridge the gap between realism and constructivism it should be able to explain these cases by identifying the conditions under which norms matter.

Additionally, the three crises span three different decades, allowing me to demonstrate that my hypotheses are not era-dependent.

As with any study, it is imperative that my variables are strictly defined. George and Bennett advise researchers to approach data collection using the method of “structured, focused comparison” with clearly defined variables to ensure standardized data collection.<sup>17</sup> My research suggests that there are three conditions that must be fulfilled before the U.S. intervenes: 1) there must be a presence of global civil society providing information and political pressure to intervene, 2) the material costs of intervention must be relatively low, and 3) the intervention must not compromise the security/strategic interests of the U.S. The existence of all three conditions as a set should lead to my dependent variable: the occurrence of humanitarian intervention. To improve clarity, I devised a chart to represent the decision-making process to intervene in humanitarian crises (on following page).

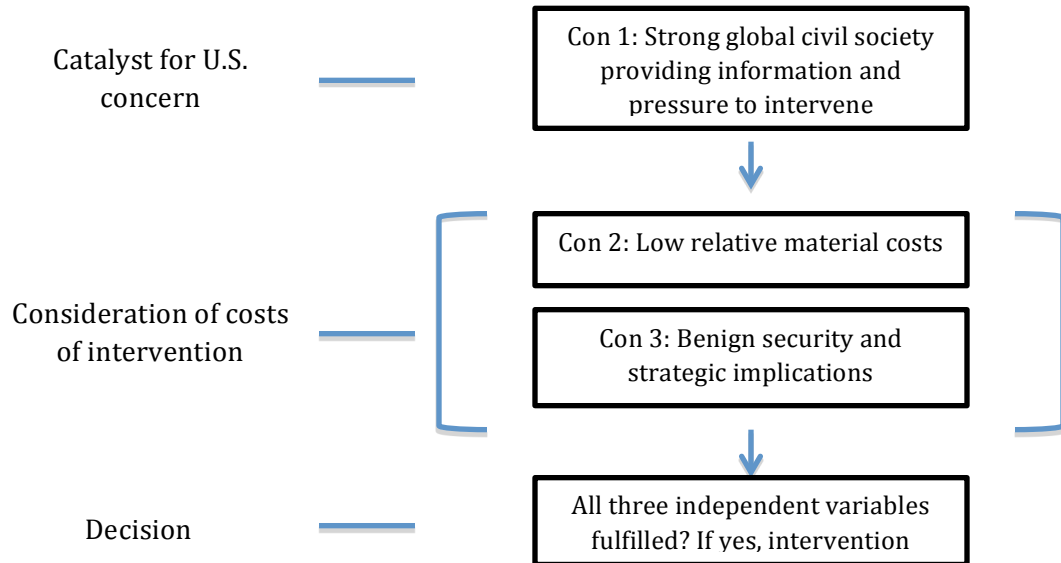
This chart illustrates the considerations of the U.S. when deciding to intervene in humanitarian crises. It demonstrates the catalyst role that global civil society plays in putting the crisis on the agenda, and the material and strategic costs that the U.S. must consider before deciding to intervene. According to my hypothesis, if and only if all three of the conditions

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<sup>17</sup> George, Alexander L., and Andrew Bennett. "The Method of Structured, Focused Comparison." *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005) 67-72.

above are fulfilled will intervention occur. The fulfillment of all three conditions is thus necessary and sufficient for intervention in humanitarian crises.

**Fig 1- U.S. Decision-making in Humanitarian Crises**



### **Description of Conditions:**

#### *The Role of Global Civil Society and NGOs:*

Global civil society describes the network of non-state actors and groups and the role they play in international governance.<sup>18</sup> Individuals, households, businesses and corporations, coalitions, and the media all fall under the umbrella of global civil society.<sup>19</sup> One of the most prominent actors in global civil society that has surfaced in recent years, and upon which this study will greatly focus, are non-governmental organizations. “The evidence is mounting,” argue Nelson and Dorsey, that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) can influence, and

<sup>18</sup> John Keane and G. John Ikenberry, “Global Civil Society?,” *Foreign Affairs* (2003) accessed March 3, 2014 <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/59214/g-john-ikenberry/global-civil-society>

<sup>19</sup> John Keane, *Global Civil Society?*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 8

sometimes even change, state policy.<sup>20</sup> The emergence of NGOs in international governance has altered the international system itself, marking a change from a completely state-centric understanding of IR to one in which non and sub-state groups challenge the interests and policies of state governments. NGOs claim to represent the interests of non-government actors, and push forward selfless ideas of what is good and right that might otherwise be ignored by states. The actual influence of NGOs is a matter of contention, however. Some academics such as Lucy Ford optimistically claim that NGOs and global civil society are catalysts of transnational movements that guide socio-cultural change and play prominent roles in international governance.<sup>21</sup> This pluralist view sees Westphalian sovereignty as declining, and humanitarian intervention as a manifestation of this development. Globalist and realist views, in contrast, maintain that the state is the primary actor in international governance, and that humanitarian NGOs are either an organ of the UN and human rights regimes or are completely powerless without working through the state.<sup>22</sup> As I will demonstrate in this paper, a realist view ignores the pervasive influence and dynamic character of NGOs. The U.S. generally does not intervene in humanitarian crises unless NGOs, and global civil society at large, perform two important functions: provide the state with important information about the conflict, and pressure it to act.

Keck and Sikkink are perhaps the most widely studied academics of global civil society and its role in transnational advocacy networks. In their book *Activists Beyond Borders*, they argue that such networks “use the power of their information, ideas, and strategies to alter the information and value contexts within which states make policies.”<sup>23</sup> They do this through four

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<sup>20</sup> Paul J. Nelson and Ellen Dorsey, *New Rights Advocacy: Changing Strategies of Development and Human Rights NGOs*, (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2008), 26

<sup>21</sup> Lucy Ford, “Transnational Actors,” in *Global Environmental Politics: Concepts, Theories, and Case Studies*, ed. Gabriela Kutting (London: Routledge, 2011)

<sup>22</sup> Nelson and Dorsey, *New Rights Advocacy*, 37

<sup>23</sup> Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 16

primary tactics: information politics, symbolic politics, leverage politics, and accountability politics. Through information politics, transnational advocacy groups provide states with important information and direct it toward the areas in government where it will be most influential. Such information can be of particular use when states are unwilling to invest their own resources in researching a humanitarian crisis, or when existing reports are impartial and ignore the true roots of the problem. Symbolic politics “call upon symbols, actions, or stories that make sense of a situation to an audience that is frequently far away.”<sup>24</sup> An example of this would be using media outlets to convey a humanitarian crisis to the population of a powerful state with the intent of generating sufficient public interest in addressing the problem. Leverage politics aims to call upon powerful actors within a network when weaker members lack adequate influence. Finally, accountability politics describes the effort to lead states to act upon the norms or principles that they have previously advocated for. Understanding these four tactics is extremely important for understanding how NGOs and global civil society as a whole operate. They demonstrate both the informational and advocacy roles that non-state actors play in influencing state behavior, and the methods that are used to accomplish this.

Taking the dynamic and pervasive nature of global civil society into account, and the hesitancy to intervene in humanitarian crises that has been historically evident in U.S. decision-making, I predict that the U.S. will not intervene in humanitarian crises unless there is a strong global civil society network providing the U.S. with information of the crisis and pressuring it to intervene.

### *The Role of Costs*

Material costs are heavily weighed by states when considering an action, and as Benjamin Valentino explains, “military intervention is a particularly expensive way to save

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<sup>24</sup> Keck and Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders*, 16

lives.”<sup>25</sup> Realism posits that states only act according to their self-interest. Thus, if states are to incur material costs through humanitarian intervention, and receive little if any benefit, there should be little incentive to intervene. Yet there have been many instances of humanitarian intervention over the past couple decades. Why is this? How do these instances differ from scenarios where the U.S. does not intervene?

One good way to approach this question is to look at opportunity costs foregone of different interventions. Opportunity costs is an economic term that, in the context of humanitarian intervention, describes “the foregone opportunities to which the resources for a military mission might have been put.”<sup>26</sup> For example, if state A spends \$500 million intervening in state B for humanitarian reasons, it is sacrificing the opportunity to use that money for, perhaps, more self-interested reasons. Indeed, the United States has used high costs to justify non-intervention in humanitarian crises in the past. During the Rwandan Genocide, for example, Washington blocked a Security Council initiative to send reinforcements and expand the mandate because of the costs of sending more troops.<sup>27</sup> As Valentino points out, the U.S. “lacked the will to pay even moderate costs...to prevent the genocide.”<sup>28</sup> Costs, among other things, was also an inhibiting factor to intervention during the Cambodian Genocide in the 1970s, which likely would have cost significantly more than any proposed intervention in Rwanda.<sup>29</sup> Simply put: costs matter.

Based on the significant role that costs play in decision-making, I predict that the U.S. will not intervene in humanitarian crises unless the perceived costs are relatively low.

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<sup>25</sup> Benjamin A. Valentino, “The True Costs of Humanitarian Intervention: The Hard Truth about a Noble Notion,” *Foreign Affairs* 90.6 (November/December, 2011) 66

<sup>26</sup> Valentino, “The True Costs of Humanitarian Intervention,” 66

<sup>27</sup> Alan J. Kuperman, “Rwanda in Retrospect,” *Foreign Affairs* (2000): 116

<sup>28</sup> Benjamin Valentino, “Still Standing By: Why America and the International Community Fail to Prevent Genocide and Mass Killing,” *Perspectives on Politics* (2003): 566

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 574

*Benign Security and Strategic Implications:*

As explained earlier in the introduction, the anarchic nature of the international system inevitably forces states to worry about their security. States fear each other, and because of this they strive to maximize their security and become the global hegemon. In the words of John Mearsheimer, “great powers are always searching for opportunities to gain power over their rivals.”<sup>30</sup> This idea is the basis for offensive realism, which posits that power and security are a state’s main objectives.

The security dilemma that characterized the Cold War perfectly epitomizes realism and the importance that states place in maximizing their security. Apart from the arms race, the United States and Soviet Union put great effort into expanding their respective spheres of influence and combating the influence of the other. Sometimes, this resulted in violent proxy conflicts such as the Vietnam War. Other times, it resulted in the U.S. funding or installing corrupt and authoritarian, but friendly, regimes for strategic gain (ie. Somalia, Iran). It is clear that the United States goes to extensive effort to maximize its security, and thus the logical contrapositive is true too: the United States will not pursue any action that will threaten its security.

This is evident by the United States’ unwillingness to intervene during the Cambodian Genocide. The nefarious killing campaign by the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia during the 1970s was virtually ignored by U.S. policymakers. As almost 1.5 million Cambodians were killed in the genocide, the United States maintained positive relations with Pol Pot’s government because, in the words of Henry Kissinger, it was a useful “counterweight” to the North Vietnam aggressors. Similar to its relationship with the Barre regime, the U.S. was “prepared to improve

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<sup>30</sup> Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 29

relations” with the Khmer Rouge even though they were “murderous thugs.”<sup>31</sup> However, after the Cold War ended, the U.S. led the UNTAC humanitarian operation in Cambodia, even though the crisis paled in comparison to what had unfolded two decades earlier.

Therefore, I predict that the United States will not intervene in humanitarian crises if it will threaten its security or strategic interests. If the U.S. does intervene, it is because the security/strategic implications are benign.

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## **Chapter 1- Humanitarianism in the Horn: UNITAF and the United States’ Decision to Intervene in Somalia**

### *Introduction:*

During the Cold War, Somalia was of strategic importance to both the Soviet Union and the United States. Under the leadership of the authoritarian Siad Barre, it aligned with the socialist bloc throughout the 1960s and most of the 1970s until the Ogaden War with Ethiopia in 1977. The Ogaden War was particularly significant because it marked a drastic change in the foreign policy of the two great powers in Africa. The Soviet Union stopped supplying aid to Somalia and instead began supporting the Derg government in Ethiopia, which it saw as an emerging Marxist state of geopolitical importance. In a truly quintessential display of Cold War politics, the United States responded by shifting its allegiance from Ethiopia to Somalia and shortly thereafter gained access to Somali military bases. Michael Johns, a policy analyst for the Heritage Foundation, an influential conservative think tank during the Reagan presidency, wrote in December of 1989 that “[Somalia] served as a balance to Soviet military involvement in the

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<sup>31</sup> Memorandum of Conversation: Secretary’s Meeting with Foreign Minister Chatchai of Thailand,” November 26, 1975, The National Security Archive at George Washington University, Washington D.C.

Horn of Africa and the Arabian Peninsula.”<sup>32</sup> Growing popular resistance against the Barre regime and reports of human rights violations in the late 1980s greatly concerned U.S. policymakers, who feared that a new regime would compromise American access to the region. The Heritage Foundation stressed the importance of reviving the military assistance program in Somalia, and argued that the Bush administration should open talks with the Somali National Movement and other opposition groups “to foster reconciliation” with the government.<sup>33</sup>

The end of the Cold War essentially negated any strategic importance that Somalia had had for the United States. A coalition group of opposition forces eventually overthrew the Barre regime in 1991, creating a power vacuum that various clans scrambled to fill. Somalia became a failed anarchic state that fell into an egregiously violent civil war that directly killed between 30,000 and 50,000 civilians by March 1992. Yet the Somali population suffered from more than just the violence. Inter-clan fighting caused severe devastation of the agricultural sector, precipitating a famine that took an additional 200,000 Somali lives by March.<sup>34</sup> In January, the Red Cross estimated that almost 3 million Somali citizens were suffering from severe nutritional needs. Despite the severity of the crisis, the Bush Administration hesitated to become involved in what they deemed a conflict resulting from generations of ethnic tensions. According to Colin Powell and other “selective engagers” in the administration, intervention would not be able to address the systemic factors that were causing the violence.<sup>35</sup> These “selective engagers” believed that military force should be used only when there were vital U.S. interests at stake, and that the lack of strategic and security concerns in Somalia gave the United States little incentive

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<sup>32</sup> Michael Johns, “Preserving American Security Ties to Somalia,” *The Heritage Foundation Backgrounders* no. 745 (December 26, 1989): 1 Accessed January 3, 2014 [http://s3.amazonaws.com/thf\\_media/1989/pdf/bg745.pdf](http://s3.amazonaws.com/thf_media/1989/pdf/bg745.pdf)

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 4

<sup>34</sup> Lisa Morje Howard, *UN Peacekeeping in Civil Wars*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 27

<sup>35</sup> Jon Western, “Sources of Humanitarian Intervention: Beliefs, Information, and Advocacy in the U.S. Decisions on Somalia and Bosnia,” *International Security* 26.4 (Spring, 2002), 112-142

to intervene. However, by July the Security Council adopted resolution 767 that authorized an airlift providing humanitarian assistance to Somali citizens, and by November the U.S. was prepared to take a leading role in a military intervention. What factors caused this reversal in policy, and what conditions were present that can explain why the U.S. intervened in the humanitarian crisis?

Recently, scholarly literature has emerged that downplays the role of the media and “the CNN effect” in explaining why the U.S. initially intervened in Somalia. Warren Strobel is at the helm of this argument; his analysis of evening news broadcasts in the months prior to the November 25<sup>th</sup> decision to intervene led him to suggest that media outlets were not particularly concerned with the humanitarian crisis in Somalia. While there was extensive coverage for about a month after Bush’s decision to start U.S. airlifts on August 12, Strobel explains that it began to decline by mid-September and did not make a revival again until November.<sup>36</sup> Jon Western echoes this viewpoint as well.<sup>37</sup>

If the media truly did play a smaller role than what has been conventionally understood, then why did the Bush Administration intervene? What convinced U.S. decision-makers that the conflict was one that should be militarily addressed, and not simply an ethnic struggle to be looked upon with pity, but ultimately dismissed?

### **Section One: Global Civil Society in Somalia:**

#### *NGOs and Jan Wescott’s Situation Reports*

After the coup that overthrew Siad Barre in January 1991, the United Nations and United States government evacuated nearly all personnel that were operating on the ground in Somalia.

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<sup>36</sup> Warren Strobel, “The CNN Effect,” *American Journalism Review* (May, 1996)

<sup>37</sup> Western, “Sources of Humanitarian Intervention.”

The UN remained more-or-less uninvolved in the conflict until April 1992 when it approved a skeleton 550-member force (the UNOSOM I Operation) to monitor a ceasefire and help aid agencies deliver food. However, until this point the International Red Cross and ten international NGOs served as “the sole international presence in Somalia.”<sup>38</sup> The context that these organizations operated within is difficult to imagine. Armed rival factions loomed at large, not to mention bandits that capitalized on the abundance of weaponry, and would often hijack aid convoys to either steal food or strengthen the control they had over the population. NGOs would sometimes resort to hiring armed guards to protect them, which were frequently no more than “khat-chewing teenagers with machine guns.”<sup>39</sup> Two U.S. agencies that were addressing the problem, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Office of US Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA), operated from Nairobi because of the danger. Both of these agencies worked closely with NGOs gathering information to send back to Washington.

Jan Westcott, the OFDA coordinator, served as the liaison between NGOs and the United States. Throughout 1991 and 1992 she sent a series of cables to Washington called “situation reports” that reported the humanitarian conditions on the ground, the programs of the various NGOs, and their successes and problems. Most of the information Westcott sent came from NGOs. Ken Rutherford explains that only a week after OFDA’s evacuation in January, Westcott began meeting with the representatives from CARE, Africare, World Concern, and AMREF to establish the “Emergency Relief Assistance to Post Civil War Somalia.” This coalition focused on “coordination of resources, sharing of knowledge of existing and planned programs, and

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<sup>38</sup> Abby Stoddard, *Humanitarian Alert: NGO Information and its Impact on US Foreign Policy*, (Bloomfield: Kumarian Press, 2006), 78

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 78

promoting donor confidence through effective communication.”<sup>40</sup> Through NGOs, Westcott hoped to demonstrate the severity of the situation to both the United States and the international community and urge them to provide greater assistance.

The situation reports that Westcott sent were grim and urgent. On June 23, 1992 the OFDA situation report indicated, “the death rate in Mogadishu is unknown, but NGOs estimate that between 100 and 200 people are dying every day in and around the city.” On October 1, OFDA’s report bluntly stated that “security incidents continue to bedevil the relief effort...the NGO community has urgently asked the UN to take steps to lessen the danger to relief workers.”<sup>41</sup> Many other reports echo similar sentiments. It is clear that from a policy standpoint, the principal objectives of NGOs were providing the U.S. government with information on the ground and appealing for assistance.

Abby Stoddard explains that these reports “made a deep impact in Washington for the simple reason that they were the only source of ground-level information coming from Somalia.”<sup>42</sup> Every report that OFDA sent provided the Bush Administration with not only information highlighting the severity of the crisis, but also with policy recommendations and potential responses, and according to Stoddard, they were the “must read” documents for anyone participating in Somalia discussions. This ground-level information was completely dependent on the work of NGOs.

### *Information Reaches Washington*

In Washington throughout 1991 and most of 1992, the general consensus was to remain uninvolved in Somalia. The Bush Administration, including Colin Powell, at the time the

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<sup>40</sup> Ken Rutherford, *Humanitarianism under Fire: The U.S. and U.N. Intervention in Somalia*. (Sterling: Kumarian Press, 2008), 16

<sup>41</sup> Stoddard, *Humanitarian Alert*, 91

<sup>42</sup> *ibid.*, 91

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, argued that the conflict was a result of decades of ethnic tension that the United States was incapable of settling. They believed that intervention should only be used when U.S. interests were at stake, and that Somalia fell outside of this distinction. Until the late summer of 1992 these “selective engagers,” to borrow a phrase from Jon Western, had “asymmetric advantages to information” and were able to frame the issue in a way that made intervention seem impractical.<sup>43</sup>

Liberal humanitarianists in Washington and throughout the United States steadily closed this information gap as they began accumulating their own facts and advocating for a greater U.S. response. Jan Westcott’s reports to Washington were certainly important in this regard, as they reached the desks of Congressmen, the State Department, and even Bush himself. But NGOs and transnational advocacy groups also worked to generate public awareness. The ICRC and CARE, both key organizations operating on the ground in Somalia, started their own grassroots campaigns in the U.S. to inform the public and lobby for additional support. *New York Times* correspondent Jane Perlez traveled to Somalia and became the first reporter to provide a first-hand account on the famine, drawing considerable attention from the U.S. public and winning a Pulitzer Prize in the process. Her trip was facilitated by the International Red Cross.<sup>44</sup> Other NGOs appealed directly to Bush himself. In November, a coalition of 160 U.S.-based NGOs called InterAction appealed to Bush both publically and privately describing the problems on the ground and the obstacles that relief groups were facing. The group urged the administration to ramp up its support for UN relief operations.<sup>45</sup>

OFDA also worked with NGOs to gain the attention of the media. Andrew Natsios, the director of OFDA from 1989 to 1991 and afterward Bush’s special emergency coordinator for

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<sup>43</sup> Western, “Sources of Humanitarian Intervention,” 117

<sup>44</sup> *ibid.*, 124

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 135

Somalia, explains that “Even if bureaucracies do not provide early warnings and there is no free press, international NGOS frequently provide...the media with information on what is happening in the field.”<sup>46</sup> According to Natsios, non-governmental organizations “played a particularly important-perhaps even decisive- role in generating media coverage...and influencing internal policy debates.”<sup>47</sup> While Warren Strobel effectively debunks the “CNN Effect,” arguing that the policy wheels in Washington were already set in motion long before the media began showing interest in Somalia, the media still plays an important role in policymaking. Many organizations recognize the media’s capacity to sway domestic opinion, which may in turn pressure the government to act quicker than it would have otherwise. Indeed, Andrew Natsios and OFDA worked diligently with NGOs to get the media involved as a way to pressure the Bush Administration to act. As Strobel remarks, any impact that the media had was “because the U.S. government had pressured itself into acting.”<sup>48</sup>

However, perhaps most important in getting the policy ball moving were the visits by Senators Nancy Kassebaum and Paul Simon, which not only drew additional attention to Somalia, but also made the conflict a higher priority within Congress. Upon their return, Kassebaum and Simon pleaded with other Senators to approve of an armed UN intervention to assist aid groups after witnessing the efforts of NGOs.<sup>49</sup> Senator Kassebaum specifically cited and praised the work of NGOs in a hearing before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. It is important to note that at this point, the proposed intervention did not emphasize peacekeeping, but rather simply *providing security to aid organizations*. As Kassebaum argued,

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<sup>46</sup> Andrew Natsios, “Illusions of Influence: The CNN Effect in Complex Emergencies” in *From Massacres to Genocide: The Media, Public Policy, and Humanitarian Crises* ed. Robert I. Rotberg and Thomas Weiss (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1996), 154

<sup>47</sup> Stoddard, *Humanitarian Alert*, 91

<sup>48</sup> Warren Strobel, *Late Breaking Foreign Policy: The News Media’s Influence on Peace Operations*, (Washington D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 1997) 135.

<sup>49</sup> Western, “Sources of Humanitarian Intervention,” 124

“the mandate would be simple: to provide protection for relief workers and guard relief supplies...”<sup>50</sup> This demonstrates that NGOs were important in making Somalia a political priority, but also were seen as a mechanism through which a military intervention could work to deliver food and relief aid.

The efforts of NGOs in bringing the issue to the media, the general public, and liberal humanitarianists in Congress succeeded in generating considerable pressure upon the Bush Administration to act. This pressure influenced the administration in a few important ways and ultimately convinced Bush that intervention was necessary. The first way that pressure influenced Bush to intervene is best understood by examining the effects of the 1992 election. On November 8, Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton defeated President Bush. Clinton, equipped with information coming from organizations on the ground, had been an outspoken advocate for military intervention in both the Balkans and in Somalia. In the first presidential debate on October 11, ABC reporter Ann Compton chastised Bush for his inaction in the crises: “Mr. President, how can you watch the killing in Bosnia and the ethnic cleansing, or the starvation and anarchy in Somalia, and not want to use America’s might...to try to end that kind of suffering.”<sup>51</sup> Bush responded by calling them “very complicated situations,” and repeated the same axiom of the selective engagers about “ancient ethnic rivalries” in Yugoslavia that made a military solution impossible. Clinton, in contrast, declared that the U.S. “should try to work with its allies to stop it.” While Clinton stopped short of suggesting military intervention, he explained how he had “urged” Bush to support the air-lift, and took an affirmative stance that the U.S. “must do what we can.”

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<sup>50</sup> Stoddard, *Humanitarian Alert*, 94

<sup>51</sup> “The First Clinton-Bush-Perot Debate, October 11, 1992,” posted by the Commission on Presidential Debates <http://www.debates.org/index.php?page=october-11-1992-first-half-debate-transcript>.

Global civil society, and in particular the media, highlighted this divergence between Bush and Clinton's approach to the crisis as a way to increase pressure on the president to act. CBS, ABC, and NBC ran a combined 48 news stories between August 2 and August 14 on their nightly news programs that challenged Bush and reported the rival views of Clinton.<sup>52</sup> Many of these stories contrasted Bush's seemingly apathetic reaction to the atrocities with Clinton's visible abhorrence. On August 9, ABC World News Tonight "extensively quot[ed] Clinton on the need for strong, decisive U.S. leadership."<sup>53</sup> After Clinton was elected as president, and amid intense political pressure to intervene, Bush recognized that the White House was about to be dominated by liberal humanitarianists that would likely intervene in at least one of the crises. In fact, at the time Bosnia seemed like the likely candidate. According to Western, Bush conceded to pressure to intervene because of the imminent power-swing in the White House. As Western explains, "Given the...intensity of mobilized political pressure to respond to humanitarian emergencies, Bush and Powell concluded that if the United States was going to intervene...it would be in Somalia and not Bosnia. Somalia was easier."<sup>54</sup> This is explained in more detail in chapter two.

NGOs and global civil society also succeeded in touching the heart-strings of the president. The exceedingly dismal ground reports began to take an emotional toll on Bush. Citing the personal accounts of National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft, Western explains that "[Bush] was personally affected by the reports and by the pressure he was receiving on Somalia by groups...[he] began asking his advisors whether anything could be done..."<sup>55</sup> This sentiment is reflected in a statement Bush made during the first presidential debate: "I am very

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<sup>52</sup> Western, "Sources of Humanitarian Intervention," 127

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 127

<sup>54</sup> *ibid.*, 118

<sup>55</sup> *ibid.*, 136

concerned about [Bosnia]. I am concerned about ethnic cleansing. I am concerned about a tax on Muslims.”<sup>56</sup> The evidence also suggests that Bush was motivated by past experiences.

According to Andrew Natsios, President Bush drew a parallel between the Somalia crisis and the 1985 Sudan famine, which he had visited while serving as Vice President.<sup>57</sup> Natsios insists this memory influenced his decision to intervene, as well as other genuinely altruistic concerns.

Further, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for African Affairs James L. Woods remembers, “it was truly his [Bush’s] personal decision, based in large measure on his growing feelings of concern as the humanitarian disaster continued to unfold...”<sup>58</sup> Although Bush certainly did not make a visceral decision to intervene, the information he received from NGO reports clearly influenced him on an emotional level and motivated his decision.

Another way that civil society pressure influenced Bush’s decision was by threatening his legacy. Despite Bush’s successful foreign policy record, in particular his impressive coalition building and management of the Gulf War, his track record on humanitarian crises was not something Americans viewed positively. Shortly after Bush announced the U.S. would lead the operation, a joint poll by the *New York Times* and CBS revealed that 81% of participants believed sending American troops into Somalia was the right thing to do. 70% even agreed that the mission justified the loss of American lives.<sup>59</sup> With the American public clearly on the side of the liberal humanitarianists, Bush believed, according to Brent Scowcroft, that intervention in Somalia would be a positive contribution to his legacy.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> “The First Clinton-Bush-Perot Debate, October 11, 1992”

<sup>57</sup> Natsios, “Illusions of Influence,” 161

<sup>58</sup> Andreas Krieg, *Motivations for Humanitarian Intervention: Theoretical and Empirical Considerations*, (Dordrecht: Springer Press, 2013), 74

<sup>59</sup> Luke Glanville, “Somalia Reconsidered: An Examination of the Norm of Humanitarian Intervention,” *Journal of Humanitarian Assistance* (September, 2005), 5

<sup>60</sup> Western, “Sources of Humanitarian Intervention,” 137

In July, Bush agreed to an airlift that would deliver relief to suffering Somalis, and on the 26<sup>th</sup> the Security Council passed Resolution 767 to authorize it. On the 25<sup>th</sup>, the President finally submitted to months of political pressure and called for the deployment of U.S. forces through a U.N. sanctioned military intervention. The mandate of the UNITAF operation, dubbed Operation Restore Hope, was to create a safe environment for the delivery of aid.<sup>61</sup> For the United States, this was an unprecedented policy decision that deviated significantly from the ideology of the selective engagers. Without the information and pressure from NGOs and global civil society at large, it is unlikely that U.S. military involvement would have ever occurred. In fact, the first situation report following U.S. deployment explicitly stated that Operation Restore Hope was “in response to sentiment expressed” by the U.N., U.S. government representatives, and *non-governmental organizations*.<sup>62</sup>

*The Interventions: An NGO-Oriented Perspective*

When the UN first got involved in mid-1992 with UNOSOM I, its services were often ineffective and paled in comparison to the efforts of NGOs. Westcott explains that the UN Development Programme initially viewed the work of aid groups as inferior and tried to distance itself from them until “they realized...NGOs were way ahead of them in terms of knowing what the situation was in Somalia and planning relief interventions.”<sup>63</sup> The NGOs that had been operating on the ground were already experienced in distributing food (delivering and transporting approximately 21,000 megatons of food from January to October, 1991), reporting hostilities and looting, and establishing rehabilitation programs in hospitals. They understood

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<sup>61</sup> “Somalia- UNOSOM 1,” UN website. Last modified March 21, 1997  
<http://www.un.org/Depts/DPKO/Missions/unosomi>

<sup>62</sup> USAID/OFDA, *Somalia Situation Report No. 17, December 17, 1992*, by USAID/OFDA. (Washington D.C.: U.S. Agency for International Development, 1992),

<sup>63</sup> Center for Policy Analysis and Research on Refugee Issues, *The Somalia Saga: A Personal Account 1990-1993*, by Jan Westcott (Washington D.C.: U.S. Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance, 1994), 19  
[http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\\_docs/pdabk961.pdf](http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pdabk961.pdf)

the particular factors that were contributing to the fighting and hindering the humanitarian response to a far greater degree than the UN did.

The UNITAF operation's original mandate was NGO-centric. It was established to protect aid organizations and help their convoys deliver relief, further demonstrating global civil society's influence on U.S. policy. In terms of protecting aid convoys, Operation Restore hope is generally viewed as a success. However, the lack of a strategy regarding interclan warfare and peacekeeping stripped the intervention of its ability to address the systemic factors of the conflict. Some argued that, for example, if military forces had worked to disarm militia groups or raid weapons caches, perhaps the violence in Somalia would have declined. Yet American forces often worked with the warlords who were in control of the humanitarian aid routes, urging them to cooperate with food delivery and therefore giving them some sense of political legitimacy.<sup>64</sup> Because of this, UNITAF was unable to end the civil war and completely alleviate the suffering.

### *Conclusion*

Non-governmental organizations were important actors in convincing the Bush Administration to intervene. NGOs worked with Jan Westcott and OFDA to generate reports illustrating the worsening humanitarian crisis on the ground, and this information was extremely important in mobilizing liberal humanitarianists in the public and in the government. Additionally, NGOs were the catalyst for the political pressure against the administration to act, and they worked with the media to escalate this pressure as the crisis worsened. Without the strong global civil society network, it is unlikely that Somalia would have ever been an important item on Bush's agenda, not to mention a target of intervention.

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<sup>64</sup> Howard, *U.N. Peacekeeping in Civil Wars*, 26

## Section Two: Low Costs in Somalia

While the Bush Administration was contemplating action in Somalia throughout 1992, another issue was beginning to flare up in the Balkans. In March 1992, Muslims and Croats in Bosnia voted for independence from Yugoslavia in a referendum that was boycotted by the Serbs. In April, the European Union officially recognized Bosnia and Herzegovina as a sovereign entity, and a month later the United Nations followed suit by accepting it as a member state. Tensions between the Bosniaks and Croats, who favored independence, and the Serbs, who preferred remaining with Yugoslavia, heightened and eventually culminated in full-fledged civil war. Serbian President Slobodan Milošević and the Serbs set out to establish a Serb Republic in the region, and through a sweeping campaign of violence occupied around 70% of the country by April.<sup>65</sup> Serb forces employed methods reminiscent of the Rape of Nanking or the Cambodian Genocide by the Khmer Rouge in the 1970s: they looted and burned Bosniak villages and beat, raped, and killed innocent civilians. Over two million people were refugees by the end of the war. The Bosnian government lost any authoritative capability it had once had, and in May the United Nations increased its involvement by imposing sanctions on Serbia. Just as there was mounting pressure on the Bush Administration to intervene in Somalia, voices began to call for a U.S. presence in the Balkans as well. Faced with two horrific humanitarian crises and tremendous pressure to act, the Bush Administration realized it had to do something. This chapter will demonstrate how the low relative material and personnel costs of UNITAF played a decisive factor in the Bush Administration ultimately intervening in Somalia instead of Bosnia. Intervention was possible because the Somalia operation was seen as relatively cheap compared to the alternative. Otherwise, the Somalia intervention may never have happened.

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<sup>65</sup> "Chronology- What Happened During the War in Bosnia,?" *Reuters*, July 21, 2008 Accessed January 5, 2014 <http://www.reuters.com/article/2008/07/21/idUSL21644464>

*Bosnia: Another Vietnam*

As domestic pressure for a Bosnia intervention grew, selective engagers in the Bush Administration increased their efforts to frame the crisis as a result of centuries of ethnic feuds. It was very much the same approach that was taken when explaining inter-clan warfare in Somalia. In an attempt to divert American interest away from intervention, Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger argued in 1992, "this war is not rational. There is no rationality at all about ethnic conflict. It is gut; it is hatred; it's not for any common set of values or purposes; it just goes on."<sup>66</sup> Acting on the public distaste for American involvement in Southeast Asia less than two decades earlier, Eagleburger compared the conflict to Vietnam. He argued that even a limited intervention in Bosnia would have calamitous consequences, as the 'do a little bit' approach often slowly evolves into more invested involvement and a protracted conflict, as evidenced in Vietnam. Indeed, American military strategy during the Bush Administration was based upon what is now known as the Powell Doctrine. Named after General Colin Powell, the doctrine argues that any war involving the United States should be fought with overwhelming force against the enemy to minimize American casualties and ensure a decisive victory. The strategy had been largely successful in the 1991 Gulf War, and by nature opposed the limited approaches to conflicts that were being advocated for the Bosnian War. To Powell, suggestions of a limited approach completely disregarded the reality of the conflict: "as soon as they tell me it is limited, it means they do not care whether you achieve a result or not. As soon as they tell me it's 'surgical,' I head for the bunker."<sup>67</sup> The Bush Administration simply did not want to be

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<sup>66</sup> Western, "Sources of Humanitarian Intervention," 131

<sup>67</sup> Michael R. Gordon, "Powell Delivers a Resounding No on Using Limited Force in Bosnia," *New York Times*, September 28, 1992, accessed December 21, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/1992/09/28/world/powell-delivers-a-resounding-no-on-using-limited-force-in-bosnia.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm>

drawn into another Vietnam-like quagmire in which there was no clear solution, and especially not in a conflict that had no clear U.S. interests at stake.

Yet even a limited intervention would be unbearably costly for the United States. The Joint Chiefs of Staff predicted in June of 1992 that an emergency humanitarian airlift, far cheaper than a full-scale military intervention to stop the conflict, would itself require over 50,000 American troops to secure a perimeter around the Sarajevo Airport. The predictions for a military intervention were even more exceptional. In August, the Joint Chiefs of Staff told Congress that between 60,000 and 120,000 troops would be needed to break the siege of Sarajevo by the Army of Republika Srpska (the armed forces of what was then known as the Serbian Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina), and a whopping 400,000 would be needed for a full cease-fire.<sup>68</sup> President Bush believed that the European Union should bear these costs rather than the United States, and that the problem in the Balkans was fundamentally a European issue and not an American one.<sup>69</sup>

#### *Pressure for U.S. Action Mounts*

The efforts of the selective engagers in the Bush Administration to frame the Bosnia conflict as unsolvable did not stop the flux of demands for intervention. Again, the Bosnia narrative unfolded in a similar manner as Somalia's. The *New York Times* and *Washington Post* published articles advocating for intervention and condemning the Bush Administration for its response, arguing that American taxpayers should expect "more for their money than no-can-do."<sup>70</sup> NGOs worked closely with members of the Senate Intelligence Committee to determine whether Milošević's armed forces were committing genocide, and appealed to the administration

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<sup>68</sup> Western, "Sources of Humanitarian Intervention," 130

<sup>69</sup> "The War in Bosnia 1992-1995," U.S. Department of State Office of the Historian, accessed January 2, 2014, <http://history.state.gov/milestones/1993-2000/bosnia>

<sup>70</sup> Western, "Sources of Humanitarian Intervention," 133

to act.<sup>71</sup> Eventually, the aggregate pressure for intervention in Somalia and Bosnia, as well as President Bush's genuine humanitarian concerns, influenced a change in U.S. policy. The Bush Administration realized that its inaction was politically and morally costly and that some type of action was necessary, and ultimately decided to intervene in Somalia instead of Bosnia. As Secretary Eagleburger explains, intervening in Somalia was “a way for the administration to take some of the pressure off not doing anything in Bosnia.”<sup>72</sup> Yet why did Bush agree to a Somalia operation and not Bosnia, when the two humanitarian crises were similarly destructive?

*Somalia: A Relatively Low-Cost Operation*

Somalia presented itself to the Bush Administration as a relatively low cost operation that could divert public attention away from the Bosnia crisis. Though the intervention certainly entailed costs, the personnel commitments paled in comparison to what a Bosnia operation would have entailed. At the height of UNITAF, the United States had approximately 25,000-30,000 boots on the ground to lead the operation, half of what the Joint Chiefs of Staff predicted for an airlift in Bosnia and about one-fourth of what was deemed necessary to break the siege of Sarajevo.<sup>73</sup> UNITAF's mandate was also limited in scope, especially in comparison to what military planners were discussing for Bosnia. President Bush described the operation's objective to Congress and the public as simply “insur[ing] the safe delivery of food Somalis need to survive.”<sup>74</sup> Lawrence Eagleburger was more blunt but indicated the same sentiment, saying the intention was to “feed and get out.”<sup>75</sup> The mandate did not mention disarmament of clan militias and noticeably avoided any obligation to end the violence and provide stability. Indeed, Colin

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<sup>71</sup> Western, “Sources of Humanitarian Intervention,” 131

<sup>72</sup> Stoddard, *Humanitarian Alert*, 84

<sup>73</sup> Western, “Sources of Humanitarian Intervention,” 112

<sup>74</sup> Seyom Brown, *The Illusion of Control: Force and Foreign Policy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institute, 2003) 29

<sup>75</sup> Stoddard, *Humanitarian Alert*, 105

Powell even withheld his support for the operation until it was certain that the U.S. would be responsible only for securing the delivery of humanitarian aid and not for peacekeeping.<sup>76</sup>

The relative low costs of the operation thus made Somalia a much more attractive option than Bosnia. After finally committing to the operation, the Bush Administration repeatedly justified their decision by using this rationale. Eagleburger, who had earlier called the war in Bosnia "not rational" and unmanageable for the U.S. military, argued that Somalia was an area where "we can, in fact, affect events." He continued by insisting, "there are other parts of the world where things are equally tragic, but where the costs of trying to change things would be monumental- in my view, Bosnia is one of those."<sup>77</sup> Bush's National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft also highlighted the importance of UNITAF's relative low military costs as a reason for the policy change. He explained that "we thought that the military costs would be low, and the chances of something going wrong were almost non-existent. The net was clearly a plus."<sup>78</sup> It is evident that Scowcroft and Eagleburger, as well as other Bush Administration officials, were willing to bear the costs of the Somalia but not Bosnia. Pushed into a corner in which the only escape was taking some form of action, decision-makers reasoned that the benefits of taking action in Somalia outweighed the material costs of the operation, something that could not be said for a Bosnia intervention.

Senior military officials, arguably the most resistant to intervention throughout 1992, reluctantly acceded to the pressure by the end of the year and assured Bush that they could get the job done. Again, their planning was based the low costs of Somalia compared to Bosnia. On November 20th at a National Security Council meeting, the Deputies Committee discussed three

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<sup>76</sup> Glanville, "Somalia Reconsidered," 6

<sup>77</sup> Glanville, "Somalia Reconsidered," 7

<sup>78</sup> Matthew A. Baum, "How Public Opinion Constrains the Use of Force: The Case of Operation Restore Hope," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 34.2 (June, 2004): 198. Accessed December 5, 2013  
[http://www.hks.harvard.edu/fs/mbaum/documents/Somalia\\_PSQ.pdf](http://www.hks.harvard.edu/fs/mbaum/documents/Somalia_PSQ.pdf)

possible avenues for dealing with Somalia: increasing financial support for the current UN peacekeeping force, establishing a broader UN effort for which the US would provide strictly logistical support, or leading a multi-national intervention. Initially, the intervention option was discarded. Yet the next day Admiral David Jeremiah changed his stance and told the deputies meeting that the military was available to lead an operation in Somalia. While he recognized that deploying a force of around 30,000 would certainly be costly, he explained that "Bosnia made it seem as if we could do Somalia with a relatively moderate force... thirty thousand wouldn't get you a running start in Bosnia."<sup>79</sup> From Jeremiah and the Joint Chiefs of Staff's perspective, if there was no way around intervention, Somalia was by far the more sensible operation.

### *Conclusion*

After months of tremendous pressure from non-governmental organizations, the public, and government liberal humanitarianists, the Bush Administration reversed their non-intervention policy. However, the decision to intervene specifically in Somalia and not Bosnia was rooted in costs. Although the situation in Bosnia in 1992 was certainly dire, the Bush Administration and senior military planners concluded that intervention in the Balkans would be not only extremely expensive, but also risky. Somalia, in contrast, was seen as a relatively low-cost operation with a higher chance of success. It was thus a more attractive option to policymakers, who saw intervention as a way to pacify advocates who were arguing for American action in both areas.

### **Section Three: Benign Security/Strategic Implications in Somalia:**

The paramount priority of American military planning during the Cold War years was countering Soviet power. Korea, Southeast Asia (ie. Cambodia, Vietnam), Latin America (ie.

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<sup>79</sup> Western, "Sources of Humanitarian Intervention," 137

Nicaragua, Guatemala, Cuba, El Salvador), the Middle East (ie. Iran, Afghanistan), Western Europe (ie. Greece), and Eastern Europe (ie. Hungary) all became areas of strategic importance where the United States and Soviet Union sought to extend their influence. The Horn of Africa was no exception. From the late 1970s throughout the following decade, Somalia served as an important regional counterweight to Soviet influence in Ethiopia. Yet as tensions eased with the fall of the Berlin Wall, the strategic significance of Somalia dissipated almost instantly. This chapter will explain Somalia's strategic significance, or lack thereof, during the humanitarian crisis that plagued the nation in the early 1990s. It will demonstrate that while humanitarian intervention would have been out of the question for the United States during the 1980s, a period when the Siad Barre regime's human rights abuses first came to light, the lack of security and strategic implications after the Cold War made intervention strategically uncostly and a viable course of action.

#### *The Strategic Importance of Somalia during the Cold War*

Located by the Red Sea shipping lanes and the Bab-el-Mandeb straits, Somalia was of substantial interest to the United States during the Cold War years. This stemmed from the fact that Somalia's geography is particularly conducive for shipping oil. The *Petroleum Economist* estimated in October 1989 that a whopping 500,000 barrels of crude oil passed through the Gulf of Aden daily, with a significant volume reaching Europe, North America, and American allies in Asia.<sup>80</sup> Additionally, the Bab-el-Mandeb straits, referred to as the "chokepoint" of the Horn of Africa, serves as the principle channel of oil shipments between the Persian Gulf and Western

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<sup>80</sup> *Petroleum Economist*, (October 1989): 325.

Europe.<sup>81</sup> During the 1970s, and especially after the OPEC oil embargo, the United States began taking steps to ensure that it had clout in the strategically important region.

Another matter of concern for the United States was the deep Soviet military involvement in neighboring Ethiopia. Although the U.S.S.R. had established friendly diplomatic relations with the Barre regime throughout the 1970s, signing a treaty of friendship and cooperation with Somalia in 1974 (validated by over \$400 million in military support), the Soviets abruptly changed course in 1977. Recognizing Ethiopia as “the greater strategic prize,” the Soviet Union withdrew its support for Barre at the start of the Ogaden War and offered military assistance to the state’s new leader, Mengistu Haile Mariam.<sup>82</sup> Michael Johns of the Heritage Foundation suggests that this reversal of policy was a well-calculated move by the Soviet Union that was driven by strategic considerations. The U.S.S.R. was taking advantage of the strained relations between the United States and Mariam, fueled by accusations of the Ethiopian leader’s human rights violations, while at the same time recognizing that it simply had more to gain by aligning with Ethiopia. Having a military presence in Ethiopia meant that the Soviet Union could obtain access to Red Sea ports a mere 200 miles away from Saudi Arabia. It also bolstered the U.S.S.R.’s regional power in relation to the United States.

As the Cold War paradigm suggests, for every strategic action taken by one superpower there was an equal and opposite reaction by the other. After the Soviet Union signed a friendship agreement with Ethiopia in November 1978, and invested over 1 billion dollars in weapons assistance over the course of the following year, Barre terminated his agreement with Moscow

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<sup>81</sup> David N. Gibbs, “Realpolitik and Humanitarian Intervention: The Case of Somalia,” *International Politics* 37, (March 2000): 43 .

<sup>82</sup> Johns, “Preserving American Security Ties to Somalia,” 7

and looked to the Western bloc for assistance.<sup>83</sup> However, the United States was initially reluctant to support Somalia. The Barre regime had claimed ownership of the Ogaden region and supported the insurgency, a move that neither the United States nor the other African countries had looked at favorably. Additionally, negative sentiment in America regarding the Vietnam War made military planners hesitant to align with another warring state.<sup>84</sup> Yet Ethiopia's evident success in the Ogaden Conflict ultimately convinced the United States that countering Soviet influence in the region was a necessity, and by the end of the decade Washington began providing Mogadishu with developmental and military assistance. In 1978, the U.S. opened an Agency for International Development office in Somalia and established a series of development initiatives including livestock programs, management training programs, and health services.<sup>85</sup> Between 1979 and 1989, USAID contributions totaled over \$620 million and "targeted sectoral growth and stabilizing the economy in the short run, while intending to address larger macroeconomic problems later in the program."<sup>86</sup> In terms of military aid, the U.S. granted Somalia an additional \$133.5 million between 1980 and 1989, as well as military training and weapons.<sup>87</sup> In sum, Somalia received more than \$800 million of economic and military aid from the United States between 1971 and 1991.<sup>88</sup>

In return, Somalia granted the United States access to various key bases and ports in the country. An agreement in 1980 allowed the U.S. to use airfields and dock facilities at the port of Berbera (ironically built by the Soviet Union) in the north of Somalia, the port of Kismayu in the

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<sup>83</sup> Geir Lundestad, *East, West, North, South: Major Developments in International Politics Since 1945*, (London: Sage Publications, 2010), 91

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 91

<sup>85</sup> Johns, "Preserving American Security Ties to Somalia," 7

<sup>86</sup> United States Agency for International Development, *Development Disaster: USAID in Somalia 1978-1990*, by Melissa C. Pailthorp. PNABX-503 (Washington D.C.: U.S. Agency for International Development, 1994), 3

<sup>87</sup> Johns, "Preserving American Security Ties to Somalia," 7

<sup>88</sup> George B.N. Ayittey, *The Somali Crisis: Time for an African Solution*, (Washington D.C.: The Cato Institute, 1992).

south, and in Mogadishu. The location of the airstrips at Berbera and Mogadishu were well suited for combat air operations in the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea, or in the Indian Ocean. Additionally, the agreement permitted the U.S. to conduct joint exercises with Somali forces, dock and refuel ships, and conduct military repairs at the facilities.<sup>89</sup> These concessions were important to counter Soviet influence in the region.

*Wanting to “Stay Engaged” With a Dictator*

The era of amity between the United States and Somalia, however important to American strategic interests, was tainted by an inauspicious development in the mid 1980s: the Siad Barre regime was committing human rights abuses against Somali citizens. As Barre began to lose his grip over Somali affairs, especially in the countryside where rival clans were fighting each other, the regime turned to political imprisonment, torture, and political killings (especially against the Isaaks clan) as a means to consolidate power.<sup>90</sup> First and foremost, Barre was concerned with making sure his family and clan, the Marehans, remained in power as his health began to deteriorate by the late 1980s. A series of government-backed killing campaigns highlighted the discontent in Somalia with the regime and the paranoia of Barre as he witnessed his political power weakening. For example, in May 1988 the regime bombed Somali citizens after a demonstration against Barre’s rule. On July 16, 1989 during Eid al-Adha, an important Muslim holiday, the government arrested six eminent imams and opened fire on the crowd of worshippers, killing over 1,000 innocent civilians.<sup>91</sup> The Human Rights Watch, in conjunction

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<sup>89</sup> Johns, “Preserving American Security Ties to Somalia,” 7

<sup>90</sup> George James, “Somalia’s Overthrown Dictator, Mohammad Siad Barre, is Dead,” *New York Times*, January 3 1995, accessed December 23 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/1995/01/03/obituaries/somalia-s-overthrown-dictator-mohammed-siad-barre-is-dead.html>

<sup>91</sup> Ayittey, *The Somalia Crisis: Time for an African Solution*

with Africa Watch, reported in 1990 that between 50,000 and 60,000 people were killed by government forces, either by shooting, aerial bombardment, or artillery shelling.<sup>92</sup>

The U.S. condemnation of these human rights abuses was at best superficial. While the United States ended its lethal military aid for Somalia in 1988, and redirected \$21 million in economic assistance to other African countries, members of the Reagan and Bush Administrations voiced the importance of upholding positive relations with Somalia. In October 1988, a State Department Spokesman commented in regards to relations with Somalia, “we don’t want to give a sign of withdrawal...we want to stay engaged.”<sup>93</sup> Additionally, in a letter to the *New York Times* in 1989, Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs Richard Schifter defended sending additional economic aid to Somalia. In a more symbolic display of the Bush Administration wanting to stay engaged, on June 20, 1989 the administration neglected to send a witness to a House Banking Subcommittee on International Development Institutions and Finance hearing that was examining U.S. human rights policy in the context of aid to Somalia. This demonstrated the administration’s unwillingness to denounce the Somali government. While the Bush Administration *did* make efforts to investigate atrocities in Somalia, and *did* reevaluate their Somalia policy, as the Human Rights Watch declared in late 1989, “the potential impact of the Bush Administration’s decision to investigate...was all but nullified by the administration’s efforts to persuade Congress to provide military and economic assistance to the very forces responsible for those abuses.”<sup>94</sup> To the Bush Administration, staying

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<sup>92</sup> The Africa Watch Committee, *Somalia: A Government at War with its Own People*, (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1990) 10 Accessed on February 3 2014 [http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/somalia\\_1990.pdf](http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/somalia_1990.pdf)

<sup>93</sup> David Ottaway, “Congress Blocking Aid to Somalia,” *The Washington Post*, October 26, 1988.

<sup>94</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Human Rights Watch World Report: Somalia*, (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1989) Accessed on February 3, 2014, <http://www.hrw.org/reports/1989/WR89/index.htm#TopOfPage>

engaged was essential during the Cold War, and the implications of condemning the human rights abuses were too great to bear.

*A Complete 180: U.S. Policy after the Cold War*

With the end of the Cold War, American strategic interest in Somalia virtually dissipated. As Jon Western explains, the Bush Administration was initially uninterested in the humanitarian crisis because it was “not relevant to U.S. vital interests” and was instead just “[a] humanitarian traged[y].”<sup>95</sup> Matthew A. Baum agrees, arguing, “the strategic stakes for the United States in Somalia were arguably as small as they have ever been in a U.S. deployment overseas.”<sup>96</sup> There is little evidence that suggests the United States had any ulterior motives other than the promotion of moral goals.

Notwithstanding the evidence, arguments suggesting that the United States intervened for self-interested reasons do exist. David N. Gibbs from the University of Arizona, for example, contends that the intervention was partly a manifestation of American *realpolitik*, and suggests that gaining access to oil supplies in Somalia was a consideration during the decision-making process.<sup>97</sup> His argument rests on the fact that Conoco, an American oil company, had connections with both U.S. government officials as well as Mohammed Farah Aideed, a former member of the United Somali Congress that helped overthrow the Barre regime and who later led the Somali National Alliance. However, this evidence is at best questionable. As Valerie J. Lofland explains, after the Cold War, and especially after the Gulf War, Middle Eastern oil fields

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<sup>95</sup> Western, “Sources of Humanitarian Intervention,” 113

<sup>96</sup> Baum, “How Public Opinion Constrains the Use of Force,” 197

<sup>97</sup> Gibbs, “Realpolitik and Humanitarian Intervention,” 47

were already accessible to the United States through the Gulf Cooperative Council nations.<sup>98</sup>

The impetus for intervention was thus not an American desire to exploit Somali oil fields.

Others may argue that the strategic aspect of intervention was protecting the U.S. image as the leader of the post-Cold War New World Order. Indeed, President Bush had made American leadership point of a speech before Congress in September, 1990 when he declared, “there is no substitute for U.S. leadership...let no one doubt American credibility and reliability...Americans have stepped forward...in defense of principal and the dream of a new world order.”<sup>99</sup> However, the evidence suggests that American image was not overly influential in Bush’s decision to intervene. Baumann et al. explain that both Bush and the Pentagon recognized the assertion of the United States as the backbone of a “New World Order” as more of a political statement than a boundless commitment, and that intervention in Somalia was more rooted in moral considerations and the opportunity to deflect pressure to intervene in Bosnia.<sup>100</sup> Nicholas Wheeler agrees, arguing that there were no hidden power-political reasons motivating intervention.<sup>101</sup>

Rather, there was little material gain to be made by the United States by intervening. On the other side of the coin, there was little to be *lost* by the U.S. by intervening as well, as long as the intervention remained limited. The negative strategic implications that would have been suffered had the U.S. intervened to stop Barre’s human rights abuses during the Cold War, or even if they had disengaged from the government for that matter, did not exist after the fall of the

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<sup>98</sup> Valerie J. Lofland, “Somalia: US Intervention and Operation Restore Hope,” in *Case Studies in Policymaking and Implementation*, ed. David A. Williams, 6<sup>th</sup> edition. (Newport, RI: Naval War College, 2002).

<sup>99</sup> George Bush Presidential Library and Museum website, “Address Before a Joint Session of Congress on the Persian Gulf Crisis and the Federal Budget Deficit,” accessed April 9, 2014  
[http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public\\_papers.php?id=2217&year=1990&month=9](http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=2217&year=1990&month=9)

<sup>100</sup> Robert F. Baumann, Lawrence A. Yates, and Versalle F. Washington, *My Clan Against the World: U.S. and Coalition Forces in Somalia 1992-1994*, (Fort Leavenworth: Combat Studies Institute Press: 2004), 24

<sup>101</sup> Nicholas J. Wheeler, *Saving Strangers: Humanitarian Intervention in International Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 201

Berlin Wall. Michael Desch and Nicholas J. Wheeler echo this point from a realist perspective, explaining that states will not intervene in humanitarian crises if the intervention is perceived to undermine a state's security or economic interests.<sup>102</sup> Wheeler writes, "Bush would have ruled out Operation Restore Hope had he believed that this threatened U.S. security interests."

Somalia's geo-strategic importance in terms of access to oil and countering Soviet regional influence was no longer true, and thus the strategic costs of intervening no longer existed either. Intervention was therefore possible.

*Conclusion:*

After the Cold War ended, the United States had greater flexibility to intervene in areas that would have been strategically impossible beforehand. While intervening in Somalia, or even disengaging, would have had severe strategic and security implications during the Cold War, these costs disappeared as Cold War tensions abated. This made intervention possible.

When the strategic and security implications of humanitarian intervention are too high, intervention will not occur. Conversely, when the implications are benign and my other conditions hold true, intervention will occur. In the next part of this project, I will demonstrate how the United States refrained from intervening in the Darfur Crisis because these conditions did not hold true.

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<sup>102</sup> M. Desch, "Culture Clash: Assessing the Importance of Ideas in Security Studies," *International Security*, 23/1 (1998), 144; Wheeler, *Saving Strangers*, 202

## Chapter Two- The Limits of the Humanitarian Norm in the Darfur Genocide

Although many current accounts of the Darfur Crisis cite 2003 as the beginning of the war, widespread violence has plagued the region since the 1990s.<sup>103</sup> In June 1997, Darfuri members of parliament unsuccessfully demanded self-determination for the region, motivated in part by the oil-rich land. Khartoum denied these requests with force, and by March 1998 around 100 Darfuris had been killed at the hands of the state.<sup>104</sup>

In 2003, the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) initiated a rebellion that was again met with violent opposition. The Omar al-Bashir regime launched a terror campaign using scorched earth tactics and air raids against civilians, forcing those who were lucky enough to escape death to migrate elsewhere, particularly into neighboring Chad. Perhaps the biggest threat to civilians was the government-sponsored *janjaweed*, Arab militia on horseback that would rape and pillage Darfuri villages. Although technically a civil war, the conflict has been referred to some, most notably the United States, as genocide because of the discriminate and systematic nature of the killing. The UN estimated that as of 2008, up to 300,000 people had died and another 2.5 million had been displaced in Darfur.<sup>105</sup>

There are differing interpretations as to why the conflict erupted. Some believe that contending racial or religious attitudes can explain the violence, framing the conflict as “Arabs committing genocide against an African population.”<sup>106</sup> However, Randall Fegley notes that the SLA and JEM have been linked to militant Islamist groups, suggesting that racism is not the underlying factor. The Save Darfur Coalition echoes this point, explaining on its website that

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<sup>103</sup> Douglas Johnson, *The Root Causes of Sudan's Civil Wars: Peace or Truce* (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 2011): xviii

<sup>104</sup> Randall Fegley, *Beyond Khartoum: A History of Subnational Government in Sudan*, (Trenton: The Red Sea Press, Inc, 2011): 235

<sup>105</sup> Johnson, *The Root Causes of Sudan's Civil Wars*, 178

<sup>106</sup> Mahmood Mamdani, *Survivors and Saviors: Darfur, Politics, and the War on Terror*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 2009), 51-52

this is a common myth that should be dispelled.<sup>107</sup> A seemingly more accurate explanation offered by Fegley is that the rebellion is a response to the “brutal rule and interference” of Khartoum over Darfuri affairs for decades.<sup>108</sup> Indeed, Khamis Ahmad Osman, a rebel who joined the SLA after 21 years in the government army, listed “freedom” and “justice” as his two motivations for joining.<sup>109</sup> Regardless of the reasons for the instability in Darfur, the existence of a humanitarian disaster cannot be denied. Yet even after calling it genocide, the United States never led a unilateral humanitarian intervention in the region as it did in Iraq, never took a leadership role through NATO, and did not deploy troops on the ground to support the UN operation. Why did the U.S. avoid intervention? As civil society, costs, and security implications were important factors that led to intervention in Somalia, they are also fundamental factors as to why there was no intervention in Darfur.

### **Section One: Global Civil Society in Darfur**

#### *The Conflict's Early Years: NGOs Break Through Khartoum's Information Blackout in 2003-04*

As humanitarian conditions continued to worsen in Darfur, Omar al-Bashir's government made a concerted effort to suppress the release of any information painting a grim picture of reality. Khartoum denied visas to visiting journalists, human rights investigators, and aid NGOs, local news correspondents were arrested after reporting government attacks, and Sudanese human rights activists were regularly arrested without access to a fair trial. Alex de Waal, who served on the African Union mediation team for Darfur in 2005-2006, explains that “international NGOs found themselves facing a bleak choice: to turn a blind eye to atrocities, or

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<sup>107</sup> Save Darfur website, accessed November 20 2013, <http://savedarfur.org/the-conflict/darfur/>

<sup>108</sup> Fegley, *Beyond Khartoum*, 235

<sup>109</sup> Alex de Waal & Julie Flint, *Darfur: A Short History of a Long War*, (London: Zed Books, 2005): 68

to speak out and risk being expelled.”<sup>110</sup> Khartoum’s secrecy was essential not only for winning the war in Darfur without eliciting outside interference, but also for establishing complete domination over the region and extending Arab unity into Chad. This is reflected in an Arab Gathering report in 2003 that explicitly called for “totally control[ing] power in the state” through “secrecy of important information for security of the procession.”<sup>111</sup> An immediate response to the conflict was thus hampered by an information blackout, and many early reports of the humanitarian crisis had to rely on inaccurate third-hand accounts from people in other countries.<sup>112</sup>

While Bashir’s information monopoly was successful within Sudan’s borders, the media and NGOs were able to escape his iron grip by reporting from neighboring Chad. Since many Darfuris were forced into Chad by the violence and terror campaigns of the *Janjaweed*, the conflict became more than simply a Sudanese problem. This had two important implications. Firstly, the internationalization of the conflict made it one that was a threat to “international peace,” echoing the words of the U.N.’s Chapter VII that identifies this condition as one that warrants outside intervention. The crisis thus became of interest to the international community, and to both state and non-state actors. Secondly, it allowed reporters and human rights activists to interview refugees and investigate in a manner that was impossible in Darfur. One June 23, 2004, Lorne Craner, assistant secretary for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor at the State Department, brought together a group of NGOs to prepare a report on the conditions of Darfur and the reality of the violence.<sup>113</sup> With financial assistance from USAID, these NGOs

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<sup>110</sup> *ibid.*, 116

<sup>111</sup> Arab Gathering, “Report on the Visit of the political committee of the Arab Alliance to Buram, Tulus, Riheid el-Birdi and ‘Id al-Fursan,’ November 15, 2003. Accessed November 13, 2013 <http://www.darfurna.com/Darfur/Darfur/Alliance/Political.htm>

<sup>112</sup> Janey Levy, *Genocide in Darfur*, (New York: Rosen Publications, 2009), 41

<sup>113</sup> Rebecca Hamilton, *Fighting for Darfur: Public Action and the Struggle to Stop Genocide*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 36

interviewed 1,147 refugees along the Sudan-Chad border and reported their results to Colin Powell and the State Department. The findings of the study were revealing enough that Powell made the provocative decision to label the crisis genocide, arguing that “the conclusion on genocide was legally supportable.”<sup>114</sup> Identifying the conflict in Darfur as genocide had legally-binding implications through the 1948 Genocide Convention, and non-legal obligations through the UN Declaration of Human Rights and the Responsibility to Protect Initiative (although in 2004, R2P was still just a theory and not a stated initiative). NGOs thus played a decisive role in changing the nature of the conflict, and shaping the way that the U.S. and other states would subsequently respond to it.

*The Successes of the Darfur Advocacy Movement in Shaping U.S. Policy:*

The labeling of Darfur as genocide by the world’s strongest state, and by a state that had historically shied away from such a word in fear of its implications, drew considerable attention from human rights organizations. It also opened the door for an unprecedented citizen-driven advocacy movement that, as David Rieff first coined, lobbied people “in churches and shopping malls” rather than just those with power.<sup>115</sup> Citizen interest spread across many different social circles, from college students to religious associations. Lisa Rogoff, a student intern at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, prepared a poignant presentation about Darfur for fellow students just days after Powell’s statements. Her presentation convinced members in the audience to act, and soon after the first chapter of STAND (Students Take Action Now for Darfur) was established. Beginning at Georgetown, the group eventually spread to over 750 chapters at universities throughout the United States, striving to “actively fight genocide” on the premise

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<sup>114</sup> Hamilton, *Fighting for Darfur*, 38

<sup>115</sup> David Rieff, “The Precarious Triumph of Human Rights,” *New York Times*, August 8 1999, accessed November 21 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/1999/08/08/magazine/the-precious-triumph-of-human-rights.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm>

that “students are the agents of change.”<sup>116</sup> Swarthmore students Sam Bell and Mark Hanis worked with STAND to fundraise money to directly fund the African Union’s mission in Sudan (AMIS), eventually branching off to develop their own group- the Genocide Intervention Network.<sup>117</sup>

Perhaps the most well-known Darfur advocacy network was the Save Darfur Coalition, established by David Rubenstein in 2004. While also a money-raising campaign, the Save Darfur Coalition saw itself as a potential catalyst to generate American interest and persuade those with power in the government to act, breaking away from the “society-wide silence as an indicator of public indifference” that had allowed U.S. policymakers to ignore genocide in the past.<sup>118</sup> The emerging R2P norm was a fundamental principle of the coalition’s ideology.<sup>119</sup> Rubenstein and other leaders of the movement argued that Westphalian sovereignty was a privilege, not a right, and that a state’s refusal to protect its citizens necessarily warranted intervention by the international community. Save Darfur thus strove to hold states to their previously-stated commitments to ending genocide, and saw domestic politics as an avenue to achieve this goal.

In her comprehensive analysis of the Darfur movement, *Fighting for Darfur*, journalist Rebecca Hamilton highlights the successes of civil society in influencing American policy in Darfur. She writes, “the mobilization of thousands of citizens as first-time advocates was one of the movement’s greatest strengths,” as Congressmen were surprisingly responsive to their constituents’ requests.<sup>120</sup> Sam Bell’s Genocide Intervention Network created a telephone number

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<sup>116</sup> STAND Website, accessed November 20 2013, <http://www.standnow.org/about>

<sup>117</sup> Hamilton, *Fighting for Darfur*, 73

<sup>118</sup> Samantha Power, *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide*, (New York: Basic Books, 2002), xvii

<sup>119</sup> Hamilton, *Fighting for Darfur*, 49

<sup>120</sup> *ibid.*, 52

that, when called, informed citizens of Darfur legislation that was on the floor in Congress and subsequently connected them with their representatives. The group also graded Congressmen on their response to Darfur on an A+-F scale, a score that was taken seriously enough that many representatives published their results on their websites and press releases for their constituents to see. Hamilton notes that out of the 167 representatives who received an F in August 2006, all but one took action to improve their grade over the following 18 months.<sup>121</sup>

Civil society was also successful in persuading the President to act. Save Darfur led a call for Bush to appoint a special envoy to Sudan by placing ads in prominent newspapers, and citizens urged Congressmen to pressure the executive branch to act. On July 5, 2006, citizens succeeded as a bi-partisan group of Congressmen Mike Capuano of Massachusetts, Donald Payne of New Jersey, Tom Tancredo of Colorado, and Frank Wolf of Virginia wrote a letter to President Bush “expressing deep concern over the worsening humanitarian situation in Darfur and calling on him to immediately appoint a Special Envoy to Sudan.”<sup>122</sup> Two months later, Bush succumbed to the pressure, appointing Andrew Natsios to fill the role in September.<sup>123</sup> Bush Jr. also felt upset at articles condemning his Darfur policy. Michael Gerson, working in the chief-of-staff’s office during the second Bush Administration, explains that a February 2006 article by Nicholas Kristof was especially troubling to the President and convinced him to look into additional possibilities for action.<sup>124</sup> Civil society organizations were thus key actors in generating U.S. interest in the conflict and persuading the state to act.

*Civil Society and Darfur: Why was there no Intervention?*

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<sup>121</sup> Hamilton, *Fighting for Darfur*, 100

<sup>122</sup> Michael Capuano Website, accessed November 30 2013, <http://www.house.gov/capuano/news/2006/pr070506.shtml>

<sup>123</sup> United States Congress, *Congressional Record V. 152, pt. 14, September 2006*, (Government Printing Office, 2010), 18888

<sup>124</sup> Hamilton, *Fighting for Darfur*, 78

If the civil society movement and efforts by NGOs were so successful in influencing policymakers, then why did the United States never lead an intervention in Darfur? One reason why the civil society movement did not lead to a U.S. intervention is because there was simply very little pressure to deploy American boots on the ground. Instead, the Save Darfur movement pressured the U.S. to act by funding the already operational African Union mission. In April 2005, Sam Bell and the Genocide Prevention Network planned a “100 Days of Action” campaign with a goal of fundraising \$1 million for AMIS. The group hoped that by generating enough money and public interest, they could shame Washington to boost its own contributions. The Save Darfur Coalition launched a similar event called the “Day of Action for Darfur” in September 2005. Rubenstein’s group created a Powerpoint presentation for citizens highlighting the need for greater UN, EU, and NATO monetary contributions for AMIS to protect civilians. While these advocacy groups pressured the U.S. to act by providing money, pressure to act through a military intervention was largely absent from the Darfur discourse. Hamilton notes that, perhaps surprisingly, “no member of the Save Darfur Coalition actually called for the deployment of U.S. troops.”<sup>125</sup> Indeed, David Rubenstein even mentioned his reluctance for an intervention, wondering how the military would even proceed once they got there.<sup>126</sup>

Professional aid organizations were also opposed to intervention. Action Against Hunger, a group working on the ground to deliver humanitarian aid in Darfur, cautioned against intervention without approval from Khartoum: “[intervention] could have disastrous consequences that risk triggering a further escalation of violence while jeopardizing the

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<sup>125</sup> Hamilton, *Fighting for Darfur*, 77

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 77

provision of vital humanitarian assistance to millions of people.”<sup>127</sup> After the Save Darfur Coalition placed newspaper ads urging the Bush Administration to approve a no-fly zone, the closest thing to a military intervention that the group called for, active aid organizations came out in vehement opposition. Some argued that disallowing flights would inhibit the ability of organizations to deliver aid, thus doing more harm than good. Sam Worthington, the president of InterAction, criticized the Save Darfur’s proposition as something that “could easily result in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of individuals.” In an email to David Rubenstein, Worthington wrote that he was “deeply concerned by the inability of Save Darfur to be informed by the realities on the ground and to understand the consequences of [its] proposed actions.”<sup>128</sup> Professional aid organizations believed intervention would have calamitous repercussions and advised Washington to avoid intervention.

The disconnect between professional NGOs and the Save Darfur Coalition captures another reason why the pressure from global civil society did not lead to intervention. Citizen-led movements such as Save Darfur and STAND, while well-intentioned, generally lacked a comprehensive understanding of the conflict, its root causes, and approaches that could be taken to resolve it. Unlike professional human rights workers who earn their paycheck by studying crises and can devote substantial time to understanding conflicts, many members of Save Darfur had their own jobs and responsibilities that compromised their ability to stay well-informed. Because of this, the United States could appease advocates by acting in a limited fashion that, in reality, did little to solve the problem. One State Department official remembers, “it turned into a game about numbers- how many troops (AMIS troops) can we deploy? What gets lost is the

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<sup>127</sup> Stephanie Strom and Lydia Polgreen, “Darfur Advocacy Undergoes an Shakeup,” *New York Times*, June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2007, accessed April 9, 2014

<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/06/02/world/africa/02darfur.html?pagewanted=all&r=0>

<sup>128</sup> *ibid.*

nuance- like if we don't have the ten right people in headquarters the whole thing will fall apart.” Airlifting Rwandan troops into Sudan “with pictures to show for it,” for example, was an easier and less costly way to appease advocate demands than issuing a statement explaining how they were working to improve operational methods or logistics.<sup>129</sup> However, the same official explains how the State Department understood that such actions would barely improve the mission, if at all.

Once it became clear to both the United States and NGOs that AMIS was failing in early 2006, the discussion shifted toward a possible UN mission in Darfur. The Save Darfur Coalition’s “Million Voices Campaign,” during which citizens mailed one million postcards to the White House advocating for the U.S. to “Save Darfur,” was instrumental in pushing Washington toward securing a peace agreement between Khartoum and the rebel factions. The United States hoped that with a peace agreement, the UN could deploy a military force and fulfill the demands of advocates. While a peace agreement was eventually signed in 2006, and a UN hybrid operation commenced in 2007, American soldiers were never sent overseas.

*Conclusion:*

NGOs and civil society played a fundamental role in getting the United States to refer to the Darfur Conflict as genocide by providing important information, thus shaping subsequent policy discussions. Because of Khartoum’s information blackout, this would have been impossible without the work of these organizations. Civil society was also able to pressure Congress and the Bush Administration to act in ways it probably would not have otherwise, such as by funding AMIS, helping deploy African troops into Sudan, and creating a Special Envoy for Sudan. Similar to civil society organizations in Somalia in the early 1990s, Darfur NGOs were able to provide information and pressure that shaped U.S. foreign policy. However, unlike

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<sup>129</sup> Hamilton, *Fighting for Darfur*, 75

Somalia organizations, the biggest voices on Darfur were citizen-led groups that lacked a comprehensive understanding of the conflict. Therefore, the U.S. was able to appease demands and pressure with limited efforts instead of seriously considering an actual intervention, such as by airlifting a few hundred African troops to support AMIS or by sending a little bit more money. Furthermore, many groups *never even pressured the U.S. to intervene*.

The civil society movement, a necessary condition for intervention, was thus too weak and misguided to induce intervention in Darfur. What about the other conditions for intervention? The subsequent sections will discuss how military costs and strategic/security implications also influenced U.S. decision-making regarding Darfur.

## **Section Two: High Costs in Darfur**

In chapter 2, I discussed the role that military costs played in convincing the Bush Administration to intervene in Somalia instead of Bosnia. While the Joint Chiefs of Staff certainly perceived an intervention in Somalia to be costly, the estimated deployment paled in comparison to what would have been required in Bosnia to be successful. Therefore, because the military costs of a Somalia operation were relatively low, intervention was possible.

In Darfur, the circumstances of the conflict and the U.S. response were very different, yet the same lesson can be learned. The perceived military costs of a Darfur intervention were too great, discouraging the United States from deploying boots on the ground and demonstrating how cost concerns often supersede normative ones.

### *The Failure of AMIS*

Throughout 2004 and the first half of 2005, discussions on Capitol Hill and the Department of Defense continued to emphasize the importance of an African solution to an

African problem.<sup>130</sup> AMIS thus continued to be the primary avenue through which the United States could provide support to end the atrocities in the region. However, not only was the operation exceptionally understaffed (by April 2005, the AU had authorized an increase in military personnel to 7,731 troops: approximately one soldier per 25 square miles)<sup>131</sup>, but it was also flawed in its intelligence, interoperability, logistics, and air support capacity.<sup>132</sup> As mentioned in the previous section, the U.S. response to these shortcomings reflected little more than “a game about numbers.”<sup>133</sup> When asked by Senator Barack Obama at a Foreign Relations Committee meeting in September, 2005 what steps the United States was taking to help reinforce the AU effort, Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick replied that it was currently working to provide 105 Armored Personnel Carriers, 16 experienced contract military observers, and \$160 million in PKO funds to support AMIS, as well as to airlift an additional 1,800 Rwandan troops into Darfur.<sup>134</sup> Such contributions helped appease advocacy demands for AMIS expansion and made it look like the United States was concerned about the crisis, yet as an unnamed State Department official explained, “those of us working closest to the AU realized that you could expand ten times over and they [AMIS] still wouldn’t have the capacity...we knew we couldn’t solve it with more money or more personnel.”<sup>135</sup> Retired Lt. Colonel Ron Capps, working in Sudan for the State Department, echoed a similar lack of faith in AMIS: “[AMIS] has failed to

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<sup>130</sup> *Darfur Revisited: The International Response: Hearing Before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate*, 109<sup>th</sup> Congress. 77 (2005) (Statement by Deputy Secretary Zoellick)

<sup>131</sup> Hamilton, *Fighting for Darfur*, 74

<sup>132</sup> *Darfur Revisited: The International Response: Hearing Before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate*, 109<sup>th</sup> Congress. 66 (2005) (Statement by Deputy Secretary Zoellick)

<sup>133</sup> Hamilton, *Fighting for Darfur*, 75

<sup>134</sup> 109<sup>th</sup> Congress, *Darfur Revisited*, (Zoellick) 66

<sup>135</sup> Hamilton, *Fighting for Darfur*, 75

carry out its mandate and will remain powerless to stop the violence...rebels and militias will continue to kill with impunity.”<sup>136</sup>

As it became clearer that AMIS was a failing mission, the United States began looking toward other possible approaches to stop the violence. In the same September committee hearing, Obama asked Deputy Secretary Zoellick when the U.S. should use force, and whether it was appropriate for a situation like Darfur. Zoellick’s response was politically-uncontroversial and avoided any statements that would commit the U.S. to taking military action. He affirmed that the U.S. “must stand firmly for the non-negotiable demands of human liberty,” but at the same time must always “weigh the costs...of intervention” and consider “different strategies to advance our principles.”<sup>137</sup> Zoellick continued by suggesting cheaper and easier alternatives, such as sanctions or diplomatic pressure, as ways to pressure Khartoum into taking steps to end the violence. Yet UN Security Council Resolution 1591, adopted on March 29, 2005, had already called for member states to freeze assets and restrict travel against those who “impede the peace process,” and insisted that “there can be no military solution to the conflict in Darfur.”<sup>138</sup> These sanctions had also proven to be unsuccessful in pressuring Sudan to change its behavior. Something else had to be done.

*The Costs of Deployment: Ruling Out Intervention*

As a first-hand witness to the atrocities being committed in Darfur- the *Janjaweed* terror campaigns, the bombing of villages by the Sudanese government, and the forced displacement of over two million Darfuris- Ronald Capps determined that there was only one capable solution: military intervention. In a succinct, provocative memorandum to the State Department in April

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<sup>136</sup> “Lt. Colonel Ronald Capps Memorandum to U.S. State Department,” April 28 2006, The National Security Archive at George Washington University

<sup>137</sup> 109th Congress, *Darfur Revisited*, (Zoellick) 69

<sup>138</sup> U.N. Security Council, 60<sup>th</sup> year, Resolution 1591, 29 March 2005, pg. 3. Official Record. New York, 2005. Accessed January 4, 2014 [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1591%20\(2005\)](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1591%20(2005))

2006, Capps challenged the current U.S. response and reproached the government for its inconsistent approach to the problem:

We alone have called the atrocities in Darfur genocide. We must lead the coalition that will stop it. We must demonstrate to the world our resolve and determination to stop this genocide and to never again let genocide occur...Stopping the violence in Darfur will require a military force with first-world leadership, first-world assets, and first-world experience...Putting together such a coalition...will require that the U.S. government and our military take a lead role...Otherwise, which American president will be the one to apologize to the dead of Darfur?<sup>139</sup>

The retired officer, who had also been previously deployed in the Iraq War, insisted that the problem in Darfur “was so much bigger” than anything he had seen in the Middle East.<sup>140</sup>

Yet the United States, as well as the other power players in the international community, continued to act just as the “bystanders to genocide” had during the Rwandan crisis a decade earlier.<sup>141</sup>

One of the biggest reasons for this was the realization at the Pentagon and in the State Department that a U.S. military operation would be extremely costly. This was especially true considering the fact that Omar al-Bashir and the Sudanese government had demonstrated their resistance to any Western troops on the ground, believing that what the U.S. really wanted was regime change. In the summer of 2004, the Defense Department estimated that it would take approximately 35,000 U.S. troops to secure the displaced camps inside Darfur and to provide continuous security. 35,000 was already a significant

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<sup>139</sup> Capps, “Memorandum”

<sup>140</sup> Hamilton, *Fighting for Darfur*, 74

<sup>141</sup> Samantha Power, “Bystanders to Genocide,” September 1 2001, *The Atlantic*. Accessed January 21 2014, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2001/09/bystanders-to-genocide/304571/>

deployment, but this estimate was for a consensual operation. According to the Pentagon's standard planning procedure for nonconsensual operations, the force deployed must be at least three times greater than the opposition to ensure success. Since there were approximately 30,000 Sudanese Army soldiers deployed in Darfur, this would necessitate a U.S. operation of close to 100,000 troops.<sup>142</sup> In an interview with Rebecca Hamilton, Bush's National Security Adviser Stephen Hadley explained that the Pentagon was extremely unenthusiastic about deploying a force of this magnitude.<sup>143</sup> Assistant Secretary for African Affairs Jendazi Frazer agreed, claiming that officials in the Department of Defense "weren't keen" about sending such a military force into Darfur.<sup>144</sup>

The negative implications of leading an operation this large were exacerbated by the fact that significant American military resources were already being utilized in Iraq and Afghanistan. A report by the Congressional Research Service in 2009 shows that average monthly U.S. troop levels in Afghanistan and Iraq were 162,900 in FY2005, the same year that AMIS began to truly show its deficiencies.<sup>145</sup> After President Bush's decision in January 2007 to deploy five extra Brigade Combat Teams to Iraq, deployment in the two countries ballooned to almost 188,000 by FY 2008.<sup>146</sup> One unnamed senior U.S. Defense Department Official explained that a Darfur deployment would have "meant taking resources from elsewhere...for us, institutionally, it was a relief [not to be asked to deploy], a weight off the nation in terms of sweat and blood."<sup>147</sup> A force in Darfur would have necessarily required redirecting military resources from the Middle East, a course of action

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<sup>142</sup> Hamilton, *Fighting for Darfur*, 76

<sup>143</sup> Hamilton, *Fighting for Darfur*, 75

<sup>144</sup> *ibid.*, 75

<sup>145</sup> United States Congress. Congressional Research Service, *Troop Levels in the Afghan and Iraq Wars, FY 2001-2012: Costs and Other Potential Issues*, By Amy Belasco, R40682. (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2009): 23. Accessed January 13, 2014 <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/R40682.pdf>

<sup>146</sup> *ibid.*, 23

<sup>147</sup> Hamilton, *Fighting for Darfur*, 76

that would have been strategically costly to the United States (see next chapter). Thus, because redirecting resources from the War on Terror was impossible through the lens of Defense Officials, the prospects of a Darfur intervention presented very serious capacity concerns. Indeed, according to Jendazi Frazer, military planners responded to the Darfur deployment estimate by concluding “we don’t have that because of Iraq.”<sup>148</sup>

The military also dismissed any discussion of a smaller deployment. Just as Powell had argued against sending a limited force into Bosnia, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld cautioned that if a small deployment encountered serious danger, a larger force would have to be sent to save them.<sup>149</sup> This risked being drawn into a costly protracted conflict that the U.S. could not afford to undertake. Additionally, AMIS had already demonstrated that limited force in Darfur would be ineffective. The only military response capable of success was a full-fledged deployment that simply was not viable because of Iraq and Afghanistan.

Finally, military planners were dissuaded from intervening in Darfur because of concerns that there was no clear military solution, and that the operation would last indefinitely and continue to incur costs. Among expert advocates for non-intervention on this basis was Alex de Waal. Citing the ethnic dimension of the fighting, he argued in 2006, “military intervention won’t stop the killing...the crisis in Darfur is political. It’s a civil war, and like all wars it needs a political settlement.”<sup>150</sup> Instead of deploying troops to enforce peace, de Waal maintained, the political differences must be settled through inclusive peace negotiations between the Sudanese government and all rebel factions. Indeed, this is the approach that the U.S. had primarily taken

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<sup>148</sup> *ibid.*, 75

<sup>149</sup> *ibid.*, 75

<sup>150</sup> Alex De Waal, “I Will Not Sign,” *London Review of Books* 28.23 (November 30, 2006) Accessed January 23, 2014 <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v28/n23/alex-de-waal/i-will-not-sign>

from 2004-2006. In the hearing before the Committee of Foreign Relations in September 2005, Zoellick insisted that a peace agreement in Abuja was the “ultimate solution to violence in Darfur.”<sup>151</sup> The Bush Administration believed that a peace agreement was essential for a transition from AMIS to a United Nations Operation, and Zoellick led a series of negotiations between the rebels and the government throughout 2006 with the hope that diplomacy could end the fighting. Military force, on the other hand, was viewed as an ineffective approach that would draw the U.S. into a long, costly conflict. As Stephen Hadley explained, the military viewed intervention as “a mission without an end” that would continue to drain resources and risk American lives.<sup>152</sup> The operation was simply too costly.

*Conclusion:*

As it became clear that AMIS was a failing operation, the United States began to look at other approaches to end the conflict in Darfur. However, the high costs of intervention convinced U.S. military planners that force was not the avenue to be taken. Not only were resources already stressed because of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, but Sudan’s lack of consent also meant that a significant deployment was deemed necessary to be successful, something that the U.S. could not afford. As Rebecca Hamilton explains, without Sudanese consent a mission would have “logistical and military complications rising near the level of practical impossibility,” and “not even the United States was willing to fight a real war with [these] real costs”<sup>153</sup> Because of this, the United States never seriously considered using military force in Sudan.

Instead, the U.S. pursued a much cheaper alternative: a peace agreement between the Sudanese government and rebel factions. In May 2006, an agreement was finally approved and

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<sup>151</sup> 109th Congress, *Darfur Revisited*, (Zoellick) 66

<sup>152</sup> Hamilton, *Fighting for Darfur*, 75

<sup>153</sup> *ibid.*, 112

signed, signaling a hopeful new beginning in relations between Darfur and Khartoum. However, the hope was short-lived. The Darfur Peace Agreement was fundamentally flawed as it failed to secure the approval of the JEM and the entire SLA (which was itself divided into two ethnic factions), two prominent rebel groups whose consent was necessary for a successful agreement. The only rebel signatory was the ethnic Zaghawa faction of the SLA led by Minni Minawi, who in no way represented the interests of the rebels as a whole. Furthermore, the agreement amazingly made no explicit reference to a UN operation. Instead, the Sudanese government assured Deputy Secretary Zoellick that a UN peacekeeping force would be welcomed, regardless of its absence in the actual text of the document. Perhaps unsurprisingly, when the UN passed Resolution 1706 in August 2006 that authorized deployment in Darfur, Omar al-Bashir went back on his word and rejected the decision. The president insisted that he would not “consent to a resolution that will violate [Sudanese] sovereignty,” and charged the resolution as an “unjustifiable hostility against Sudan.”<sup>154</sup> He also warned the UN that Darfur would be a “graveyard” of foreign troops if a deployment were approved.<sup>155</sup> Therefore, while the United States saw military intervention as a costly and ineffective approach, the Darfur Peace Agreement proved to be a futile effort as well.

### **Section Three: The Negative Security/Strategic Implications in Darfur**

In the previous section, I demonstrated how the high costs of a non-consensual military intervention dissuaded the United States from deploying boots on the ground in Darfur. In this section, I will explain how humanitarian intervention in Darfur would also have precipitated, at

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<sup>154</sup> CBC News, “Sudan Rejects UN Resolution to Control Peacekeepers in Darfur, *CBC News*, August 31 2006. Accessed February 3, 2014 <http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/sudan-rejects-un-resolution-to-control-peacekeepers-in-darfur-1.610430>

<sup>155</sup> Anne Penketh, “Sudan Blocks UN Troops in Fear Darfur Could Become ‘Graveyard,’” *The Independent*, March 11 2006, Accessed February 3, 2014 <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/sudan-blocks-un-troops-in-fear-darfur-could-become-graveyard-350540.html>

least from the perspective of the United States, severe security and strategic implications that the Bush Administration was not willing to bear.

*Iraq and Afghanistan: Priorities in U.S. Strategy:*

The Pentagon was never enthusiastic about using U.S. military force in Sudan. The September 11th attacks brought the Middle East to the forefront of U.S. military planning, and by 2005 Washington was already heavily invested in two wars in the region. While Powell had officially identified the War in Darfur as genocide, thus holding the United States accountable for intervention according to Pillar One of the Responsibility to Protect initiative and the 1948 Genocide Convention, the prospects of a Darfur intervention continued to take the backseat to the Afghanistan and Iraq operations. As explained in the previous section, the Department of Defense *did* mull over potential military avenues, yet as Assistant Secretary for African Affairs Jendayi Frazer explains, it ultimately came to the conclusion that "we don't have [sufficient manpower] because of Iraq."<sup>156</sup> Other Defense officials echoed the same point of view, citing capacity issues because of the Middle East as the primary reason that military intervention was impossible. The United States simply was not willing to compromise its operations in the Middle East by responding militarily to Darfur, especially considering the small return that would come on such a heavy investment.

To some, the future of U.S. humanitarian intervention seems bleak because of such strategic considerations. James Kurth of Swarthmore College explains that the missions in Afghanistan and Iraq, while framed and justified as operations to promote human rights (especially in Iraq), are more accurately understood as strategic wars rather than humanitarian interventions and always take precedent to purely normative missions: "the real impact of [Iraq] has been to make humanitarian intervention by the United States elsewhere impossible. This

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<sup>156</sup> Hamilton, *Fighting for Darfur*, 75

radically reduces the prospects for successful humanitarian interventions in the future, while improving the prospects for undeterred and uninhibited ethnic massacres or genocides, such as has been occurring in the Western Sudan."<sup>157</sup> Therefore, even though the United States had an explicitly stated "responsibility to protect," it disregarded these responsibilities in favor of continuing its more important objectives in the Middle East. Redirecting resources and manpower from the Middle East to Africa would have negative security and strategic implications that the U.S. was not willing to bear.

Another prominent explanation that has emerged to explain why the U.S. did not deploy troops to Darfur takes Sudanese sovereignty into account. The Security Council passed UN Resolution 1706 in August 2006, authorizing a UN peacekeeping operation as long as the Sudanese government gave consent. After Bashir famously rejected the agreement, contending that any UN force would be considered an invasion, the UN was presented with an awkward situation: a resolution with terms that could not be met. However, American respect for Khartoum's sovereignty was not itself the reason the U.S. evaded intervention. In fact, sovereignty has not historically been a decisive impediment to U.S. humanitarian intervention. As Nicholas J. Wheeler and Alex Bellamy point out, the UNSC did not oppose intervention in Rwanda because of its sovereignty, but because of the member states' lack of political will. And in 2003, the Bush Administration showed little reluctance to an Iraq invasion, suggesting that sovereignty in itself does not preclude humanitarian intervention (though the humanitarian motives for intervention Iraq are questionable at best). Rather, a state's reluctance to undertake humanitarian intervention is a result of the costs it may incur, whether it be material (see previous section) or strategic. Wheeler and Bellamy sum up this point neatly in the context of

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<sup>157</sup> James Kurth, "Humanitarian Intervention post-Iraq: Legal Ideals vs. Military Realities," *Orbis* (Winter 2006): 88

the U.S. 'War on Terror' and Darfur: "...[not only has] the War on Terror fractured the fragile consensus over humanitarian intervention...but also the problem of political will continues to bedevil effective humanitarian intervention as it did over Rwanda. The Darfur case suggests that the commitment to the War on Terror is making it less likely that [the U.S.] will intervene to save strangers in strategically unimportant regions."<sup>158</sup> Strategically, the Middle East was more important to the Bush Administration than Darfur.

*The Other Side to Omar al-Bashir: How the President's Cooperation with U.S. Counterterrorism Operations made Intervention Strategically Costly:*

Omar al-Bashir's lack of consent in itself was not a factor that prevented intervention. But by violating Sudan's sovereignty, the United States risked something else altogether: deploying American troops would have serious ramifications on the relationship between Washington and Khartoum. Sudan's relevance in American foreign policy extended far past the Darfur War and issues in South Sudan. In a classic case of political irony, the murderous Bashir also happened to be one of the most cooperative partners in U.S. global counterterrorism operations. He was certainly a tyrant, but through the lens of American policymakers, he was a 'good tyrant.' Peter Feaver, Director of Strategic Planning on the National Security Council, outlines this view: "on counterterrorism cooperation...Khartoum had gone a long way towards meeting our demands...there was a fear that steps we might take to pressure them on Darfur would...create problems."<sup>159</sup> Former diplomat Timothy Carney takes this rhetoric a step further, identifying Sudan as "the key to [the problem of] terrorism" and an ally in the War on Terror.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Alex J. Bellamy and Nicholas J. Wheeler, "Humanitarian Intervention in World Politics" in *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations* ed. By John Baylis and Steve Smith, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) 518

<sup>159</sup> Hamilton, *Fighting for Darfur*, 123

<sup>160</sup>Harvey Glickman, "The Darfur Crisis," *Foreign Policy Research Institute E-Notes*, July 2006. Accessed November 12, 2013 <http://www.fpri.org/enotes/20060705.africa.glickman.darfurcrisis.html>

Indeed, the United States worked closely with Sudanese security officials throughout the 2000s while simultaneously condemning the state for its role in Darfur. In 2005, for example, the CIA flew Sudanese National Security Director Salah Abdallah Ghosh to Washington for a debriefing on terrorism. He provided American officials with important information regarding Islamist militants training in Sudan in the years before 9/11. Yet, as *The New York Times* reported, Ghosh and other security officials were the very ones that were "orchestrating Khartoum's crimes in Darfur and deploying intelligence units that...carried out targeted killings."<sup>161</sup>

The United States was thus presented with a tricky situation. Either it could deploy American troops through a U.S.-led intervention or through a United Nations Peacekeeping Operation, providing the 'bite' to its 'barks' of genocide yet risking alienating Bashir, or it could maintain its strategic relationship with Khartoum by making only limited efforts to stopping the killing in Darfur. The U.S. took the latter approach and instead advocated for a UN operation *without* American soldiers on the ground. The State Department in 2006 called Sudan "a strong partner in the War on Terror," and in 2007 described the U.S.-Sudan counterterrorism relationship as "solid."<sup>162</sup> To the U.S., this relationship was not worth risking, even if it meant more-or-less ignoring the deaths of over 400,000 Darfuri citizens.

#### *American Image in the Arab World*

With the United State's image in the Arab World already arguably at an all-time low, the Bush Administration recognized that targeting Sudan and intervening in another Muslim country would also be a devastating blow to its reputation. A military intervention would have undoubtedly exacerbated tensions and Muslim aggression against the United States. It would

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<sup>161</sup> Elizabeth Rubin, "If Not Peace, than Justice," *New York Times*, April 2, 2006. Accessed February 3, 2014 <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/02/magazine/02darfur.html?pagewanted=all&r=0>

<sup>162</sup> *Hearing on Sudan: Hearing Before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate*, 111<sup>h</sup> Congress. 3 (2009) (Statement by David H. Shinn, Adjunct Professor George Washington University)

have also raised questions over the legitimacy of the United States' intentions, especially after the war in Iraq. National Security Adviser Stephen Hadley explains that even American allies warned Bush to be vigilant: "...Bush was hearing from our allies in the region that if the U.S. deployed it would be a lightning rod for al-Qaeda...they didn't like the idea of another U.S. intervention in another Muslim country."<sup>163</sup> Omar al-Bashir recognized this as well, and threatened to publicly frame any intervention as an invasion. Strategically, the United States could not afford to widen the chasm between the Arab and Western worlds any further, and in late 2006 UN Secretary General Kofi Annan began to pursue different avenues for intervention that did not involve U.S. deployment. After an onerous period of lobbying, Sudan finally gave consent to a new resolution in 2007 calling for a 'hybrid' United Nations/African Union mission. On July 31, the Security Council unanimously passed Resolution 1769 authorizing the deployment of 19,555 military personnel for the operation, known as UNAMID. The operation's mandate, which still exists today, is to protect civilians, contribute security for humanitarian assistance, monitor and verify implementation of agreements, assist an inclusive political process, contribute to the promotion of human rights, and monitor the situation along the borders of Chad and the Central African Republic.<sup>164</sup> Though Annan was successful in getting the resolution to pass, the presence of Western troops (except a few from Germany) is notably absent from the operation. It continues to be a mostly African-led operation to this day.

*Conclusion:*

Despite Colin Powell's recognition of the Darfur conflict as genocide in 2004, the United States abstained from deploying American troops. One of the reasons for this was the fear of the security and strategic costs that might have been incurred had the U.S. militarily intervened.

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<sup>163</sup> Hamilton, *Fighting for Darfur*, 77

<sup>164</sup> United Nations Website, Accessed March 13, 2014 <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/unamid/mandate.shtml>

The two ongoing wars in the Middle East had already consumed significant resources, and a Darfur intervention would have required redirecting these resources to an effort that was strategically less important. In the eyes of American policymakers, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan were more significant to U.S. security than genocide against Africans and deserved the full attention of the military. Additionally, Omar al-Bashir and Khartoum had played an increasingly prominent role in American counterterrorism efforts since September 11th, and an intervention threatened alienating the Sudanese government and fracturing the strategic bond between the two states. Ultimately, the United States was unwilling to bear these costs. Finally, the U.S. recognized how an intervention in another predominantly Muslim state would further damage its image in the Arab World. Allies in the region warned the United States that intervention was not welcome, and that American deployment would fuel anti-American sentiment and embolden Al-Qaeda. Ultimately, the United States prioritized its security and strategic interests over protecting Darfuris, and the prospect of negative implications was instrumental in dissuading the U.S. from intervening.

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### **Chapter Three- Obama's War: Examining why the United States Agreed to Intervene in Libya**

A leg of the popular uprisings that spread throughout the Arab World in 2011, famously dubbed the "Arab Spring," the Libya Crisis was unique in the fact that it was the first rebel movement that was publically supported by the United States. Beginning in mid-February, the revolt was in response to what Chorin calls "a series of deep insults and organized deprivation" by the Qaddafi regime.<sup>165</sup> Colonel Muammar al-Qaddafi, who rose to power in a 1969 coup, had

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<sup>165</sup> Ethan Chorin, *Exit the Colonel: The Hidden History of the Libyan Revolution*, (New York: Public Affairs, 2012), 187

been a thorn in the United States' side for over four decades. Throughout the 1970s, the regime was notable for its funding of international terrorist organizations, relationship with the Soviet Union, and efforts to acquire nuclear weapons.<sup>166</sup> In the 1980s, the United States initiated a trade embargo against Libya, supplemented by a bombing campaign, yet fell short of ever removing Qaddafi from power. One reason for this is that Qaddafi began cooperating with the United States as the Libyan economy began to suffer, especially after the price of oil, a significant source of revenue for Libya, plummeted in the late 1980s. The 1990s and early 2000s saw improved relations between Libya and the West as Qaddafi agreed to give up his WMD program, assist with U.S. counterterrorism operations, and pay compensation for the victims of the infamous Pan Am bombings (to which Libya was linked). Thus, while the United States was pursuing regime change in Iraq by 2003, Qaddafi's seat in Libya appeared unchallenged.

By 2011, much had changed. In 2010, the regime began cracking down on personal liberties, increasing censorship of foreign news websites and blocking Youtube videos of protests and growing discontent in Benghazi.<sup>167</sup> In February 2011, Ibrahim Sahad, the Secretary General for the National Front for the Salvation of Libya (a Libyan opposition group), issued an international "call to action," organizing protests against Qaddafi in capitals throughout Europe and in Washington D.C. Sahad's optimism to incite change was undercut by what he perceived to be a closing window of opportunity to dispose the Libyan leader: "we knew we likely had a single shot...in which to cripple the regime. We would not have a second chance."<sup>168</sup> However, Sahad's fears never came to fruition. Organized protests and Qaddafi's attempts to quell any uprisings attracted media attention and brought the problems in Libya to the international limelight. The regime began mobilizing security forces to prevent people from organizing in

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<sup>166</sup> Yehudit Ronen, *Qaddafi's Libya in World Politics* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2008). 10-17.

<sup>167</sup> Chorin, *Exit the Colonel*, 190

<sup>168</sup> *ibid.*, 190

large groups, and released criminals from jails on the grounds that they would fight protesters. It also began issuing subsidies to Libyan citizens in an attempt to appease protesters. Instead of discouraging the opposition, these moves strengthened the rebels' discontent. On February 16, the regime used force against protests in Maidan al Shajara, killing many people. Over the course of the next month, Qaddafi's forces clashed violently with the opposition as protesters refused to concede. Meanwhile, a humanitarian crisis began to materialize. Food and medicine in Tripoli were becoming increasingly difficult to find, and many people attempted to flee to Tunisia. On February 25, the International Red Cross warned of the "number of people leaving their homes in search of safety."<sup>169</sup>

Believing that he was immune from Western intervention, Qaddafi set his forces on Benghazi in early March to "create a swath of coastal control from the Tunisian border to Marsa Brega, with a focus on the cities."<sup>170</sup> The loyalist forces commonly used bombing and helicopters. As Qaddafi's forces seemed to be gaining the advantage, the United States began to feel pressure to act. In mid-March, the UN voted in favor of Resolution 1973, authorizing a NATO led intervention to protect civilians in Libya. If my hypotheses hold true, I would expect to see a strong global civil society providing information and pressure upon the U.S. to act, low relative material costs, and benign strategic and security implications resulting from intervention. The evidence suggests that these conditions were all present in Libya.

### **Section One: Global Civil Society in Libya**

Non-governmental organizations and individuals played a prominent role in the Obama Administration's decision-making process regarding intervention in Libya. Similar to the role of

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<sup>169</sup> "Libya: ICRC Launches Emergency Appeal as Humanitarian Situation Deteriorates," International Red Cross website, accessed March 12, 2014 <http://www.icrc.org/eng/resources/documents/news-release/2011/libya-news-2011-02-25.htm>

<sup>170</sup> Chorin, *Exit the Colonel*, 206

NGOs in Somalia, these actors highlighted the atrocities being committed by the Qaddafi regime, provided the administration with key information that influenced policy discussions, and petitioned the administration to act. As I will argue in the following section, this global civil society network was instrumental in reaching the Obama administration on both emotional and pragmatic levels, convincing decision-makers that intervention was not only the morally sound avenue, but also one that was politically feasible.

*The Role of the National Transitional Council (NTC), Organizations, and Libyan Citizens*

Only a few days after the beginning of the uprising, Libyan rebels began organizing into a more cohesive coalition with common objectives and demands. The original group, known as the 17<sup>th</sup> February Coalition, issued a statement calling for Saif Gaddafi's promises of a new constitution and limited reforms to be fulfilled, and later for his father's removal from power altogether. Only a week later, academic Fathi Mohammed Baja, writer Mohammad Al Mufti, and Saleh Al Ghazaal published a formal manifesto outlining the coalition's intentions. According to Baja, the document, called the *Bayan*, expressed "that our problem...was not only economic, but a question of freedom and respect."<sup>171</sup> It was also, as a senior US diplomat stated, an important step in convincing the Obama Administration that the rebel group was a legitimate organization that could be trusted.<sup>172</sup> In addition to the United States, other members of the international community began to accept the coalition, which eventually evolved into the National Transitional Council (NTC), as the legitimate governing body. On February 21, Libyan representatives to the United Nations pledged their support to the rebels and demanded that the Libyan army assist with the removal of Qaddafi. Amazingly, this support came a mere four days after the first government-supported attack on protesters.

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<sup>171</sup> Chorin, *Exit the Colonel*, 196

<sup>172</sup> *ibid.*, 197

Meanwhile, NGOs and news organizations operating in Libya played an important role in reporting the atrocities on the ground and pressuring the U.S. to take action. For example, on February 21<sup>st</sup>, a group of 70 NGOs sent a letter to the United States urging it to “take immediate action to halt the mass atrocities now being perpetuated by the government of Libya on its own people.”<sup>173</sup> On February 25<sup>th</sup>, the International Red Cross described the worsening humanitarian crisis, warning of the “number of people leaving their homes in search of safety and trying to cross the border (into an already unstable Tunisia).”<sup>174</sup> A few days later, Al Jazeera reported that the death toll was reaching 1,000, and that medical supplies and food were running short.<sup>175</sup> Sometimes, the reports of these organizations contradicted U.S. intelligence. For instance, on February 21<sup>st</sup> Al Jazeera reported a government counteroffensive backed by fighter jets and live ammunition against protesters in Tripoli.<sup>176</sup> On the same day, *The Guardian* published an article describing the defection of two high-ranking Libyan Air Force pilots who fled into Malta rather than “carry out orders to bomb civilians.”<sup>177</sup> Even the Human Rights Watch reported air attacks by the government, such as the use of Red-Cross marked helicopters to fire at aid convoys.<sup>178</sup> Reports such as these reached the ears of United States decision-makers, despite Secretary of Defense Robert Gates’ assertion that “we had seen no evidence that Qaddafi was using aircraft to fire on the rebels.”<sup>179</sup> By late February and early March, the NTC was busy drafting a new

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<sup>173</sup>“Urgent Appeal to Stop Atrocities in Libya,” UN Watch, accessed March 1, 2014

<http://www.unwatch.org/site/c.bdKKISNqEmG/b.1289203/apps/s/content.asp?ct=9135143>

<sup>174</sup> “Libya: ICRC Launches Emergency Appeal as Humanitarian Situation Deteriorates,” International Red Cross website, accessed March 12, 2014 <http://www.icrc.org/eng/resources/documents/news-release/2011/libya-news-2011-02-25.htm>

<sup>175</sup>Al Jazeera writers, “Libya’s Humanitarian Crisis,” *Al Jazeera*, February 28, 2011. Accessed March 13, 2014 <http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/insidestory/2011/02/20112289513477110.html>

<sup>176</sup> Al Jazeera writers, “Libya Protests Spread and Intensify,” *Al Jazeera*, February 21, 2011, accessed March 13, 2014 <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2011/02/2011221133557377576.html>

<sup>177</sup> John Hooper and Ian Black, “Libya Defectors: Pilots Told to Bomb Protestors Flee to Malta,” *The Guardian*, February 21, 2011, accessed March 17, 2014 <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/feb/21/libya-pilots-flee-to-malta>

<sup>178</sup> Chorin, *Exit the Colonel*, 207

<sup>179</sup> Robert Gates, *Duty: Memoirs of a Secretary at War*, (New York: Knopf Doubleday, 2014) 513

statement of principles that called for, among other things, the enforcement of a no-fly zone in Libya by outside powers, and strikes against Qaddafi.<sup>180</sup>

The reports of government-sponsored air attacks by organizations on the ground, and by the National Transitional Council, likely influenced the opinions of key decision-makers within the U.S. Indeed, according to Chorin, U.S. decision-makers at the time were not entirely sure exactly what was developing on the ground and relied on a variety of reports, including Qaddafi speeches, to shape their policy approaches.<sup>181</sup> Despite repeated concerns by Gates and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Mike Mullen that there was no evidence of Qaddafi backed airstrikes, and that enforcing and sustaining a no-fly zone would be extremely costly, Congressmen and officials within the Obama Administration continued advocating for such a military approach based on what they were hearing from organizations on the ground in Libya. On March 1, John McCain criticized the administration for not acting with haste, arguing, “of course we need to have a no-fly zone...don’t tell me we can’t do a no-fly zone over Tripoli.”<sup>182</sup> Republican Senator Mitch McConnell and Independent Senator Joseph Lieberman offered similar views.<sup>183</sup>

Perhaps the most influential decision makers in the pro-intervention camp were National Security Council director Samantha Power and UN ambassador Susan Rice. Power, a former journalist and author, was a well-known critic of the United States for its traditionally apathetic response to humanitarian crises in the past. Her book *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide* provided a comprehensive study of humanitarian crises, most notably in Rwanda and Bosnia, and the markedly limited efforts the U.S. took to combat the problems. Even before her role as NSC director, Power firmly believed that the United States should take a

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<sup>180</sup> Chorin, *Exit the Colonel*, 205

<sup>181</sup> Chorin, *Exit the Colonel*, 217

<sup>182</sup> Gates, *Duty*, 512

<sup>183</sup> Chorin, *Exit the Colonel*, 212

more active role to help alleviate humanitarian disasters, rather than directing its policy goals only toward “promoting a narrowly defined set of U.S. economic and security interests.”<sup>184</sup> Rice, who had been an adviser to Clinton on Africa during the Rwandan genocide, held similar convictions as Power. Believing that she could have done more to push for intervention in 1994, Rice resolved not to make the same mistake twice. Both women advocated for a no-fly zone in Libya, with Power commenting post-intervention that it would have been “extremely chilling, deadly” had the U.S. not taken such a step.<sup>185</sup> Again, the call for a no-fly zone reflected the pleas of the NTC, and the reports by news organizations of Qaddafi using air power against civilians, rather than U.S. intelligence. As Gates explained in a press conference in early March, “we’ve seen the press reports but there’s no confirmation [of Qaddafi using air power on rebels].”<sup>186</sup>

Despite Gates’ qualms, the Obama Administration continued to listen to the National Transitional Council because they saw it as a legitimate interlocutor with clearly stated objectives. After the NTC requested a no-fly zone from the United States, the proposed solution became a hot discussion point within decision-making circles. In the words of Chorin, “a critical step in the formation of U.S. policy toward the evolving situation in Libya was the articulation of a set of specific criteria in support of intervention, including *legitimate local leadership that could convincingly articulate their needs* (italics added).”<sup>187</sup> The non-governmental group formed a network with U.S. policymakers and was able to provide important information and policy pressure that influenced the eventual decision to intervene.

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<sup>184</sup> *ibid.*, 216

<sup>185</sup> Chorin, *Exit the Colonel*, 222

<sup>186</sup> Youtube user VexZeed. “Media Wars Pentagon: No Proof of Airstrikes the Basis of U.N.’s NFZ; NFZ Means No Armed Force (CNN Broadcast),” *Youtube* video, 1:57, October 23, 2011  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E61aP6rMsp8>

<sup>187</sup> Chorin, *Exit the Colonel*, 222

Focusing solely on the influence of the rebel coalition, however, ignores the role that the broader Libyan community played in pressuring the United States to intervene. As the violence worsened, Libyans in both the U.S. and on the ground in Libya placed “many, many” calls to the State Department urging the Obama Administration to act immediately.<sup>188</sup> Obama himself was emotionally moved by the plight and pleas of the Libyans, and recognized the moral responsibilities of the United States to end the suffering. At the final meeting discussing intervention, Obama joined the humanitarian camp and reasoned, “acting would be the right thing to do, because we have the responsibility to prevent a massacre, and we’ve been asked to do it by the people of Libya.”<sup>189</sup> An unnamed White House official echoes this same view: “a city of 700,000 is facing indiscriminate slaughter. That’s what moved the president.”<sup>190</sup> Obama was influenced by genuinely altruistic concerns, and by the requests of the NTC and the Libyan community as a whole. Though the intervention fell out of U.S. strategic interests (according to Gates and the anti-intervention camp), it posed greater moral questions that the Obama Administration believed the U.S. should be committed to addressing. The NTC, NGOs, news organizations, and Libyan activists certainly played a role in making these questions resonate in Washington.

*The Role of “Non-Governmental Individuals”: “The French Catalyst” and Mahmoud Jibril*

Individuals also played a pivotal role in convincing the Obama Administration to intervene in Libya. One of the most prominent “non-governmental individuals” that influenced policy was Bernard-Henri Lévy, a flamboyant French intellectual that Chorin aptly nicknames “The French Catalyst.” Feeling an obligation to support the Libyan rebels, Lévy, working

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<sup>188</sup> Chorin, *Exit the Colonel*, 208

<sup>189</sup> Michael Hastings, “Inside Obama’s War Room,” *Rolling Stone*, October 13, 2011, pg 4. Accessed March 11, 2013 <http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/inside-obamas-war-room-20111013>

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*, 4

outside the auspices of any government agency and with only a loose plan, connected with President Sarkozy and secured an audience for an NTC delegation. Lévy was surprised at Sarkozy's immediate consent, explaining that it was "as if [the president] found it perfectly natural receive a proposal for the official recognition of a newly formed power of which nothing, to date, was known other than it was rebelling against the all-powerful government in Tripoli."<sup>191</sup> Sarkozy nevertheless met with two NTC representatives- Ali Essaoui, Qaddafi's ex-finance minister, and Mahmoud Jibril, the former head of Libya's National Economic Development Board- and on March 10 formally recognized the coalition as the legal representative of Libya. Less than a week later, France was pressuring NATO to act. Though there is some speculation as to whether Sarkozy was acting upon more self-interested objectives (for example, taking the opportunity to be more proactive in the Arab Spring development, or to improve low poll ratings at home), Lévy still played an important role in convincing France to take the "first tangible, decisive steps toward isolating Qaddafi and creating an actionable international consensus."<sup>192</sup> According to Gates, France's demonstration of leadership pressured the United States to take the lead role at the United Nations in organizing an operation against Qaddafi.<sup>193</sup> "The French Catalyst" was therefore a key figure in pushing the international community to act.

After working with the Sarkozy government to influence French policy, Lévy turned his sights to the United States. On March 14, Lévy organized a meeting in Paris between Secretary of State Hilary Clinton and Jibril. The NTC representative lobbied for the United States to enforce a no-fly zone over Libya, yet Clinton and other American officials were still hesitant. While the Arab League had also petitioned for a no-fly zone, the group had simultaneously

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<sup>191</sup> Chorin, *Exit the Colonel*, 219

<sup>192</sup> *ibid.*, 221

<sup>193</sup> Gates, *Duty*, 518

rejected the idea of foreign intervention in Libya.<sup>194</sup> This was an inhibiting condition to American intervention, as the Obama Administration was carefully avoiding stepping on the toes of regional organizations and the Arab World, fearful of the political costs of another unwanted military effort in another Arab country (see chapter 9 for greater discussion). However, Jibril seemed to appease most of Clinton's concerns and convinced her to push for intervention. An unidentified associate of Clinton told Lévy that "[Jibril] had reached Hilary on a very fundamental level; that he had caught the attention of Clinton the political animal, but also...the female instinct within her."<sup>195</sup> The following day, Clinton briefed Obama in an advisers meeting that after her discussion with Jibril, she believed the Arab League would support a no-fly zone over Libya, and that NATO could lead a bombing campaign against Qaddafi's airforce and aircraft carrier.<sup>196</sup> Jibril's lobbying was crucial, especially considering that many members of the administration at the time were still unconvinced of an impending massacre in Benghazi (despite Qaddafi publically threatening to kill "the rats" in Benghazi).<sup>197</sup>

On March 17, President Obama announced that he had come down on the side of intervention and the United States began working on a Security Council resolution. Ultimately, it was determined that a no-fly zone by itself was insufficient, and after significant lobbying from Susan Rice at the United Nations, a resolution was adopted under Chapter VII of the UN Charter that authorized the use of "all means necessary" by NATO to protect civilians. Motivated by moral considerations, and by the relatively low costs of intervention compared to the costs of non-intervention (see next chapters), the president set an important precedent regarding the use of American military force post-Iraq and post-R2P. Global civil society played an extremely

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<sup>194</sup> BBC News Writers, "Clinton Meets Libyan Opposition Figure Mahmoud Jibril," *BBC News*, March 15, 2011. Accessed March 10, 2014 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-12741414>

<sup>195</sup> Chorin, *Exit the Colonel*, 224

<sup>196</sup> Hastings, "Inside Obama's War Room," 3

<sup>197</sup> Chorin, *Exit the Colonel*, 224

important role in guiding U.S. policy through the information it provided, the pressure it presented, and the policies it prescribed.

### *Conclusion*

As the humanitarian crisis worsened in Libya, non-governmental groups and individuals worked to influence U.S. policy. NGOs, news organizations, and the NTC provided the U.S. with important information that shaped the discourse in Washington. This is even more remarkable considering that some of this information contradicted the views of the Department of Defense. These organizations also pressured the U.S. to alleviate the crisis, raising questions of moral responsibility and touching the heartstrings of important decision-makers. Finally, non-governmental organizations and individuals, in particular Mahmoud Jibril, convinced the United States that it had the regional support that it needed to intervene, quieting concerns of a politically destructive unwelcome intervention. Global civil society was the catalyst that pushed the Libyan humanitarian crisis into the United States' agenda. However, as I will demonstrate in the following two sections, the relatively low material costs and benign security implications of intervention were also necessary conditions for the U.S. to intervene in Libya.

### **Section Two: Low Costs in Libya**

In his memoirs, Robert Gates writes, “when considering military intervention, presidents virtually never consider the cost- Obama included, when it came to Libya.”<sup>198</sup> His comment contradicts one of the main discoveries of this study, namely that presidents will not intervene in humanitarian crises unless the costs are relatively low. However, upon further reflection, it becomes clear that costs played an extremely important role in the decision-making process regarding intervention in Libya: the mandate was limited, U.S. leadership was to be scaled back after the initial attack, and the military costs were to be shared between different states. The

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<sup>198</sup> Gates, *Duty*, 519

evidence suggests that intervention was only decided on after discussing the military costs, and that low costs were a prerequisite for intervention.

*Considering the Costs- No Nation Building*

Contrary to Gates' assertion, the White House was highly attentive to the costs of intervention and the potential for disaster. On March 6, National Security Advisor Thomas E. Donilon organized a group at the NSC to begin planning for a post-Qaddafi Libya. The group discussed potential scenarios that might arise if the United States supported the rebels against the Qaddafi regime, asking questions such as "how messy will this be? Will there be a civil war, or a more linear downfall that allows time to set up a new government? Will a U.N. Peacekeeping force be required, and if so, how many soldiers will it need?"<sup>199</sup> Tony Blinkin, a high-ranking official in the NSC, wondered what would come next if Qaddafi was overthrown- would intervention make things worse?<sup>200</sup> As Michael Hastings explains, these types of discussions were noticeably absent before the Iraq intervention, and were meant to prevent a repeat of the costly nation building responsibilities that the United States had assumed after overthrowing Saddam.<sup>201</sup> Regime change is easy; nation building is not. The White House wanted to be sure it knew what it was getting into before agreeing on intervention.

These concerns undoubtedly influenced the intervention's mandate. There was considerable pressure on President Obama, especially from Congress, to make regime change an objective of the intervention. Senator John McCain and House Representative Buck McKeon were particularly vocal about overthrowing Qaddafi. As were Elliot Abrams and Paul Wolfowitz, who co-signed a letter in February with 40 others urging the Obama Administration to pursue

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<sup>199</sup> Hastings, "Inside Obama's War Room," 3

<sup>200</sup> *ibid.*, 3

<sup>201</sup> *ibid.*, 3

regime change. However, the mandate that the White House agreed upon was markedly limited and was aimed at checking American interference in post-conflict Libya. It authorized using air power to destroy Qaddafi's air force and establish a no-fly zone, as well as protect citizens by bombing control and command centers, but fell short of overthrowing Qaddafi. According to Obama, "broadening our military mission to include a regime change would be a mistake."<sup>202</sup> Not only would regime change threaten the intervening coalition and the strong international support for intervention- including sanction from the Arab League, NATO, UN, and Gulf Cooperation Council- but it would also require the U.S. to play a role in Libya's transition to democracy. Obama explained in a speech to the American public on March 28 that this would require deploying American boots on the ground, and augment "the costs and our share of responsibility for what comes next."<sup>203</sup> He cited Iraq as an example of regime change gone awry, explaining that the United States could not afford being dragged into another trillion-plus dollar quagmire. Not everybody was content with the limited mandate. At a hearing with the House and Senate Armed Services Committee, Gates and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Michael Mullen were bombarded with complaints about the limitations of the military mission.<sup>204</sup> However, the White House adhered to its belief that limiting the scope of the intervention and its operational costs was essential. Indeed, after NTC militias killed Qaddafi in October, the United States pursued a postwar approach in Libya suitably referred to by the Rand Corporation as the "light-footprint strategy." The strategy emphasized taking a low-profile approach through a small

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<sup>202</sup> Al Jazeera writers, "Obama's Remarks on Libya," *Al Jazeera*, March 29, 2011. Accessed March 1, 2014 <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2011/03/20113293489811364.html>

<sup>203</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>204</sup> Gates, *Duty*, 520

U.N. political mission, while delegating the majority of postwar operations to the Libyans themselves.<sup>205</sup> Another costly postwar operation was simply out of the question.

### *Splitting the Costs*

One of Gates' biggest concerns about intervention was the cost of declaring a no-fly zone, and uncertainty about how long it would take to implement and sustain. He was particularly critical of the White House for leading military discussions without consulting the Department of Defense, and worried that Washington only superficially understood the costs of the options being proposed: "The White House has no idea how many resources will be required. This administration has jumped to military options before it even knows what to do."<sup>206</sup> During a House Appropriations Defense Subcommittee hearing, the Secretary of Defense testified "[a no-fly zone] is more than just signing a piece of paper...it's a big operation in a big country."<sup>207</sup> From Gates' perspective, the White House was resorting to military options without seriously considering how much it would cost, and humanitarianists leading the discussions such as Samantha Power were prioritizing moral responsibilities over operational practicality.

However, Gates' criticisms ignore Obama's preconditions for intervention that were heavily rooted in costs. The first condition was that no American ground forces were to be used. This meant that ground units would not be redirected from Iraq or Afghanistan, and that the Army would not be stretched (a significant concern during the Darfur decision-making process). Secondly, the intervention was to be under NATO auspices. Not only did a NATO coalition indicate that there was international support for intervention, but it also allowed for burden

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<sup>205</sup> Christopher S. Chivvis, Keith Crane, Peter Mandaville, and Jeffrey Martini, "Libya's Post-Qaddafi Transition: The Nation-Building Challenge," *Rand Corporation National Security Research Division*, (2012). 1. Accessed March 5, 2013 [http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research\\_reports/RR100/RR129/RAND\\_RR129.pdf](http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR100/RR129/RAND_RR129.pdf)

<sup>206</sup> Gates, *Duty*, 512

<sup>207</sup> *ibid.*, 513

sharing between the participating states. The evidence indicates that burden sharing was a particularly important precondition for intervention. The United States was tasked with taking the lead in destroying Qaddafi's air defenses, but after the initial bombing campaign it was to scale back its involvement and assist NATO by providing only what the "U.S. military 'uniquely' possessed...that would enable other allies to take the lead."<sup>208</sup> American contributions were significant- including intelligence, fueling, and targeting capabilities- but so were the contributions of the other participants. The coalition consisted of 14 NATO member states and four outside partners. France and the United Kingdom offered over 40 percent of the sorties and destroyed over one-third of the overall targets. Italy contributed aircraft for reconnaissance missions, and together with Greece provided access to air bases. Belgium, Canada, Norway, Denmark, and the UAE all deployed combat fighters. Jordan, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, Turkey and Qatar all assisted with maintaining the no-fly zone.<sup>209</sup> The Obama Administration was careful not to lead the United States into another military conflict in which it would bear the brunt of the costs. Indeed, *Time Magazine's* Fareed Zakaria writes that "compared to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Libya operation was a bargain."<sup>210</sup> Compared to the \$1.3 trillion collective cost of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, the invoice of the Libya intervention for the United States was "only" \$1 billion. This was, in fact, lower than some estimates of the UK's contributions (*The Guardian*, for example, suggests that the UK spent between one and two billion USD on Libya), and not much higher than the \$700 million USD from Italy.<sup>211</sup> It is

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<sup>208</sup>Chivvis et al., "Libya's Post-Qaddafi Transition," 1

<sup>209</sup> Ivo H. Daalder and James G. Stavridis, "NATO's Victory in Libya: The Right Way to Run an Intervention," *Foreign Affairs* 91.2 (March/April 2012): 4

<sup>210</sup> Tony Karon, "Is Libya a New Model of U.S. Intervention, or an Afghanistan Do-Over?," *Time*, August 31, 2011. Accessed March 4, 2014 <http://world.time.com/2011/08/31/is-libya-a-new-model-of-u-s-intervention-or-an-afghanistan-do-over/>

<sup>211</sup> Nick Hopkins, "UK Operations in Libya: The Full Costs Broken Down," *The Guardian*, September 26, 2011. Accessed March 1, 2014 <http://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2011/sep/26/uk-operations-libya-costs>.

unlikely that the U.S. would have intervened had it not been supported militarily by these other states. Gates even admits, “it was clear that the president was not going to act alone...he wanted any military operations to be under NATO auspices.”<sup>212</sup> Again likely influenced by Iraq, Obama saw multilateralism as the only viable avenue for intervention, effectively distancing himself from the unilateralist approach that characterized the Bush years.

### *Conclusion*

The war in Libya continued until October, seven months after the initial bombing campaign. During this period, the initial limited mandate evolved into “a more sweeping and aggressive push for regime change.”<sup>213</sup> Although some might argue that overthrowing Qaddafi was the political goal of the United States from the very beginning, the evidence suggests that the Obama Administration genuinely believed the intervention would be short, easy, and relatively uncostly. In the words of an unnamed White House source, “we thought it was going to be quick.”<sup>214</sup>

The Obama Administration would not have intervened in Libya had the perceived costs been greater. Intervention was conditional on a limited mandate, a coalition to share the operational burdens, and the prediction that direct military involvement would be relatively short. Contrary to Gates’ assertion, Obama and the White House were concerned about how intervention would hurt the wallet- low perceived costs were absolutely essential.

### **Section Three: Benign Security/Strategic Implications in Libya:**

By 2011, the United States was approaching almost a decade of military involvement in the Middle East. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan had strained relations between the U.S. and

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<sup>212</sup> Gates, *Duty*, 515

<sup>213</sup> Hastings, “Inside Obama’s War Room,” 6

<sup>214</sup> *ibid.*, 6

the Muslim World, as well as undermined American credibility in the region.<sup>215</sup> Indeed, the reluctance to intervene in Darfur in the mid-2000s can be partly attributed to the Bush Administration's misgivings about becoming involved in another Muslim country (see chapter 6, especially National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley's quote). Five years later, there was a new president in the White House and a new administration, yet the same concerns continued to linger. The Libya crisis presented the Obama Administration with a political and strategic quandary. How would the Muslim World react to another American military intervention in another Muslim state? Would intervention negatively affect American security and power vis-à-vis its credibility in the region? These concerns weighed heavily in the minds of decision-makers, yet it soon became clear that the circumstances of the Libya conflict were fundamentally different than in Darfur. In this chapter, I will demonstrate that the Obama Administration realized not only that intervention would not undermine security and strategic interests, but also that *inaction* would be strategically costly. Because of this, intervention was more than just feasible- it was strategically important.

#### *Broad International Support for Intervention*

According to one U.S. senior administration official involved with the deliberations, "there was a certain wariness to get involved militarily in another Muslim country."<sup>216</sup> Some U.S. decision-makers, Robert Gates included, were likely influenced by the course of events leading up to the Iraq invasion in 2003 and were reluctant to lead another intervention without international sanction. At a NATO defense ministers meeting on March 10, Gates told Secretary General Anders Rasmussen that the United States would be willing to plan for a no-fly zone, but

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<sup>215</sup> Amitai Etzioni, "The Coming Test of U.S. Credibility," *Military Review* (March-April 2011): 4. Accessed February 23, 2014 [http://usacac.army.mil/CAC2/MilitaryReview/Archives/English/MilitaryReview\\_20110430\\_art004.pdf](http://usacac.army.mil/CAC2/MilitaryReview/Archives/English/MilitaryReview_20110430_art004.pdf)

<sup>216</sup>Hastings, "Inside Obama's War Room," 3

that a UN Security Council Resolution and “explicit regional participation” were necessary stipulations before any military action would be taken: “this can’t be seen as a bunch of Americans and Europeans intervening in a sovereign Arab state without sanction.”<sup>217</sup> With the criticisms of Iraq still ringing in his ears, Gates insisted that the United States must be able to first justify intervention as a humanitarian operation and not simply an extension of U.S. military might for self-interested reasons. In particular, the Secretary of Defense wanted the U.S. to be able to answer certain questions that might be asked, such as why it was intervening in Libya instead of other states, or whether the operation was motivated by oil interests.<sup>218</sup> A repeat of the Iraq debacle, an intervention without broad international support, was out of the question.

The Gulf Cooperation Council was the first prominent international organization to voice support for a no-fly zone in Libya, offering the very kind of regional support that the United States was waiting for. On March 8, the organization called for the UN Security Council to implement a no-fly zone, a maneuver that Chorin calls “a bold step.”<sup>219</sup> Two days later, NATO showed its support for military action. After the March 10<sup>th</sup> meeting, most defense ministers were supportive of intervention.<sup>220</sup> Germany was a notable exception, as it opposed relocating some ships, although Supreme Allied Commander Europe James G. Stavridis had the ability to do this on his own accord. Despite this, the United States and NATO remained reluctant to act without the support of the Arab League.

Without Arab League sanction, the United States feared repeating the same mistakes of the Iraq intervention. The Obama Administration understood that an unwelcomed military operation in Libya could “turn out to be prolonged and complex,” inducing significant material

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<sup>217</sup> Gates, *Duty*, 515

<sup>218</sup> Gates, *Duty*, 515

<sup>219</sup> Chorin, *Exit the Colonel*, 212

<sup>220</sup> Gates, *Duty*, 516

costs as well as further undermining American credibility in the region.<sup>221</sup> However, on March 11 the 22-nation Arab League finally pledged support for a UN intervention, “an extremely rare invitation for Western military forces on Arab territory.”<sup>222</sup> Amr Moussa, the Secretary General of the organization, justified the decision on humanitarian grounds, explaining that the Arab League sought an end to the bloodshed against innocent Libyan citizens. It was also partly a response to negative comments that Qaddafi’s son, Seif al-Islam al-Qaddafi, had made about the Arab League, as well as a general loathing of Qaddafi in the Gulf.<sup>223</sup> Regardless of the motives for the decision, the Arab League’s sanction not only made it possible for the United States and Europe to push for a strong Security Council resolution against objections from Russia and China, but it also pressured the U.S. to take a lead role in the military campaign. The Arab League’s endorsement of Western deployment in the region starkly contrasted the situation in Darfur in the mid-2000s, when the Arab World strongly opposed U.S. intervention. The United States recognized the significance of the endorsement. In his memoirs, Robert Gates explains, “the action of the Arab League...persuaded the President that the United States would need to take the lead at the U.N. and in organizing the military campaign to stop Qaddafi.”<sup>224</sup> Chorin offers a similar perspective: “a critical step in the formation of U.S. policy...was strong regional (Arab) support.”<sup>225</sup> Soon after the Arab League’s statement, the White House released a message stating, “we welcome this important step by the Arab League...the international

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<sup>221</sup>Ethan Bronner and David E. Sanger, “Arab League Endorses No-Flight Zone Over Libya,” *New York Times*, March 12, 2011. Accessed March 13, 2014

[http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/13/world/middleeast/13libya.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/13/world/middleeast/13libya.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0)

<sup>222</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>223</sup> Chorin, *Exit the Colonel*, 225

<sup>224</sup> Gates, *Duty*, 518

<sup>225</sup> Chorin, *Exit the Colonel*, 222

community is unified in sending a clear message that the violence in Libya must stop.”<sup>226</sup> With broad international and regional support, the United States did not face the same strategic implications of intervention that it had during the Darfur crisis. Intervention would not exacerbate tensions between the U.S. and Arab World, nor undermine its legitimacy in the region and in the international community at large. Rather, it provided an opportunity to work with the Arab League to pursue a common goal.

*The Image of America and American Credibility: More than a “Rhetorical Construct”*

In a 2009 speech in Cairo, President Obama promised that the United States would take a new approach to the Middle East, characterized by a respect for human rights and democratic ideals and not “the crude stereotype of a self-interested empire.”<sup>227</sup> Yet as the Arab Spring—beginning in Tunisia and spreading to Egypt, and then Libya—provided an opportunity for the U.S. to show its dedication to upholding these values, the Obama Administration seemed to balk. This was especially true for the uprisings in states with governments friendly to the United States, including Egypt and Bahrain. Michael Hastings explains, “the Obama Administration was slow to distance itself from the oil-rich autocrats the U.S. had supported for decades. In Egypt...Biden downplayed the democratic revolt, saying he didn’t consider Hosni Mubarek a ‘dictator.’ In Bahrain...the administration looked the other way...To Arab protesters, Obama’s ‘new beginning’ seemed more like the same old American *realpolitik*.”<sup>228</sup>

The United States’ seemingly apathetic response to the concerns of Arab protesters thus threatened the image of America that Obama had promised to promote. Indeed, officials in the White House recognized the danger this would pose to American credibility, especially in the

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<sup>226</sup> Richard Leiby and Muhammad Mansour, “Arab League Asks U.N. for No-fly Zone Over Libya,” *Washington Post*, March 12, 2011. Accessed March 3, 2014 [http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/arab-league-asks-un-for-no-fly-zone-over-libya/2011/03/12/ABoie0R\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/arab-league-asks-un-for-no-fly-zone-over-libya/2011/03/12/ABoie0R_story.html)

<sup>227</sup> Chorin, *Exit the Colonel*, 209

<sup>228</sup> Hastings, “Inside Obama’s War Room,” 1

Middle East, and they saw Libya as an opportunity to prove American resolve to democratic values and human rights. On March 15, Hillary Clinton traveled to Egypt to meet with a coalition of Egyptian youth groups. After the coalition refused to meet with her, Clinton remarked to several State Department officials “we didn’t get off to a great start with Egypt- let’s reverse that with Libya.”<sup>229</sup> According to Hastings, President Obama shared a similar sentiment, believing that intervention in Libya could compensate for the “slow-footed response to the Arab Spring.”<sup>230</sup> It was important to the Obama Administration that Libyans, and the world at large, understood that American involvement in the Middle East to promote democratic values would be more than simply rhetoric.<sup>231</sup>

Inaction therefore would have been costly to the United States. It would have undermined American credibility, which is inherently related to power.<sup>232</sup> As the theory of credibility explains, if state A can convince state B to follow a course of action that state A prefers, state A is demonstrating its “soft power” over state B. Soft power is important, as it can allow a state to influence international politics at an extremely low price. The idea is that if a state signals its resolve, it will not have to utilize its military or instill economic sanctions, actions that can be costly to the state. In the context of the Libya crisis, intervention indicated to the world that the U.S. would fight to uphold the values that it promoted rather than simply ignoring violations when it was inconvenient. This was important for two reasons. First, as explained above, it reinforced the image of the U.S. that Obama had promised in his “new beginnings” speech in Cairo, thus improving American credibility and legitimacy in the eyes of the Middle East and paving the way for, potentially, better relations between the U.S. and Middle East. Secondly, it

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<sup>229</sup> *ibid*, 3

<sup>230</sup> *ibid*, 3

<sup>231</sup> Marc Ambinder, “Obama’s First New War,” *National Journal*, March 19, 2011. Accessed February 27, 2014 <http://www.nationaljournal.com/whitehouse/obama-s-first-new-war-20110319?page=1>

<sup>232</sup> Amitai Etzioni, “The Coming Test of U.S. Credibility,” 2

made a statement to other regimes in the Middle East that the United States would not tolerate human rights abuses, and would even resort to using military force if necessary.

This second point was particularly important to the Obama Administration in regards to handling Iran. Iran was the proverbial elephant in the room in discussions about Libya: the decisions made regarding intervention in Libya would undoubtedly have important implications regarding Tehran's treatment of its own protesters. Clinton was concerned about the kind of message that inaction in Libya would send to Iran, namely that "America was so afraid of committing its military to protect Muslims and Arabs that it would allow virtually anything to happen."<sup>233</sup> Jay Solomon of *The Wall Street Journal* iterates a similar point: "President Barack Obama's decision last week to use military force against...Qaddafi's forces was made in part by his administration's fear that Western inaction could further embolden Tehran."<sup>234</sup> If the United States and Western bloc allowed Qaddafi to regain control over Benghazi, it would have communicated to Iran that leaders who are more lenient toward protesters, such as Mubarak in Egypt, will be disposed of, while regimes that respond with brutal crackdowns will be allowed to remain in power. By intervening, the United States was able to demonstrate its resolve and steadfast opposition to violence against protesters. But perhaps more importantly, it was sending the message to Tehran that the regime would not be permitted to act freely without repercussions, including pursuing a nuclear weapons program. According to National Security Advisor Thomas E. Donilon, "[Iran] would interpret a failure to back up [Obama's] declaration that...Qaddafi had "lost the legitimacy to lead" as a sign of weakness- and perhaps a signal that Mr. Obama was equally unwilling to back up his vow never to allow Iran to gain the ability to

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<sup>233</sup> Marc Ambinder, "Obama's First New War."

<sup>234</sup> Michael Crowley, "Is Libya Really About Iran?," *Time*, March 22, 2011. Accessed March 1, 2014. <http://swampland.time.com/2011/03/22/is-libya-really-about-iran/>

gain a nuclear weapon.”<sup>235</sup> Inaction would thus have dangerous strategic and security implications that the United States wanted to avoid.

### *Conclusion*

During the Darfur crisis and the UN planning period for intervention, Kofi Annan recognized that Western troops could not be deployed “because of the environment in the aftermath of Iraq and perceptions in the Islamic World, which Bashir presented very well.”<sup>236</sup> These perceptions had changed, albeit not completely, by the Libyan revolution in 2011. The Arab World welcomed U.S. military involvement to protect Libyan citizens, calling on the U.N. to implement a no-fly zone in an “extremely rare” move.<sup>237</sup> The United States therefore recognized that intervention would not exacerbate tensions between itself and the Arab World. Rather, it would demonstrate U.S. resolve to protect human rights and democratic values that Obama had promised in his 2009 speech in Cairo. Simply put, the negative security and strategic implications that would have resulted from intervention in Darfur did not exist in Libya.

Furthermore, by demonstrating resolve, the United States made a statement to Iran and other regimes in the region that it would be willing to resort to force if the government violently cracked down on protesters. Libya was, for all intents and purposes, an ally of the United States in 2011. Qaddafi had complied with U.S. demands to give up its WMD capabilities, and had instilled mild reforms in Libya during the 2000s. This made it all the more spectacular that the United States assisted the rebels, signaling that not even allied governments were immune from American opposition. By proving resolve, Obama and the U.S. also demonstrated its credibility in backing up rhetoric with action, especially in regards to preventing Iran from obtaining a

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<sup>235</sup>David E. Sanger, “The Larger Game in the Middle East: Iran,” *New York Times*, April 2, 2011. Accessed March 2, 2014 <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/03/weekinreview/03sanger.html?pagewanted=all&r=0>

<sup>236</sup>Hamilton, *Fighting for Darfur*, 127

<sup>237</sup>Bronner and Sanger, “Arab League Endorses No-Flight Zone.”

nuclear weapon. Intervention in Libya thus not only lacked significant strategic and security *costs*, but also had important strategic *benefits*. Inaction was simply too costly.

### **Analysis and Conclusion:**

The results of this case study confirm the initial hypotheses: the United States will only intervene if there is a global civil society network providing information and pressure upon the government to intervene, the material costs are relatively low, and the security/strategic implications are benign. The U.S. will forego intervention if these conditions are not fulfilled. I will conclude this study by briefly recapping each of my conditions and by summarizing their importance in the context of each crisis, followed by a discussion of the causal relationship between my independent variable (the three conditions) and dependent variable (humanitarian intervention). I will then end by commenting on what this says about realism, constructivism, and the importance of the humanitarian norm.

As Keck and Sikkink point out, transnational non-governmental actors can play a prominent role in influencing state policy by serving as advocacy networks. To recap, they propose four tactics commonly employed by networks: information politics, symbolic politics, leverage politics, and accountability politics. We see these methods utilized by global civil society in the crises presented in this study. In Somalia, NGOs continued operating on the ground even after the violence expelled most government agencies. They worked with OFDA and Jan Westcott to relay information to the most important decision-makers in Washington, highlighting the atrocities and worsening humanitarian conditions and painting them in ways that demonstrated the urgent need for outside action. Additionally, media agencies brought the crisis to the American public, mobilizing humanitarianists and increasing pressure on the Bush

Administration to intervene. Though Strobel insists the policy wheels were already in motion before the media began regularly covering the crisis, the media nevertheless augmented public interest and probably forced Bush to act quicker than he would have otherwise. Finally, the success of accountability politics is demonstrated by Bush's belief that he was morally obligated to help alleviate the suffering as described by global civil society. Without global civil society providing important information and pressure to intervene, intervention would likely never have happened.

The same can be said for the intervention in Libya. NGOs and the media were instrumental in reporting government attacks and the violence to key decision-makers in the government. Reports of government-sponsored air attacks contradicted statements by the Defense Department, yet were still able to influence the likes of Samantha Power, John McCain, and Susan Rice who all advocated for a no-fly zone. Additionally, the NTC worked directly with Clinton and the State Department to advocate for U.S. intervention, presenting itself as a legitimate interlocutor with clear demands that should be listened to. It called for "freedom" and "respect," values that not only certainly resonated with American decision-makers, but were also promised by President Obama in his 2009 Cairo speech to the Muslim World. Framing the war as a violent struggle between freedom and authoritarianism, the NTC and Libyan public were able to convince Obama that the U.S. had a moral responsibility to intervene: "acting would be the right thing to do, because we have the responsibility to prevent a massacre, and we've been asked to do it by the people of Libya."<sup>238</sup>

Global civil society provided the Bush Administration with important information about the humanitarian crisis in Darfur, especially during Khartoum's information blackout, and was successful in influencing American policy. It also spawned an unprecedented citizen advocacy

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<sup>238</sup> Hastings, "Inside Obama's War Room," 4

movement that successfully lobbied Congressmen and the President to act in ways they certainly would not have otherwise. However, it fell short of eliciting intervention for a couple of reasons. Firstly, citizen-led advocacy groups, especially the Save Darfur Coalition, had only a general understanding of the political forces involved in the conflict and what could be done to stop it. Secondly, and more importantly, the citizen-led movement noticeably fell short of calling for intervention. Because of these two reasons, the United States was able to appease advocacy demands with markedly limited, and unsuccessful, efforts. Often, airlifting a few thousand more soldiers “with pictures to show for it” was enough to satisfy advocacy demands.<sup>239</sup> In other words, the U.S. was *not* held accountable for not intervening. My first condition for intervention thus went unfulfilled.

My second condition for intervention, low relative costs, is also upheld by the cases in this study. Although the Bush Administration was also heavily pressured by global civil society to intervene in Bosnia, the low relative costs of the Somalia operation determined that if the United States was going to lead any mission, it would be in the Horn of Africa instead of the Balkans. The perceived costs of intervention in Bosnia were simply too great. Likewise, low costs were a prerequisite for intervention in Libya. Despite Gates’ assertion that the Obama Administration ignored military costs, the evidence indicates otherwise. First, coalition building and burden sharing with NATO and the Arab League convinced Obama that intervention was plausible. The President made it clear during negotiations that he would not intervene alone, and that the U.S. would scale back its military involvement after the initial bombing campaign as to not become entrenched in another Iraq-like quagmire. Secondly, intervention was conditional on a limited mandate that fell short of regime change. Again, Iraq was the standard to avoid; Obama feared that regime change would inevitably require the U.S. to take the lead in the costly

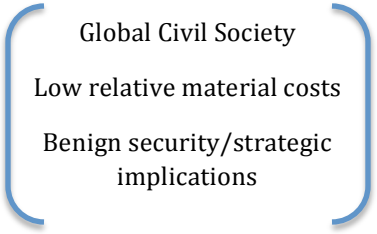
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<sup>239</sup> Hamilton, *Fighting for Darfur*, 75

post-war transition. Although the mandate eventually evolved to include removing Qaddafi, and the operation lasted over seven months, the evidence suggests that the administration genuinely thought the operation would be quick. In Darfur, the perceived high costs of intervention barred military action. The Defense Department feared that deploying troops in Sudan would either stretch the military thin, or require relocating manpower from Iraq and Afghanistan. Military planners deemed intervention too big and too costly to pursue.

This study also proves that the U.S. will not intervene in humanitarian crises unless the security and strategic implications are benign. Despite Siad Barre's blatant human rights abuses in the 1980s (although not a humanitarian crisis), the U.S. not only refrained from intervening to protect citizens, but also made an effort to maintain positive relations with the regime as a way to counter Soviet influence in the region. After Somalia's strategic importance diminished after the Cold War ended, and the Barre regime fell, the security/strategic implications of intervention disappeared and military action became strategically harmless. In Libya, the U.S. had regional support from both the Arab League and the Gulf Cooperation Council, greatly reducing the strategic implications that could have otherwise resulted from another intervention in another Muslim country. Additionally, Washington actually strategically benefitted from intervention by demonstrating its resolve and by adhering to the image spelled out in Obama's 2009 speech in Cairo. If the implications had not been benign, the administration would not have intervened. On the other hand, decision-makers saw intervention in Darfur as strategically harmful for three reasons: it would have compromised operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, it would have threatened Sudanese cooperation with American counterterrorism efforts, and it would have escalated tensions between the U.S. and the Arab World. Intervention was therefore out of the question.

Individually, each of these conditions is necessary, but not sufficient, for intervention. Together, they form a set that is both a necessary and sufficient variable for intervention. The causal relationship can be written as follows:

If  holds, then intervention is more likely

Or, if intervention does not occur, then *at least* one of the individual conditions of the set is not true. It is interesting to note that in Darfur, none of these conditions was true, making it a particularly unfavorable environment for U.S. intervention. Indeed, the absence of each particular condition was used by Washington to justify non-intervention.

By identifying the conditions under which states intervene in humanitarian crises, this study bridges the gap between realism's inability to explain the importance of the humanitarian norm, and constructivism's inability to capture states' "logic of consequences" mentality. Clearly, the humanitarian norm influences state behavior. Despite realism's assertion that states undertake interventions only for self-interested reasons, principally to maximize security or power, this study demonstrates that the United States will intervene to uphold values it perceives as good and right. However, while the humanitarian norm certainly influences U.S. policy, Washington will only intervene in humanitarian crises under favorable conditions. As realism would suggest, the United States makes extremely calculated decisions, carefully examining the perceived costs and benefits of intervention, both material and security/strategic related, before agreeing to participate in a military effort. Decision-makers will avoid intervention if they

determine the costs to be too high. Therefore, the humanitarian norm *does* matter, but only when upholding it does not require the United States to make considerable sacrifices.

Additionally, this study demonstrates that the catalyst for putting intervention on the agenda as a potential policy option is usually not benevolent policymakers in Washington, but global civil society. The global civil society conglomerate is a dynamic actor that, by providing information and pressure upon the government to intervene, can influence policy and convince the U.S. to act in ways it would not have otherwise. This suggests that Washington needs prodding to intervene and, as realism indicates, prefers to forego humanitarian intervention if it can. Yet it also shows that the president can be motivated by the humanitarian norm when pressured, and can be convinced to pursue policy options that may not be directly beneficial to the state. This reality holds true with constructivism.

Both realism and constructivism therefore have important contributions to describing state behavior in humanitarian crises. Yet exclusively, both theories also fall short. This study bridges the gap between realism and constructivism by demonstrating the conditions under which norms can compel the United States to undertake costly military operations with few, if any, prospects for self-gain. The humanitarian norm matters, and can influence state behavior, but only conditionally.

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