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On the following pages, you can read the Senior Thesis of Cameron Overton, awarded the SBS Class of 2014 Slater Award for exceptional writing. ✨

## *The Moral Obligation for American Intervention in Foreign Atrocities*

— by Cameron Overton —

### *Abstract*

*Due to the growing role of the United States as an international hegemon, the question of whether America possesses a moral obligation to intervene in foreign atrocities often arises. Several United Nations doctrines and documents, along with Scriptural passages, advocate human rights protection. Still, many argue that America should focus on domestic problems before focusing abroad, and that sacrificing American resources and lives for the welfare of foreigners is imprudent. Multiple passages of Scripture support American intervention in foreign atrocities, which violate Biblical commands and principles, such as the sanctity of human life. Therefore, America should intervene to terminate foreign atrocities in coalition with the U.N. and other sovereign nations, using military force only if non-forceful methods are unsuccessful.*



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**IN RECENT DECADES**, the United States of America has developed an increasing role as an international hegemon. The strong international influence which the United States presently holds may be attributed to the advanced military, technology, and economy of the nation, and the foundations of liberty which propel its government and society. Because of the influence and resources which the United States possesses, the nation is often pressured to assert itself abroad as both a protector and preserver of morality when morality is threatened. There exists an ongoing debate regarding whether the United States is morally obligated to intervene in foreign atrocities (cruel, physically violent acts committed against one people group by another), and how the United States should proceed in the future when foreign atrocities occur.

## TERMINOLOGY

In order to maximize knowledge and understanding of both the subject at issue and the controversy surrounding it, comprehension of the definitions of several terms is imperative. The definition of each term is extracted from *Webster's 1828 Dictionary*, unless the definition is not present in Webster's dictionary, in which case an alternate source will be cited. Hegemony is defined as "the social, cultural, ideological, or economic influence exerted by a dominant group; preponderant influence or authority over others" (*merriam-webster.com*). Social is defined as "pertaining to society; relating to men living in society, or to the public as an aggregate body." Cultural is a term which pertains to "the beliefs, customs, arts, etc., of a particular society, group, place, or time" (*merriam-webster.com*). Ideological is a term which relates to "the set of ideas and beliefs of a group or political party" (*merriam-webster.com*). The term economic relates to "the management of pecuniary concerns or the expenditure of money."

Preponderant is defined as "outweighing". Hegemon is defined as "one (as a political state) possessing hegemony" (*merriam-webster.com*). An atrocity is a circumstance which involves "enormous wickedness; extreme heinousness or cruelty." Atrocities typically involve physical violence or injury. Atrocious is defined as "extremely heinous, criminal or cruel." The term intervene is defined as "to happen in a way to disturb, cross or interrupt; to interpose or undertake voluntarily for another." Foreign is defined as "belonging to another nation or country; alien; not of the country in which one resides; extraneous." The term murder is defined as "to kill with premeditated malice; to kill (a human being) willfully, deliberately, and unlawfully." The term kill is defined as "to deprive of life, animal or vegetable, in any manner or by any means; to render inanimate; to put to death; to slay."

The term governance is defined as "exercise of authority; direction; control; management." Government is "the system of polity in a state; that form of fundamental rules and principles by which a nation or state is governed, or by which individual members of a body politic are to regulate their social actions." Humanitarian is defined as "having concern for or helping to improve the welfare and happiness of people; pertaining to the saving of human lives or to the alleviation of suffering" (*dictionary.com*). Morality is "the quality of an action which renders it good; the conformity of an act to the divine law, or to the principles of rectitude."

Intervention is defined as "interposition in favor of another; a voluntary undertaking of one party for another."

The term ethics is defined as "a system of moral principles; a system of rules for regulating the actions and manners of men in society." International is a term "pertaining to the relations between nations; involving multiple nations" (*dictionary.com*). Supremacy is defined as "the state of being in the highest station of power; highest authority or power." Power is "command; the right of governing, or actual government; dominion; rule,

sway; authority.” A norm is defined as “a principle of right action binding upon the members of a group and serving to guide, control, or regulate proper and acceptable behavior” (*merriam-webster.com*).

A nation is defined as “a body of people inhabiting the same country, or united under the same sovereign or government.” The term sovereignty is defined as “supreme power...; freedom from external control; autonomy; controlling influence” (*merriam-webster.com*). Protect is a term which means “to cover or shield from danger; to defend; to guard; to preserve in safety.” Finally, the term supreme is defined as “highest in authority; holding the highest place in government or power.”

## HISTORY

Historically, there have been multiple doctrines, historical events, Biblical examples, and United Nations declarations which relate to American humanitarian intervention, or intervention by the United States in order to alleviate human suffering and to promote the welfare of humans in foreign nations. One set of ideas which relates to American foreign policy, and, thus, American humanitarian intervention, is the Middle East Paradigm.

## THE MIDDLE EAST PARADIGM

The Middle East Paradigm is the set of beliefs and assumptions which have guided American issuers of policy regarding the Middle East throughout the twentieth century. The name “Middle East Paradigm” is a term created by Leon Hadar, and used in his book, *Sandstorm: Policy Failure in the Middle East*. The Middle East Paradigm consists of three factors which provide reason for intervention in the Middle East. The first factor involves strategy, and asserts that the United States is obligated to have strong influence in the Middle East. Hadar relates this idea to the Cold War, when America used the power of its military to keep the Soviets, a global superpower which threatened American influence and power, out of the Middle East (Hadar 5).

The second factor which comprises the Middle East Paradigm involves economics. The United States has, since World War II, been responsible for protecting accessibility to the energy resources in the Middle East through partnerships with Iran, Saudi Arabia, and other nations which manufacture oil. Consequently, the United States is forced to intervene in the Middle East when these oil resources are threatened. The third factor involved in the Middle East Paradigm is the protection of Israel. Since the Holocaust, the United States has ensured the survival of

the Jewish nation by aiding in the protection of Israel from surrounding hostile Arab nations. This moral commitment became an important component of American foreign policy, and has withstood domestic political pressure. However, it is difficult for the United States to remain loyal to Israel while also remaining loyal to the Arab oil-producing nations which are enemies of Israel. Though the three components of the Middle East Paradigm do not relate directly to American humanitarian intervention in foreign nations, they do encourage interventionist attitudes which may lead to the promotion of humanitarian intervention (Hadar 5).

## THE UNITED NATIONS

The United Nations (UN) is an international organization which was founded after World War II. Historically, the UN has been the chief advocator of humanitarian intervention and aid. According to “UN at a Glance”, the UN was founded by “51 countries committed to maintaining international peace and security, developing friendly relations among nations and promoting social progress, better living standards and human rights.” The United Nations possesses the authority to act on a wide range of issues and provides means for its 193 member states to communicate their views with one other through several bodies and committees, such as the General Assembly and the Security Council (“UN at a Glance”).

The most well-known functions of the United Nations include peacekeeping, peace-building, conflict prevention, and humanitarian assistance. Other functions of the UN include, but are not limited to, sustainable development, environment and refugees protection, disaster relief, counter terrorism, disarmament, non-proliferation, promotion of democracy, protection of human rights, maintenance of gender equality, advancement of women, governance, economic and social development, international health, and expansion of food production (“UN at a Glance”).

The UN has several enforcement bodies which handle infractions by member and non-member states upon its policies throughout the world. The UN relates to the United States in that the United States is a member of the UN Security Council. Thus, the United States is bound to acceptance of Security Council decisions about humanitarian intervention or aid, and is bound to carry out these decisions. For example, if the Security Council rules in favor of intervention in a conflict, the United States is expected to contribute resources to the relief efforts. Conflict occasionally arises between the United States and UN about whether and how foreign conflicts should be managed.

## THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS (UDHR)

The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* is a “milestone document in the history of human rights” (“Universal Declaration of Human Rights”). The UDHR was drafted by representatives from all regions of the world, and was given forth by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948. This document declared for the first time in history that fundamental human rights should be universally protected. The UDHR was inspired by World War II and the deplorable occurrences of the Holocaust. The 30 articles of the document advance the protection of inherent human rights, such as life, liberty and freedom, and cast down actions such as torture, slavery, and arbitrary arrest or detainment. The UDHR is not a treaty, and, thus, nations are not bound to the document’s policies. However, the document contains principles and rights which are based on human rights standards included in other international agreements which are legally binding. Also, the content of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* was agreed upon by the General Assembly of the UN, and therefore represents a strong commitment to it by UN member nations (“Universal Declaration of Human Rights”).

## “RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT”

“Responsibility to Protect” is a term which refers to the “obligation of states towards their populations, and towards all populations at risk of genocide and other large-scale atrocities” (“What is the Responsibility to Protect?”). This doctrine is a significant development in the history of humanitarian intervention and human rights. The “Responsibility to Protect” doctrine was proposed by the United Nations in 2005, and focuses mainly on preventing mass atrocities such as genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing. Although the doctrine is grounded in international law, it is a norm, rather than a law (“What is the Responsibility to Protect?”).

The “Responsibility to Protect” doctrine is composed of three pillars. The first pillar of “Responsibility to Protect” holds that sovereign states have an obligation and carry the primary responsibility to protect their citizens from mass atrocities. The second pillar of the doctrine holds that the international community is responsible for assisting states in building the capability to prevent mass atrocities before, during, and after conflict. The third pillar of “Responsibility to Protect” holds that, if a state fails to act appropriately, or fails to protect its citizens from mass atrocities, the

responsibility to do so is given to a larger community of states. Additionally, if a nation is allowing or sanctioning human rights violations within its own population, there is a responsibility for intervention by outside nations (“What is the Responsibility to Protect?”).

In his book, *Humanitarian Intervention*, Thomas G. Weiss analyzes three elements of the “Responsibility to Protect” doctrine which are not included in the three main pillars of the doctrine, but are crucial in a humanitarian intervention. The first element which must be present in a humanitarian intervention is the responsibility to prevent, or to address root causes and direct causes of an internal conflict which puts a populations at risk. The second element crucial to a humanitarian intervention is the responsibility to react, or to respond in situations of human need with appropriate measures. This element may include international prosecution, military intervention, or placement of sanctions. The third element which must be present in a humanitarian intervention is the responsibility to rebuild, or to provide full assistance with recovery, reconstruction, and reconciliation. This element also involves addressing the causes of the harm the intervention was intended to halt (93).

## AMERICAN INTERVENTION IN SOMALIA (1992-1994)

The intervention in Somalia by the United States in 1992 is a key event in the history of American humanitarian intervention. In 1992, Somalia was struggling with internal conflict and poor economic and social conditions. As a result of warfare between coalitions of clans within Somalia, much of the agriculture within the nation was destroyed. Somali clans would frequently hijack food and give it to leaders of opposing clans in order to secure the loyalty of those leaders, or would give the food to other nations in exchange for weapons. Throughout the years 1991 and 1992, approximately 300,000 Somalis died of starvation (R. Snyder).

After witnessing the brutal starvation of 300,000 Somalis in 1991 and 1992, the United Nations elected to take action. In July 1992, the UN sent military observers to Somalia in order to ensure the upholding of a ceasefire which was signed between opposing Somali clans. Additionally, in August 1992, the United Nations enacted Operation Provide Relief (UNOSOM-1) in order to provide humanitarian relief for Somalis. However, this mission was unsuccessful because deliveries of food and supplies were frequently hijacked by Somali clans as soon as the shipments reached Somalia. Consequently, the UN appealed to its member nations for assistance (R. Snyder).

In December 1992, President George H.W. Bush offered American assistance for the relief efforts in Somalia. The UN accepted the proposal, resulting in the deployment

of 25,000 American soldiers to Somalia. This mission was named “Operation Restore Hope”, and was enacted solely for humanitarian purposes. The United States had no intention of going to war with Somalia. The core objective of Operation Restore Hope was to secure the trade routes within Somalia, thereby allowing food to be transported to Somali citizens without interference from Somali clans (R. Snyder).

Shortly after the beginning of Operation Restore Hope, Bill Clinton was inaugurated as president of the United States. The views which President Clinton held regarding the conflict in Somalia were contrary to those of his predecessor, President Bush. Upon assuming his role as president, Clinton was determined to both minimize the American presence in Somalia and to allow UN forces to take dominion over relief efforts in Somalia. In March 1993, the UN officially resumed control of the relief operation in Somalia and named it “UNOSOM-II”. The main objective of UNOSOM-II was nation-building within Somalia. The mission focused on restoring law and order in Somalia, improving Somali infrastructure, and aiding Somalis in creating a representative government (R. Snyder).

In June 1993, while only a small quantity of American soldiers still remained in Somalia, an attack on a weapons storage site in Somalia killed several Pakistani soldiers who were performing an inspection of the site. UN forces and the remaining American forces in Somalia began efforts to apprehend Mohammad Aidad, the perpetrator of the attack and leader of a dominant Somali clan. As a result of the search efforts for Aidad, members of his clan began to demonstrate violence towards American soldiers and journalists in the area. In October 1993, the search for Aidad led to a battle at a Somali hotel in which 18 American soldiers were killed and 84 were wounded. The deceased Americans were paraded through Somali streets by anti-American Somalis. On October 7, 1993, in response to the battle at the Somali hotel, President Clinton ordered the withdrawal of all remaining American soldiers from Somalia. By March 1994, all American soldiers had been removed from Somalia. The UN completed the withdrawal of its forces from Somalia by 1995 (R. Snyder).

Operation Restore Hope is a significant historical event in relation to the present controversy regarding American humanitarian intervention in foreign nations. The operation originated solely as a peacekeeping mission intended to overpower rebel Somali clans who inflicted mass starvation upon Somalia. However, the mission led to a vicious battle which resulted in the death of several American

soldiers and injury of dozens more. Operation Restore Hope arguably set the precedent for intervention by the United States and international community into the internal affairs of a nation with military force, without the permission or cooperation of that nation. (R. Snyder).

## HISTORY OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE BIBLE

In the Bible, both the Old Testament and the New Testament provide precedent for protection of human rights. In the Old Testament, Mosaic laws “commanded respect for life and the property of strangers as well as neighbors by establishing rights in terms of duties....” (“Introduction to Human Rights Education”). For example, the commandment not to murder expresses the right to life. In the New Testament, Jesus heals the sick, and treats women, foreigners, and the poor with dignity. The Apostle Paul wrote that among the followers of Jesus, “There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (*New International Version Bible*, Gal. 3:28). Throughout the New Testament, Jesus also urges his followers to feed the hungry, provide for others, and forgive their enemies. In both the Old Testament and New Testament, Scripture advocates the preservation of human rights (“Introduction to Human Rights Education”).

## FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

The controversy regarding American humanitarian intervention in foreign atrocities arises frequently in our world today. Events such as the mass-murder of civilians in the Central African Republic in 2013 underscore this controversy. Should the United States choose to intervene in a foreign atrocity, there are several criteria which serve as prudent guides for how the intervention should be executed.

## VIOLENCE IN THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

In the Central African Republic, a landlocked African nation, President Françoise Bozize reigned for 10 years (2003-2013). During his rule, the nation was rife with corruption, misrule, and poverty. In March 2013, the president fled to Cameroon after rebels, angry about the present state of the country, overtook Bangui, the capital of the Central African Republic. The rebellion was led by the Seleka coalition, a group of minority Muslims from within the nation (Tristan McConnell).

After Michel Djotodia, the leader of the Seleka coalition, was declared interim president of the Central African Republic, he sought to dissolve the rebellion which he had initiated. However, many members of the Seleka rebelled and formed their own small factions. These small factions began robbing and killing citizens of the Central African Republic, while also attacking Christian communities within the nation. In response, Christian militias were created to resist the violence of the factions. Consequently, a sectarian struggle began in the nation (Tristan McConnell).

The United Nations refugee agency (UNHCR) estimated in December 2013 that nearly one million people had been internally displaced in the Central African Republic due to violence. About half of these people had been displaced from Bangui, since most of the violence took place there (*UN News Center*). The brutal acts which were committed included crimes against humanity such as torture, rape, drowning, lynching, beheading, and human immolation. Children were kidnapped and forced into militias. In December 2013 alone, approximately 1,000 men were killed within two days in Bangui (Kim Troike). In January 2014, the UN estimated that 2.2 million people within the nation were in need of humanitarian aid, especially through the supply of food, water, or medical supplies (*UN News Center*).

The cruel murder of a country's own citizens is a violation of both international human rights laws and Biblical commands. During the conflict in the Central African Republic, 4,000 African peacekeepers were sent into the nation. However, the peacekeepers were underfunded and, thus, ineffective. In addition, France sent 1,600 soldiers into the Central African Republic under a UN mandate. As of April 2014, the United States has not sent military force into the Central African Republic, possibly because of the failure of "Operation Restore Hope" in Somalia, which originated as a humanitarian aid mission and resulted in death and injury of Americans. However, the United States did send a \$101 million package of support for the French forces which were attempting to cease the violence, stabilize the Central African Republic, and contain its disorder (Tristan McConnell).

On January 10, 2014, regional leaders at a summit in Chad forced Michel Djotodia to resign from his position as interim president of the Central African Republic. Removal of Djotodia was a necessary step towards stabilizing the Central African Republic, but the nation needed a leader to promptly take over and begin rebuilding the country (Tristan McConnell). As of January 2014, the Central African Republic is being led by interim president Catherine

Samba-Panza, whose election raised hopes for peace. However, a sectarian struggle still exists in the nation, as Muslims have become targets of violence because they were the perpetrators of the initial violence. Many Muslims are being driven from the Central African Republic due to the violence directed at them (*The Economist*).

As of April 2014, the African and French military forces which were deployed to the Central African Republic have been unable to halt the bloodshed in the nation. It is unlikely that these forces will be capable of resolving the conflict without increasing in size or receiving additional financial assistance from other sovereign nations. Military intervention by the United States in the conflict may be necessary and even warranted, since the conflict may be described as a genocide or religious cleansing. Should the United States choose to physically intervene in the Central African Republic, it should do so in partnership with other UN member nations (*BBC News*).

## THE "JUST WAR" TRADITION

The "just war" tradition is an idea referred to by Seyom Brown in his book *The Illusion of Control*. The "just war" tradition serves as a wise standard in regards to American foreign intervention. The tradition consists of several tests which may help determine whether intervention in a particular situation is worthwhile.

American forces should not enter combat unless the decision to do so passes five tests. According to Seyom Brown, the first test is the "just cause" or "right intention" test, which states that "the reasons for going to war must be widely acknowledged as legitimate" (Brown 13). The second test which may help determine whether an intervention is worthwhile is the "proper authority" test, which states that the war must be directed and conducted only by political figures having widely recognized authority to command battle (Brown 14). The third test is the "proportionality" test, which states that the predicted loss of life, property, and well-being on both sides of the war must not overshadow the expected good results of the war (Brown 15). The fourth test which should be passed before the commitment of American forces to an intervention is the "war as a last resort" test, which states that the less harmful means of achieving the sought outcome must have been deemed inadequate or too costly (15). The fifth and final test which may help determine whether an intervention is worthwhile is the "probability of success" test, which states that the planned military actions must be examined by experts and have positive predictions of achieving the war's desired outcome (Brown 16). The "just war" tradition is a valuable set of principles which provides guidance about how to determine whether a humanitarian intervention is warranted.

## POSSIBLE RESISTANCE TO INTERVENTION

A significant aspect of the controversy regarding American humanitarian intervention in foreign atrocities involves possible opposition against the intervention. If the United States intervenes in foreign atrocities without the consent of the government of the nation in which it is intervening, there is likely to be backlash, whether from the nation in which the United States is intervening or from other nations. Though many nations have accepted the role of the United States as a world stabilizer, there are certain groups and nations which do not appreciate American globalization.

The idea of foreign resistance to American intervention is evident in the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center. In places where democracy does not exist, America pushes for the establishment of it. This brings uncomfortable change, and, naturally nations are likely to resist it. The United States must be careful to provide assistance abroad without endangering itself by becoming too invasive in foreign nations.

## MILITARY FORCE IN HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTION

When determining whether the United States should or should not intervene in foreign atrocities such as the one in the Central African Republic, there are some criticisms which illustrate the problems accompanying the use of military force in humanitarian intervention. Thomas G. Weiss illustrates three of these problems in his book *Humanitarian Intervention*. The problems accompanying the use of military force in humanitarian intervention must be considered before a humanitarian intervention is executed.

The first problem with using military force in humanitarian intervention is that coalitions are not always able to fulfill the agendas they established before intervening. Humanitarian intervention must include development, promotion of equality, establishment of rule of law and human rights protection, and post-conflict peace-building. The responsibility to include each of these aspects in a humanitarian intervention is included in the “Responsibility to Protect” doctrine. If a coalition is withdrawn from humanitarian work without fulfilling each of the previously listed responsibilities, the operation is in vain (Weiss).

The second problem with using military force in humanitarian intervention is that there is no way to fully know whether the application of military force in a particular humanitarian intervention will yield more positive effects

than negative ones. This question about the effects of military force in an intervention must be addressed situationally by examining whether military force would create a better outcome than the alternatives, such as holding a UN peace conference or providing financial support for peaceful resistance groups and displaced citizens within the affected nation (Weiss). In Somalia in 1993, during “Operation Restore Hope”, military force may have provoked the battle which killed and injured many American soldiers who were participating in a strictly humanitarian mission.

The third and final problem with using military force in humanitarian intervention involves the measurement of costs and benefits of intervention. The cost of a military intervention, the probability of casualties among American soldiers and civilians of the nation in which the proposed intervention would occur, and the political impact of the proposed intervention are factors which must be measured. Determination of the civilian benefits of an intervention requires determination of the difference before and after an intervention in terms of displacement of civilians, suffering due to hunger, disease, and abuse of human rights, and the authority of the local government (Weiss).

## ADDITIONAL CONTROVERSIAL ASPECTS OF HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTION

There are four additional aspects of humanitarian intervention which ignite controversy about the subject. First, humanitarian intervention, which is driven by morals, requires the crossing of morals in its operations. For example, humanitarian intervention operations often involve human casualties which take place during efforts to preserve moral correctness. A second controversial aspect is portrayed by Walter Russell Mead in his book *Power, Terror, Peace, and War*. Mead argues that if the United States does not exercise enough power globally, the American system may fall apart as other nations influence it. However, if the United States uses excessive amounts of power or is too forceful, America may become a target of violence or terrorism as foreign nations collaborate to destroy our nation. Ergo, the United States must discern whether it is maintaining world order or conquering the world.

A third additional controversial aspect of humanitarian intervention pertains to whether the United States should intervene abroad while we have unsolved domestic problems, such as unemployment, poverty, governmental stagnancy, and severe national debt. Many argue that

America must focus primarily on solving its own problems, and should stop committing money and resources to foreign nations. A fourth and final controversial aspect of humanitarian intervention regards the idea that humanitarian intervention in a particular foreign conflict may warrant humanitarian intervention in similar conflicts. For these reasons, many believe that humanitarian intervention is a slippery slope which is not easily escapable.

### **BIBLICAL RESEARCH AND APPLICATION OF THE BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW**

Although the Bible does not provide exact instructions regarding modern foreign policy, there are several Biblical principles and passages of Scripture which are relevant to American humanitarian intervention in foreign atrocities. Included in these relevant scriptures and principles are the themes of mercy, loving others as oneself, the sanctity of human life, and assistance for the poor and weak. Each referenced passage has been extracted from the *New International Version of the Bible*.

#### **MERCY**

The first passage which applies to American humanitarian intervention in foreign atrocities is Luke 6:36, which says, “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.” In the previous verses, Jesus discusses the importance of displaying love for enemies in addition to love for acquaintances. Jesus then calls mankind to demonstrate mercy similar to the mercy of God. Although it is impossible for sinful humans to be as merciful as God, we still must strive to demonstrate mercy similar to His. Hence, when applied to American humanitarian intervention in foreign atrocities, Luke 6:36 supports the idea that the United States must mercifully contribute in some way to the termination of atrocities.

#### **LOVING OTHERS AS ONESELF**

The second passage which pertains to American humanitarian intervention in foreign atrocities is Luke 10:25-37, which contains The Parable of the Good Samaritan. Jesus used the parable in Luke 10 to answer the question of a man who asked “...who is my neighbor?” (Luke 10:29) The Parable of the Good Samaritan tells the story of a man who was robbed and beaten on his way from Jerusalem to Jericho. The nearly dead man was laying on the side of the road where he had been attacked, and was ignored by both a priest and a Levite, or a religious leader. Finally, a Samaritan, an individual of low societal standing, passed by the traveler. The Samaritan tended to the wounds of the man

and then transported him to an inn, where the Samaritan used his own money so that the traveler could temporarily stay and receive medical care.

In Luke 10:27, Jesus dictates His greatest commandment: “...‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” When applied to American humanitarian intervention in foreign atrocities, the Parable of the Good Samaritan and the commandment given in Luke 10:27 clearly indicate that the United States should act compassionately toward the victims of atrocities, since God expects man to care for others as he cares for himself. Therefore, when foreign atrocities take place, the United States must act upon the command to love its neighbor as itself, and must make efforts to alleviate the suffering which is brought about by atrocities.

### **THE SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE**

The sanctity of human life is a principle which is cruelly violated in atrocities. There are several passages of scripture which comment on the sanctity of human life. The first passage is Genesis 1:26-27, which says:

Then God said, ‘Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.’ So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

According to this passage, man was created in the image and likeness of God. Therefore, to cause harm to a human is to cause harm to God’s Creation. Consequently, when applied to American humanitarian intervention in foreign atrocities, Genesis 1:26-27 serves as a proponent of intervention to halt physical harm which is targeted at humans.

An additional passage which relates to the sanctity of human life is Genesis 9:6, which says, “Whoever sheds human blood, by humans shall their blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made mankind.” Genesis 9:6 presents a principle of accountability for those who murder humans. According to the passage, since God created man in His image, those who murder humans are murdering God’s Creation, and will pay for their actions with their own life. Thereby, Genesis 9:6 supports American humanitarian intervention in foreign atrocities.

A final passage which applies to the sanctity of human life is Exodus 20:13, which says, “You shall not murder.” This brief, yet important scriptural passage is the sixth commandment which God conveyed to mankind. Simply put, Exodus 20:13 forbids man from committing murder. Since murder is a common feature of atrocities, Exodus

20:13 should serve as an advocator for American humanitarian intervention in foreign atrocities by compelling the United States to make efforts to end the anti-Biblical murder of humans.

## **ASSISTANCE FOR THE POOR AND WEAK**

The theme of assistance for the poor and weak relates to atrocities in that atrocities often displace civilians of nations, or in some way cause poverty. For example, citizens of Somalia in the late twentieth century experienced starvation because Somali clans stole food from civilians, leading to Operation Restore Hope. Another example can be observed in the Central African Republic crisis. Civilians of the Central African Republic are presently in dire need of basic supplies such as food and water after mass murdering displaced approximately one million people within the nation. The scenarios in Somalia and the Central African Republic demonstrate the need for outside assistance when atrocities cause great need among civilians.

A scriptural passage which applies to assistance for the poor and weak is Proverbs 31:8-9, which states, “Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.” This passage calls man to defend those who lack both the basic necessities of life and the ability to obtain those basic necessities. A scriptural passage conveying a similar principle is Psalm 82:3-4, which says, “Defend the weak and the fatherless; uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.” When applied to American humanitarian intervention in foreign atrocities, Proverbs 31:8-9 and Psalm 82:3-4 support intervention to aid civilians who are in poverty or have been displaced as a result of an atrocity.

An additional scriptural passage which applies to assistance for the poor and weak is Luke 6:38, which states, “Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.” This passage emphasizes that those who provide for the poor will be rewarded for their generosity. The emphasis on providing for the poor which is displayed in Luke 6:38 should be exercised at a personal level foremost, but is also applicable to American humanitarian intervention in foreign atrocities, since there are many people who become poor as a result of atrocities.

## **SOLUTION**

After studying scriptural passages, doctrines, and historical events relevant to the question of whether the United States possesses a moral obligation to intervene in foreign atrocities, I have come to the conclusion that the United States is obligated to intervene in foreign atrocities. My solution is a proposal which I believe will best allow the United States to satisfy its obligation to intervene in foreign atrocities, while protecting the United States against excessive entanglement abroad or the compromise of its sovereignty as a nation.

## **PARTNERSHIP WITH OTHER SOVEREIGN NATIONS**

The United States cannot and should not be the only sovereign nation which intervenes to terminate atrocities around the world. The financial cost of intervention is great, since military force is often necessary and civilians of the nation in which an intervention takes place often must be provided with basic supplies such as food and water. Therefore, an effective method of American humanitarian intervention is partnership with other sovereign nations in order to provide relief.

Partnership between the United States and other sovereign nations, such as France, China, the United Kingdom as a whole, and, ideally, Russia, is a necessity of intervention to halt foreign atrocities. The United States, as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, is able to propose UN Security Council resolutions. These resolutions are voted upon by the fifteen members of the Security Council. If nine votes are in favor of a proposal, and none of the other four permanent members of the Security Council veto the proposal, the resolution takes effect. The UN member nations would then each be obligated to abide by the decision, and would contribute resources to the proposed mission (“The Security Council”).

If a UN Security Council resolution proposed by the United States which advocates humanitarian intervention is vetoed, and, thus, does not take effect, the United States should still seek to intervene in partnership with other sovereign nations. Since only one veto by a permanent member of the Security Council is required in order to defeat a resolution, there likely would be other sovereign nations willing to intervene in an atrocity in partnership with the United States. The United States should seek to combine finances and military resources with these other willing sovereign nations in order to intervene to halt an atrocity.

Partnership with other sovereign nations, whether through the United Nations or independent of it, is an effective method by which the United States may intervene to halt foreign atrocities.

### **MILITARY FORCE AS A LAST RESORT**

I previously discussed several problems and requirements which accompany the use of military force in humanitarian intervention (see pages 15 and 16). The use of military force in humanitarian intervention requires commitment of finances, involves probable death and injury, and may cause unrest in the nation in which an intervention occurs. Additionally, military force in humanitarian intervention must include both the establishment of rule of law if it is not present and post-conflict support and peace-building. Therefore, the benefits and disadvantages of the use of military force in humanitarian intervention must be addressed situationally.

There are non-forceful measures which may be used for intervention in foreign atrocities, such as the holding of a United Nations peace conference, placement or threatened placement of economic sanctions, trade sanctions, arms embargoes, travel bans, or financial and diplomatic restrictions on nations who commit atrocities, prosecution in the International Criminal Court for those who commit atrocities, and financial assistance for populations which fall victim to atrocities. Financial assistance for victims of atrocities may include money which provides medical care and basic necessities for life, and supports peaceful resistance groups and local military forces who fight to terminate atrocities (“Repertoire of the Practice of the Security Council”). When foreign atrocities occur, the United States must intervene by first advocating and using non-forceful measures, which are always preferable over military intervention. However, there are atrocities which cannot be stopped by the previously listed non-forceful measures, and, consequently, require forceful intervention. Such situations are when the United States, in partnership with other sovereign nations, must intervene with military force.

### **SIMULTANEOUS ATROCITIES**

In the event of multiple atrocities occurring simultaneously, the United States is obligated to intervene in each conflict, since Biblical commands must be obeyed constantly and consistently. As previously stated, the initial methods of intervention should be non-forceful, and in partnership with other sovereign nations. Military intervention is a last resort. Realistically, the United States does not have unlim-

ited resources to provide. Therefore, the extent of the aid which the United States puts forth in order to terminate a given atrocity must be determined by circumstances specific to that atrocity.

Atrocities which are perpetrated by the government of a nation must receive the most attention (e.g. the Syrian Civil War). This idea corresponds with the third pillar of the “Responsibility to Protect” doctrine, which calls upon intervention by foreign nations when a government is physically harming its own citizens. In atrocities which are inflicted by one people group upon another, resources must be provided in coalition with other sovereign nations, and in proportion to the number of casualties resulting from the atrocity. These resources may include, but are not limited to, finances, basic necessities of life (i.e. food and water), medical supplies, and militaries.

### **THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH**

Historically, public opinion has played a significant role in American foreign policy, and continues to do so today, as the president and other politicians often act to please the American public in order to win votes for re-election. Thus, if the American public favors intervention to terminate an atrocity, the likelihood of the president supporting intervention in that atrocity increases. Since Biblical commands are violated in atrocities, Christians in America must strive to raise public awareness about foreign atrocities in order to sway public opinion in favor of intervention in them. Christians can employ this strategy of education and advocacy through social media and various types of public demonstration, such as the use of a slogan which can be placed on signs, clothing, and in advertisements. By raising public awareness about foreign atrocities, Christians in America can cause American politicians to support intervention in foreign atrocities which violate Biblical commands.

### **ELECTION OF PROPER LEADERS**

The Bible supports an obligation for the United States to intervene in foreign atrocities. However, political leaders who possess secular worldviews would not support intervention in foreign atrocities based on Biblical values. Therefore, it is imperative that American citizens elect political leaders, especially presidents, who have Biblical worldviews, or who at least value the sanctity of human life and have a compassionate heart for those who suffer. This wise election of leaders is key in ensuring that the United States obeys its Biblical obligation to intervene in foreign atrocities.

## CONCLUSION

In recent history, the United States has assumed an increasing role as a global hegemon. As a result, debate persists about whether the United States should intervene to terminate atrocities which occur around the world. According to the Bible, the United States should intervene in foreign atrocities, since atrocities violate Biblical commands, such as the commandment not to murder. In the future, when atrocities occur outside of the United States, America must intervene first by non-forceful methods, and in coalition with other sovereign nations, in order to halt brutal actions which violate Scripture. ❀

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