21

Humanitarian Intervention

Alan J. Kuperman

Chapter Contents

Reader's Guide

This chapter explores humanitarian intervention and its relationship to the promotion of human rights. The first section examines the evolution of humanitarian intervention, especially in the wake of the Second World War and the Cold War, to include military force and the violation of traditional norms of neutrality and state sovereignty. The chapter then discusses some obstacles to effective intervention—including the speed of violence, delays in accurate information, logistical hurdles to military deployment, and insufficient political will. Next, it analyses unintended consequences, including how the 'moral hazard' of humanitarian intervention may inadvertently trigger and perpetuate civil conflict, thereby exacerbating civilian suffering. A detailed case study of humanitarian intervention in Bosnia—from 1992 to 1995 by the United States, European Community, United Nations, and NATO—illustrates many of these concepts. The conclusion offers recommendations to improve humanitarian intervention and to reconcile it with the promotion of human rights.

Introduction to Humanitarian Intervention

Humanitarian intervention is not identical to the promotion of human rights but is related to it—in ways that sometimes are obvious but also can be quite counterintuitive. Strictly speaking, humanitarian intervention is the use of diplomatic, economic, and military resources by one or more states or international organizations intended primarily to protect civilians who are endangered in another state. These civilians may be at risk either from natural disaster or from political violence (including war) in which they are targeted deliberately or suffer from the resulting social disruption.

Because civil war may be both the cause and consequence of human rights violations, there is an intimate relationship between humanitarian intervention and the promotion of human rights. Persistent violations of a group's human rights may cause members of that group to feel so aggrieved and frustrated that they eventually take up arms and rebel, triggering a civil war. During the course of war, civilians may suffer both humanitarian deprivation—inadequate food, water, shelter, and medical care—and blatant violation of their human rights, including arbitrary detention, forced displacement, or summary violence. International action that is able to end the war may alleviate both problems, so that humanitarian intervention sometimes also promotes human rights.

But at other times, the two goals are contradictory. Efforts to promote human rights may exacerbate humanitarian suffering. Or humanitarian intervention may exacerbate violations of human rights. In such cases, advocates may have to decide which of these two worthy causes is their higher priority and temporarily sacrifice the other. Philosophers and social scientists label this the dilemma of, or trade-off between, 'peace and justice'.

Many of these dynamics are illustrated in Bosnia, a European country that suffered a bloody civil war from 1992 to 1995 and was subject to many forms of humanitarian intervention. The case of Bosnia will be detailed later in this chapter.

Evolving Concepts of Intervention

Humanitarian intervention was originally defined narrowly as the provision of vital materials to at-risk civilians, expressly avoiding any action or even commentary related to the possible political causes of civilian suffering. The prototypical humanitarian organization in this tradition is the **International Committee of the Red Cross** (ICRC), which originated in 1863 at the international conference that also gave rise the following year to the original version of the **Geneva Convention and Protocols** that assure wartime protection of medical care for civilians and soldiers. The ICRC philosophy is to eschew any political criticism of the states where it intervenes, in order to facilitate its humanitarian mandate. For example, if the ICRC were to criticize a government for intentionally harming its civilians, that government might bar the organization from entering the country to provide humanitarian aid, resulting in greater harm to the civilians. Thus, traditional humanitarian organizations such as the ICRC explicitly subordinate concern over human rights violations in order to facilitate their humanitarian objective. On several occasions, the ICRC has been harshly criticized for this strictly neutral stance—notably during the Holocaust, when it witnessed but did not report or condemn Nazi crimes.

A broader definition of humanitarian intervention has emerged over the last five decades. A key turning point was Nigeria's 1967–70 secessionist war in its Biafra region, when some ICRC employees rejected their organization's political neutrality. They believed that the government of Nigeria was intentionally inflicting humanitarian deprivation on the Biafra region in a ruthless attempt to compel the secessionists to abandon their aspirations of self-determination and independence. In their opinion, merely providing humanitarian aid to the victims, as ICRC was doing, did not address the root cause of the suffering. Accordingly, these frustrated humanitarians split from the ICRC and in 1971 formed their own organization, namely *Médecins Sans Frontières* (MSF; Doctors Without Borders), which would not only provide aid but also condemn state policies that they believed created suffering in the first place. MSF abandoned the ICRC's principle of political neutrality on the grounds that **naming and shaming** human rights violations was the best way to reduce humanitarian suffering in the long run, even if it might interfere with their ability to provide aid in the short term.

Impartial and Neutral

Humanitarians often claim to be both impartial and neutral in their interventions, but in practice it may be impossible to attain both goals simultaneously during a civil war. **Impartiality** denotes that aid is delivered solely on the basis of need, without consideration of the political or military allegiance of the recipient. **Neutrality** means that the intervention strives to avoid affecting

the balance of power between the contending parties. The incompatibility of impartiality and neutrality stems from two facts: civil wars are usually lopsided rather than symmetrical, and humanitarian intervention also benefits combatants. At any point in a civil war, one of the sides is usually winning, in the sense of suffering less. Accordingly, when interveners deliver humanitarian aid impartially, they provide it mainly to the weaker party and often require the stronger party to halt hostilities to facilitate delivery. Both of these actions alter the balance of power in the conflict, strengthening the weaker party relative to the stronger, so that the intervention is not neutral. If interveners strive to be neutral, then they must provide equal aid to the side that is not suffering as much, which would violate the principle of impartiality.

In the 1990s, the concept of humanitarian intervention was expanded again to include the use of military force, not merely to protect delivery of aid, but in some cases to deter or defeat actors perceived as aggressors endangering civilians. The end of the **Cold War** broke the US–Soviet deadlock in the United Nations Security Council, enabling the authorization, on a case-by-case basis, of intervention using all necessary means, including military force, to protect civilians. Examples are discussed in the next section.

In 2001, following several such interventions, the ad hoc International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS, 2001) concluded that there was a **Responsibility to Protect** (**R2P**)—that is, a generalized obligation of states to intervene through a variety of means to protect civilians on humanitarian grounds. These means included 'all forms of preventive measures, and coercive intervention measures—sanctions and criminal prosecutions', as well as 'military intervention'. In December 2004, a UN panel agreed: 'We endorse the emerging norm that there is a collective international responsibility to protect' (United Nations, 2004, p. 66). Finally, the UN General Assembly, at the 2005 World Summit, codified the 'responsibility to use appropriate diplomatic, humanitarian, and other peaceful means … to help protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity' and to authorize force 'on a case-by-case basis … should peaceful means be inadequate' (United Nations General Assembly, 2005, p. 30). The original formulation of the R2P declared that the international community was responsible for three types of intervention if civilians were threatened: prevention, protection, and rebuilding. When this was criticized as neocolonial, the R2P was reformulated to comprise three alternative responsibilities: (1) states should protect their populations; (2) the international community should offer states assistance to do so; (3) if states nevertheless fail to protect their populations, the international community should intervene in accordance with the UN Charter (G. Evans, 2009).

Despite considerable support for this concept, sceptics in the developing world and on the political left, notably in Europe, criticize the emerging norm as a form of neo-imperialism in which ostensible humanitarianism disguises self-interested intervention—to impose regime change, exploit natural resources, or open markets to Western exporters. Some critics also complain that governments with histories of massive human rights abuses—such as in Rwanda, Burundi, and Ethiopia—whitewash their own crimes by contributing troops to humanitarian intervention in other countries, such as Sudan and Somalia.

KEY POINTS

Humanitarian intervention was traditionally the provision of vital materials to at-risk civilians.

Interveners traditionally avoided entanglement in politics, as when the ICRC refused to criticize even the Nazis.

Modern intervention often confronts the political root causes of civilian suffering: for example, by naming and shaming offenders who target civilians.

Impartiality is the delivery of aid solely on the basis of need. Neutrality is not altering a conflict's balance of power. The two goals are typically not compatible.

Since 1991, military force has been used increasingly in humanitarian intervention, both to protect the delivery of aid and to target perceived aggressors.

The United Nations, in 2005, acknowledged the responsibility to protect civilians through humanitarian intervention, including military force if authorized.

Critical Thinking Questions:

What should be done when there is a tension between the goals of humanitarianism and human rights? For example, under North Korea's dictatorship, the population suffers not only violations of its political rights but periodic famine. The humanitarian imperative dictates that the international community provide food for starving North Koreans. But alleviating famine could bolster domestic support for the dictatorship, thereby perpetuating its violation of political rights. Which concern should take precedence in this case—promoting humanitarianism or human rights—and why?

Military Intervention

During most of modern history, the norm of **sovereignty** prohibited states from intervening in the internal affairs of other recognized states (which typically excluded territories in the New World populated by Indigenous peoples; see Chapter 19). The norm was adopted to reduce the incidence of war and to promote international stability. It arose in response to the horribly bloody 'religious wars' between Catholics and Protestants in Europe during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that culminated in the 'Thirty Years War' of 1618–48. Such wars were fought largely over the internal behaviour of states—specifically, their religion—rather than their external behaviour. Wise statesmen and jurists realized that war could be frequent and particularly savage if it were permitted to be fought over such internal differences, in light of the inherent diversity of states and the intense passions aroused by disputes over ostensibly universal values.

Accordingly, a norm of sovereignty was established in 1648 by the Treaty of Westphalia, ending the Thirty Years War. Henceforth, war could legally be fought only over the external, not internal, behaviour of states. States would enjoy total sovereignty over their internal affairs, and no other state could intervene with force or otherwise. Although the norm was sometimes violated (Krasner, 1999), it stood as a pillar of international law for over 300 years. The principle was reiterated in the UN Charter of 1945, which in its first chapter (Articles 2.4 and 2.7) prohibits intervention by either the United Nations or its members in the internal affairs of states:

> All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state … Nothing contained in the present Charter shall authorize the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state or shall require the Members to submit such matters to settlement under the present Charter.

These prohibitions hold unless the Security Council approves a resolution in a specific case under Chapter VII of the Charter, authorizing intervention in response to a threat to *international* peace and security, or unless a state is acting in self-defence against international aggression under Article 51 of the Charter.

Eroding the Norm of Sovereignty

The first modern, legal intrusion on the norm of sovereignty was the UN's 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, adopted in the wake of the Holocaust. In the Convention, signers 'undertake to prevent and to punish' the crime of genocide. Given that genocide may be committed by a state against its own citizens, the convention thus commits signers to intervene in another state, based solely on the internal behaviour of that state. The responsibility to protect further erodes the norm of sovereignty, endorsing intervention to prevent not only genocide but other massive violations of human rights that occur within a state, including **war crimes**, **ethnic cleansing**, and **crimes against humanity**. To remain consistent with the UN Charter, intervention proponents argue that the widespread violation of human rights in a country is no longer 'essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state'. In this way, the norm is gradually evolving to privilege some individual human rights over state sovereignty, although the ultimate extent of that evolution is still to be determined (see also Box 21.1).

Even prior to the formal erosion of the sovereignty norm, states occasionally intervened in the internal affairs of other states on humanitarian or human rights grounds. In the late nineteenth century, for example, some European states intervened with diplomatic pressure and threats against the Ottoman Empire over

BOX 21.1 CHALLENGING ASSUMPTIONS

Humanitarian intervention is based on the assumption that the highest priority of the international community during a civil war should be protecting civilians from harm. But is that always true? Are other goals, such as freedom or democracy, important enough that the international community should prioritize them above the protection of civilians? Moreover, is it possible that the opposing groups in a domestic conflict have the right to settle their dispute by force, if they so choose, without outside interference? What gives outsiders the right to intervene in other countries, especially ones that are far away and may have very different cultures? Think back to the US Civil War in which more than half a million Americans died before the Union defeated the Confederacy, unifying the country and ending slavery. In retrospect, would it have been preferable for interveners to stop the violence on humanitarian grounds, even if that preserved the slave-holding Confederacy?

treatment of its Christian peoples, including Armenians, who were seeking greater rights. In the late 1960s, several states intervened in Nigeria on behalf of ethnic Ibos, who were suffering from the government's response to the armed secession of their Biafra region.

Military Force

The widespread advent of humanitarian intervention with military force emerged after the Cold War. The model was established in 1991, following the Gulf War that expelled Iraqi troops from Kuwait. In March of that year, in northern Iraq, ethnic Kurd separatists launched a rebellion against the Baghdad regime of Saddam Hussein. The Iraqi army responded with brutal suppression, compelling ethnic Kurds to flee northwards towards the mountains bordering Turkey, creating a humanitarian emergency. In April 1991, the United States launched Operation Provide Comfort, a military intervention justified on humanitarian grounds. The United Nations (in Security Council Resolution 688) quickly urged its members to contribute to the humanitarian effort, and a coalition of states then helped the United States to protect the Kurds, establish displacement camps, provide humanitarian aid, and assist with resettlement. The United States also spearheaded a **no-fly zone** over the Kurdish area of Iraq, conducting missions from bases in Turkey to patrol and shoot down any Iraqi aircraft operating in that airspace. The intervention thus provided not merely emergency humanitarian aid, but long-term military assistance that shifted the balance of power in Iraq, effectively rewarding the Kurds with political autonomy that also promoted their human rights.

The use of military force in humanitarian intervention has since become widespread. Such action is sometimes carried out with the consent of the target state, typically authorized under Chapter VI of the UN Charter. In other cases it is non-consensual, authorized either under Chapter VII of the UN Charter or outside the legal bounds of that charter, as in Kosovo where intervention controversially was authorized by NATO —a US–European military alliance—rather than the UN. Since 1991, interveners have deployed forces to protect civilians in at least twenty-four countries: Afghanistan, Albania, Bosnia, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Croatia, Democratic Republic of Congo, East Timor, Georgia, Haiti, Iraq, Ivory Coast, Kosovo, Liberia, Libya, Macedonia, Mali, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, and Tajikistan—some on multiple occasions. During the same period, interveners have also deployed troops or monitors to support peace processes in another sixteen countries (not counting pre-existing operations): Cambodia, Chad, Comoros, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Guinea Bissau, Kuwait, Lebanon, Moldova, Mozambique, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Solomon Islands, and Western Sahara. Although the latter missions are not explicitly authorized to protect civilians, they are motivated heavily by the desire to shield civilians from renewed violence. In some cases, such as Sudan's north–south civil war of 1983 to 2005, the international community has also applied sanctions against states or provided covert aid to rebels in an attempt to coerce a halt to violence.

The increased frequency and extent of humanitarian intervention has spurred rapid growth in both government spending and the number of **non-governmental organizations** (NGOs) devoted to this mission. Annual spending on official humanitarian assistance, excluding military costs, increased from US$3.4 billion to US$13.3 billion during 1990–2010.[1] Such increased spending has triggered a proliferation of humanitarian organizations, so that aid delivery often involves literally hundreds of NGOs for a single emergency.

Major Interventions

After the Cold War, several cases of humanitarian military intervention have been especially prominent. In 1992, the United Nations and the United States deployed troops to Somalia to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid to civilians who had been cut off, sometimes deliberately, by factions in a long-running civil war. Although impartial, the intervention was not neutral in that it diminished the power of a Somali warlord, Mohammad Farrah Aideed, who retaliated by killing UN troops from Pakistan. The United States responded by targeting the warlord, who again retaliated by killing eighteen US troops in a single battle in October 1993, an engagement immortalized in the film *Blackhawk Down*. The interveners withdrew during the next eighteen months, after they had alleviated the immediate humanitarian emergency. However, the underlying conflicts soon exploded in renewed war, triggering further civilian suffering and intervention that continues as of early-2016.

From 1992 to 1995, the United Nations and NATO conducted a complex humanitarian military intervention in Bosnia, as detailed later in this chapter.

Soon after, in neighbouring Serbia's Kosovo province, ethnic Albanian militants of the Kosovo Liberation Army responded to government oppression by launching a secessionist rebellion. Serbian leader Slobodan Milošević retaliated with a harsh counter-insurgency that targeted the rebels but also killed several hundred civilians and displaced hundreds of thousands more during 1998. The United States first intervened to protect Kosovo's civilians by threatening Serbia with NATO air strikes, compelling Milošević in October 1998 to withdraw many Serbian forces and permit international monitors. But the ethnic Albanian rebels renewed attacks, reigniting a war that again displaced civilians. The United States then drafted a peace agreement that promised Kosovo an independence referendum after three years, and demanded in February 1999 that Milošević sign it or face NATO attack. This time Milošević refused, so NATO commenced bombing in late March 1999. Serbian forces responded by quickly expelling from Kosovo some 850,000 ethnic Albanians, approximately half their population in the province, and killing about 10,000. After eleven weeks of NATO bombing, Milošević relented, signing a peace agreement to remove all his forces from Kosovo and to permit international peacekeepers. As the ethnic Albanian refugees returned, they forcibly displaced about half of the 200,000 Serbs in the province, and killed hundreds more, despite the presence of peacekeepers. Proponents of the intervention claim that it prevented even more Serb violence against Albanian civilians, while critics say it backfired, amplifying this violence and failing to prevent vengeance against Serb civilians.

In early 2011, Libyan security forces killed approximately two hundred protesters in three days, which provoked escalation of an armed uprising. The militants initially made progress, but after a month Libya's security forces were poised to capture the last rebel stronghold of Benghazi to end the war. To coerce the rebels to surrender or retreat, Libya's government threatened to show no mercy to any who remained defiant. The rebels responded by persuading the international community that a bloodbath against *civilians* was imminent, which some Western critics in retrospect have labelled a false pretence, given the fact that during the preceding month the government had targeted mainly rebels.[2] Nevertheless, the United Nations authorized the imposition of a no-fly zone, an arms embargo, and 'all necessary measures … to protect civilians and civilian populated areas'. NATO then exceeded this mandate, pursuing regime change by bombing government targets including retreating forces for seven months while enforcing the embargo only against the government, not the rebels.

The intervention almost surely averted some violence in Benghazi, but it also perpetuated war and civilian suffering in the rest of the country, thereby increasing the death toll up to tenfold. After eight months, the rebels finally captured power, executed former leader Muammar Gaddafi, and took vengeance against his suspected supporters. The victorious rebel factions then refused to disarm or merge into a national security force, which created anarchy and a safe haven for radical Islamist terrorists, who in 2012 killed the US ambassador to Libya. Also due to the intervention, the regime's forces leaked out of Libya, triggering regional proliferation of weapons and a civil war in Mali, which created that country's worst ever humanitarian disaster and yet another terrorist safe haven. In 2014, Libya's civil war reignited, pitting Islamist against secular forces, and shutting down the oil industry that is the country's lifeblood. By the next year, the Islamic State terrorist group had established a foothold in Libya and executed some Christians. Libya is thus a clear example of well-intentioned intervention that backfired by exacerbating civilian suffering (Kuperman, 2013, 2015).

Failure to Intervene

The failure to intervene has been harshly criticized in several recent cases of large-scale violence against civilians. In Rwanda, ethnic Tutsi rebels invaded in 1990 and fought for three years against a government controlled by members of the ethnic Hutu majority (see also Chapter 20). In 1993, a peace agreement permitted the deployment of 2,500 UN peacekeepers. But in April 1994, the Hutu president was assassinated, and Hutu extremists immediately launched a genocidal campaign that killed half a million Tutsi (three-quarters of their population in the country) in just three months. Tens of thousands of Hutu were also killed. Most of the UN peacekeepers were withdrawn upon the renewal of violence, although 500 remained and protected several thousand civilians. After the first month of violence, the UN authorized a humanitarian military intervention in May 1994, but international reinforcements did not arrive in Rwanda until late June 1994, by which time the genocide was virtually over. In retrospect, many advocates of intervention

have claimed that a quick UN reinforcement could have prevented the genocide, although this is disputed in the next section (Kuperman, 2001).

In Sudan's northwest region of Darfur, militant members of African tribes launched a rebellion in 2003, complaining of neglect and discrimination by the Arab-dominated regime in Khartoum (see Chapter 20). Sudan's government retaliated using security forces, indiscriminate air strikes, and the arming of local Arab militias, who conducted a scorched-earth counter-insurgency against African villages. These attacks displaced two million civilians, resulting in tens of thousands of deaths. In 2004, the African Union (AU) authorized a small military intervention to monitor the situation and to facilitate humanitarian aid—a force that grew to 7,000 troops over the next three years. Violence diminished, but most of the affected civilians remained displaced, vulnerable, and dependent on humanitarian aid, which spurred international activists to demand more forceful intervention. In 2007, the United Nations authorized an expanded, hybrid UN–AU force of 26,000 troops and police, most of whom deployed gradually over the next several years. In 2009, based on crimes in Darfur, the International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant for Sudan's president, who responded by expelling humanitarian organizations that he accused of collaborating with the court, thereby triggering a temporary humanitarian emergency until other groups filled the aid gap. As of early 2016, violence has diminished between Arab and African tribes, but low-level fighting continues—among rebels, security forces, and some tribes—and widespread displacement persists.

In Syria, government forces began attacking peaceful protesters in early 2011 at the same time that NATO intervened in Libya ostensibly to stop similar violence. In the case of Syria, however, the international community declined to intervene. This failure to implement the responsibility to protect was explained on several grounds: Syria's army was too strong; the UN Security Council was blocked by the opposition of Russia and China; and intervention might help radical Islamists and spread war to neighbouring states. The estimated death toll in Syria climbed above 250,000 during the first five years of conflict (United Nations, 2015). Ironically, the international community had launched a humanitarian intervention in Libya, where the government targeted mainly rebels, but failed to intervene in Syria where the government initially targeted mainly civilians.

KEY POINTS

The norm of sovereignty was adopted in 1648 to promote peace by prohibiting inter-state war over domestic matters.

The UN Charter of 1945 reiterates non-interference in internal affairs.

Some individual human rights trump state sovereignty under the Genocide Convention and the responsibility to protect.

After the Cold War, humanitarian military intervention became more common, triggering increases in spending and a proliferation of humanitarian NGOs.

In Iraq, starting in 1991, humanitarian intervention also aided the self-determination movement of Kurds by altering the balance of power in the country.

In Somalia, starting in 1992, intervention alleviated the immediate humanitarian emergency but failed to resolve the underlying conflicts, which soon reignited, triggering further civilian suffering and intervention.

In both Kosovo and Libya, intervention amplified greatly the violence against civilians.

In Rwanda, Darfur, and Syria, the absence of forceful intervention has been harshly criticized by some humanitarians.

Critical Thinking Questions:

How, if at all, should the international community intervene in Syria to protect civilians? Intervention against the government could bring to power the main opposition group, the Islamic State, which has an even worse track record of mass murder and human rights violations. One alternative might be to deploy more than 100,000 occupation forces. But in Afghanistan and Iraq that proved unpopular in troop-contributing countries, which suffered tens of thousands of casualties. *Do* you personally care enough about protecting Syria's civilians to risk your own life there? If not, do you support your government ordering your fellow citizens in the armed forces to attempt that dangerous mission?

Obstacles to Effective Intervention

Several factors can impede timely humanitarian intervention in civil conflicts. Perhaps most obvious is the lack of *political will* by potential interveners, as discussed by Samantha Power (2002) in her book *'A Problem from Hell'*. She argues that powerful states could intervene fairly easily, including with military force, to prevent genocide, but they do not because they give low priority to humanitarian concerns in comparison to their traditional national interests of security and

prosperity. Undoubtedly, states do relegate humanitarian concerns to a lower priority and this is one reason why they sometimes fail to intervene, or do so belatedly and inadequately, as in Rwanda and Darfur.

But there are also practical obstacles to a timely response, as discussed in my book, *The Limits of Humanitarian Intervention: Genocide in Rwanda* (Kuperman, 2001). That study identifies three common obstacles to effective intervention: the rapid pace of violence against civilians; the delay in accurate information reaching potential interveners; and the logistical hurdles to deploying an adequate force. In Rwanda, for example, I found that most of the Tutsi victims were killed in the first three weeks, but even regional experts did not realize what was happening for two weeks, while it would have required more than a month to deploy an adequate force urgently by air to stop the genocide. Thus, even if potential interveners had possessed the political will, they could not have intervened quickly enough to protect most of the targeted civilians.

These obstacles to timely intervention are not universal but are common in humanitarian crises resulting from war. Violence against civilians has often been very quick: Croatia in 1995, where more than 100,000 ethnic Serbs were expelled from the Krajina region in less than a week; Kosovo in 1999, where most ethnic Albanians were expelled in less than two weeks; and East Timor in 1999, where most of the infrastructure was destroyed and most of the population displaced in less than a week. In Darfur, the period of peak violence against civilians lasted considerably longer, perhaps a year, but it was not widely reported in the Western media until spring 2004, by which time the displacement and killing were already tapering off.

The deployment of intervention forces also confronts some physical limitations that cannot be overcome by political will. Transporting forces by sea from Western military bases to conflict zones typically requires at least a month to load, travel, and unload. Air transport is quicker for bringing in initial intervention forces, but another month or more is required to deploy essential weapons, equipment, and supplies by air because of logistical obstacles such as the small payload of transport aircraft, the limited throughput capacity of regional airfields, and the considerable mass of modern military forces. Even if humanitarian advocates could generate sufficient political will for military intervention, the forces would often arrive too late to protect most at-risk civilians. To actually prevent civilian suffering, humanitarians need to contemplate less forceful strategies that can avert the outbreak or escalation of violence in the first place.

KEY POINTS

Timely military intervention can be inhibited by a lack of political will among powerful states, which prioritize traditional interests, such as their own security and prosperity.

But practical obstacles also inhibit timely intervention.

For example, large-scale violence against civilians is often perpetrated very quickly, sometimes within a week.

Due to delays in obtaining accurate information, violence may be mostly completed before Western media or intelligence agencies report it.

Deploying an adequate number of properly equipped military forces for humanitarian intervention typically requires at least a month, whether by air or by sea.

Thus, even with sufficient political will, it may be impossible to deploy military forces in time to protect most at-risk civilians.

Humanitarians should expand their focus to include non-military strategies that can avert the outbreak or escalation of civil war, which causes most violence against civilians.

Critical Thinking Question:

Given these obstacles to timely military intervention, how can the responsibility to protect best be implemented?

Unintended Consequences of Intervention

Humanitarian intervention can have a wide range of unintended consequences contrary to its intent of protecting civilians. These perverse consequences sometimes arise simply from the delivery of subsistence commodities, as documented by John Prendergast (1996), Alex de Waal (1998), Mary Anderson (1999), and Fiona Terry (2002). Since militants often intermingle with civilians in places such as refugee camps, humanitarian aid may provide sustenance to rebels, enabling them to fight longer. The camps may also inhibit repatriation, thereby perpetuating grievance and rebel mobilization that prolong or renew war. Combatants may also intercept aid and resell it, or charge a tax for its safe delivery, acquiring funds for their war effort. In some cases, combatants may even fight each other to control the delivery of aid, so that humanitarian assistance creates an extra incentive for war.

Humanitarian aid can also undermine local economies and governance in several ways. First, the

provision of free commodities may make it impossible for local farmers and businessmen to sell their goods, hindering economic development and potentially compelling them to turn to war to make a living. International aid organizations also siphon off local talent by employing skilled individuals as translators, drivers, and office workers, diminishing the human capital for domestic entrepreneurship and good government. Moreover, as long as essential social services are provided by external actors, local government may be deprived of the legitimacy that is essential for successful peacebuilding. Finally, because international humanitarian NGOs engage in fierce competition to win government contracts, they may concentrate more on the rapid delivery of aid than on preventing such unintended consequences.

Military force on humanitarian grounds may also backfire. Richard Betts (1994) observes that military intervention can vary in two ways—being either biased or impartial, and either limited or overwhelming—which yields four potential combinations. One effective combination is limited–biased intervention on behalf of the stronger party, enabling it to attain victory and thereby end the violence. Two other effective combinations are overwhelming intervention in either a biased or impartial manner, so that a powerful intervener simply imposes a settlement. But, regrettably, Betts says the most common combination in humanitarian military intervention is limited–impartial, which assists the weaker party just enough to prolong the fighting but not to end it (see Table 21.1). Similarly, Edward Luttwak (1999) has noted that well-intentioned intervention backfires by prolonging war and the resulting humanitarian suffering. The better way to promote stability and humanitarianism, he argues, is not to intervene but instead to let the war burn out more quickly by victory of the stronger side.

Moral Hazard

My own research warns of a systemic *moral hazard* problem whereby the responsibility to protect may perversely increase the human suffering that it intends to alleviate (Crawford and Kuperman, 2006; Kuperman, 2008). The root of the problem is that civilian suffering often stems from state retaliation against a sub-state group for rebellion (such as armed secession) by some of its members. Humanitarian intervention not only protects at-risk civilians but often facilitates, intentionally or not, the political objectives of the rebels. The expectation of intervention can therefore encourage rebellion by lowering its anticipated cost and increasing its likelihood of success. Some militants even deliberately provoke state retaliation against civilians in order to attract intervention. Although humanitarian intervention may help rebels attain their political goals, it usually comes too late or is inadequate to avert retaliation against civilians. Thus, the responsibility to protect resembles an imperfect insurance policy against genocidal violence. It creates moral hazard that encourages the excessively risky or fraudulent behaviour of rebellion by members of groups that are vulnerable to retaliation, but it cannot fully protect the group's civilians against the violent backlash. As a result, the emerging norm of humanitarian intervention may cause some civilian suffering that otherwise would not occur. The most commonly cited examples of the **moral hazard of humanitarian**

Table 21.1 Four strategies of humanitarian military intervention

	Limited force	Overwhelming force
Impartial	Most common. Saves lives in short term, but may prolong war and resultant humanitarian suffering. **(Bosnia: UN peacekeepers, 1992–5)**	Rare. Can end violence quickly, but at cost of major military commitment and entanglement in renewed violence if perceived as non-neutral. **(Somalia: US peacekeepers, 1992–5)**
Biased	Less common. Works faster if biased towards stronger party. Or can end violence gradually by helping weaker side to win, but at risk of short-term backlash against civilians. **(Kosovo: NATO bombing of Serbia, 1999)**	Rare. Can end violence by quickly helping one side to win, but at cost of major military commitment and loss of neutrality. **(Iraq: US-led intervention and no-fly zone in Kurd region, 1991–2003)**

Adapted from R. Betts (1994).

intervention are Kosovo, Darfur, and Bosnia—the last of which is detailed in the following section.

The moral hazard problem can arise from any international action that is primarily motivated by the humanitarian desire to protect civilian targets of state violence but that also helps rebels. The spectrum of such action is wide, ranging from low-cost measures that respect traditional state sovereignty to high-cost ones that impinge on it, including: rhetorical condemnation, threats or imposition of economic sanctions, recognizing the independence of secessionist entities, air strikes on military or economic assets, military assistance to or coordination with rebels perceived as defending at-risk civilians, consensual deployment of peacekeepers, and non-consensual deployment of troops for peace enforcement. Possible ways to overcome the moral hazard problem are discussed in the conclusion of this chapter.

KEY POINTS

Humanitarian provision of subsistence commodities may exacerbate violence if it sustains combatants, is stolen by them and sold, or becomes the object of fighting.

Such purely humanitarian aid may also undermine local economies and governance by making redundant the roles of farmers, businessmen, and government institutions.

An international aid organization usually hires the most talented local residents, reducing their potential contribution to entrepreneurship and government.

Humanitarian NGOs often focus on winning contracts and delivering aid, rather than preventing unintended consequences.

Humanitarian military intervention is typically limited and impartial, which bolsters weaker parties just enough to prolong fighting and civilian suffering.

'Moral hazard' arises because humanitarian intervention may help rebels attain their political goals, thereby encouraging rebellion that provokes retaliatory violence against civilians.

Moral hazard can stem from any international action, motivated by the humanitarian desire to protect civilian targets of state violence, if it also helps rebels.

Critical Thinking Question:

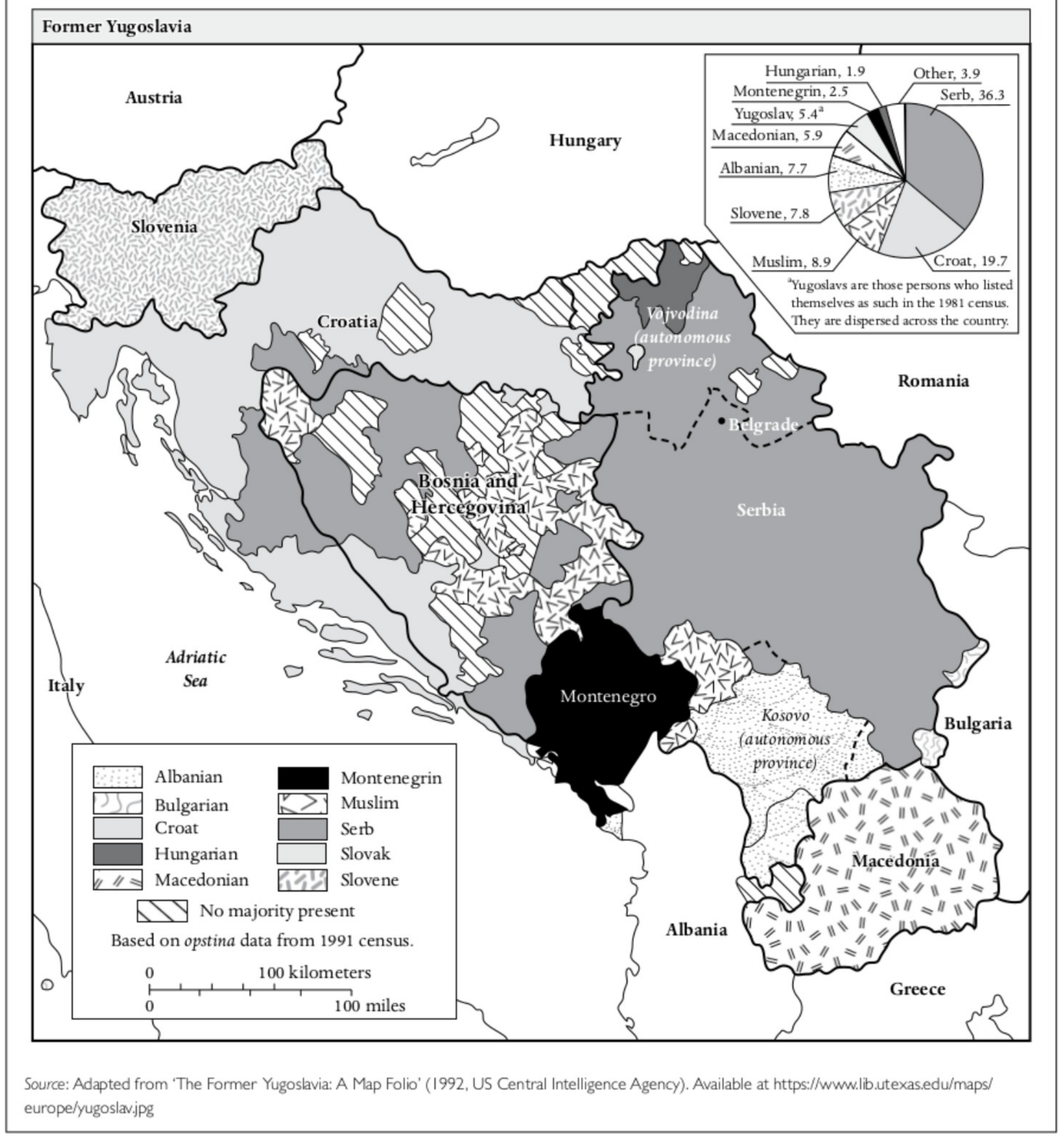
The quickest way to protect civilians in civil war is to end the fighting, and the quickest way to end the fighting is to help the strongest side, typically the government, to win. But government crimes may be the cause of the war in the first place. Which is more important: ending the violence to protect civilians, or helping to overthrow a criminal government?

Case Study of Intervention: Bosnia

The dynamics of humanitarian intervention are well illustrated by Bosnia's war of 1992–5. This war stemmed from the break-up of Yugoslavia—a formerly stable, communist country that had been the most prosperous in Eastern Europe from the Second World War until the late 1980s. The demise of Yugoslavia had multiple causes. Its population comprised multiple ethnic groups, several of which had histories of large-scale violence against each other. The country was divided territorially, mainly along ethnic lines, into six autonomous republics—Bosnia, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Slovenia—and two autonomous Serbian provinces, Kosovo and Vojvodina (see Figure 21.1). Its leader after the Second World War, Marshal Josip Broz Tito, was able to suppress ethnic rivalries, but he died in 1980. Economic decline during the 1980s exacerbated tensions, especially among the richer republics of Slovenia and Croatia, which resented the drain of the poorer ones. The fall of the Berlin Wall in the late 1980s inspired democratization in Yugoslavia that revived nationalist tendencies. Serbia's leader Slobodan Milošević accused ethnic Albanians in Kosovo of discriminating against ethnic Serbs, revoked the province's autonomy, and instituted a police state. This fostered secessionism in Slovenia and Croatia, the latter of which also adopted nationalist constitutional reforms that frightened its ethnic Serb minority. Both of these republics seceded from Yugoslavia in June 1991. The Serb-dominated Yugoslav army fought a short, unsuccessful war in Slovenia, where there were few Serbs. But in Croatia, the Yugoslav army and Serb paramilitaries fought a bloody six-month war to retain control of Serb-populated territories and expel Croats from them. The war in Croatia killed thousands and displaced hundreds of thousands.

Bosnia remained largely peaceful during this time, but soon confronted a fateful decision. Its population comprised three main ethnic groups: Muslims (> 40 per cent), Serbs (> 30 per cent), and Croats (< 20 per cent). Serbs ideally wanted Bosnia to stay part of Yugoslavia, but, if Bosnia were to become independent, they insisted it first be divided internally along ethnic lines into autonomous cantons, so that Serbs could rule areas where they predominated. The Muslims, sometimes known as 'Bosniaks', were the largest group and wanted Bosnia to become independent as a unitary state without ethnic division. Croats chose to ally temporarily with the Muslims in favour of independence,

Figure 21.1 Ethnic demography of pre-war Yugoslavia, 1991



Source: Adapted from 'The Former Yugoslavia: A Map Folio' (1992, US Central Intelligence Agency). Available at https://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/europe/yugoslav.jpg

but secretly planned for most of their areas to be annexed by neighbouring Croatia.

Some Muslim leaders were concerned by the prospect of war if Bosnia declared independence, so in August 1991 they explored a deal to remain within Yugoslavia, but popular Muslim sentiment rejected that option. The Serbs reiterated that they would not accept peacefully the independence of a unitary Bosnia, and the Yugoslav army redeployed to Bosnia those Serb troops who originated from the republic. At the end of February 1992, Muslim and Croat leaders insisted on holding a referendum on independence, which their ethnic groups approved overwhelmingly, while virtually all Serbs boycotted it.

Preventive Diplomacy Backfires

International diplomacy towards Bosnia was driven heavily by the humanitarian desire to avoid another war like the recent one in Croatia. The lead negotiator of the European Community (EC), Portuguese diplomat José Cutileiro, insisted that Bosnia's independence should not be recognized until the three groups agreed to an internal territorial division along ethnic lines. Briefly, leaders of the three groups agreed to such a plan in February 1992, based on a patchwork of non-contiguous ethnic cantons, and Cutileiro believed that war had been averted. But US diplomats argued that human rights and humanitarian interests could better be protected by recognizing the independence of a unitary Bosnia, to deter the Serbs from resorting to violence. After the United States convinced European officials to recognize Bosnia even without an agreement on internal ethnic division, the Muslims and Croats withdrew their approval for the Cutileiro plan. This exemplifies moral hazard: the United States intended to deter Serb violence, but instead emboldened the Muslims and Croats to reject a compromise and declare independence of a unitary Bosnia, despite Serb warnings that this would provoke war.

The decision by the United States and the EC to recognize the independence of a unitary Bosnia on 6–7 April 1992 failed to deter the Serbs as hoped and instead spurred them to violence, as they had warned. The Yugoslav army quickly seized control of territory, while Serb paramilitary groups engaged in killings, rapes, and forced expulsions (ethnic cleansing) to remove non-Serbs from Serb-dominated and ethnically mixed areas. Within three months, Serb forces controlled 70 per cent of Bosnia and had imposed a siege on the capital Sarajevo, attempting to compel the surrender of the Muslim and Croat leaders and the new Bosnian army that had been cobbled together from Muslim militias. By the end of June, 10,000 Muslim civilians had been killed, hundreds of thousands of Bosnians had been displaced, and Serb forces had established camps in which suspected militants were interrogated, tortured, or killed, and some women were raped. The war, lasting three and a half years, ultimately killed 97,000 Bosnians—including 64,000 Muslims, 25,000 Serbs, and 8,000 Croats. Among these were 40,000 civilian victims, of whom 33,000 (82 per cent) were Muslim. The war and the forced expulsions by each ethnic group caused the displacement of 2 million Bosnians, representing half the population.

Humanitarian intervention formally began in June 1992, when the UN Security Council voted to reopen Sarajevo airport for humanitarian deliveries and French president François Mitterand flew in to break the siege. The UN peacekeeping mission for the former Yugoslavia, originally created for Croatia in early 1992, was expanded to ensure the delivery of aid to Sarajevo and (as of September 1992) the rest of Bosnia. For the next three years, the main focus of UN troops in Bosnia was to assure the delivery of humanitarian aid to those suffering deprivation due to the fighting. Serb forces continued to surround Sarajevo (and other Muslim enclaves) and attack them with artillery and sniper fire, but they permitted sufficient aid deliveries to alleviate humanitarian suffering, which also enabled the Bosnian army to fight on. The Serb forces apparently hoped to preclude more decisive intervention against themselves by permitting the humanitarian deliveries. At the time, the United Nations maintained an arms embargo on the former Yugoslavia that perpetuated the Serb superiority in heavy weapons. As Richard Betts (1994) argues, this 'limited impartial' humanitarian military intervention helped the weaker Muslims just enough to continue fighting but not to prevail, and so had the unintended effect of perpetuating the war and its consequent humanitarian suffering, albeit mitigated by the provision of aid.

Forceful Intervention

The UN and NATO tried to use military threats and force, and diplomatic pressure, to prevent or deter the Bosnian Serbs and their supporters in Yugoslavia from continuing the war and endangering civilians. In May 1992, the UN expanded its limited arms embargo on combatants to a comprehensive arms embargo on Yugoslavia's two remaining republics, Serbia and Montenegro, on the grounds that they supported the Bosnian Serbs. In November 1992, NATO also began enforcing a UN-authorized naval blockade on these two republics. The sanctions compelled Serbia's leader Milošević to reduce military aid to the Bosnian Serbs to pressure them to make peace, but for domestic political reasons he could not cut them off entirely, so they refused to relent. This demonstrates that sanctions as a coercive tool of humanitarian intervention are not as toothless as some detractors claim, but neither can they force officials to take actions tantamount to political suicide.

In March 1993, the United Nations imposed a no-fly zone over Bosnia, and two months later authorized NATO air patrols to shoot down violators—both steps clearly targeted against Serbs, given that

Figure 21.2 Ethnic cleansing and 'safe areas' in Bosnia, 1994

Source: Adapted from *Balkan Battlegrounds: A Military History of the Yugoslav Conflict 1990–1995* (2002–3, Washington, DC: Central Intelligence Agency). Available at http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:Bosnia_areas_of_control_Sep_94.jpg

the Bosnian government had no military aircraft. In April and May 1993, the UN Security Council also declared **safe areas** in six Bosnian Muslim enclaves: Bihac, Gorazde, Sarajevo, Srebrenica, Tuzla, and Zepa (see Figure 21.2). This meant that Serb forces were prohibited from attacking these cities that they surrounded, even though Muslim forces used the cities as bases for attacks against Serbs. Both the no-fly zone and the safe areas illustrate how ostensibly impartial humanitarian intervention to protect civilians is often not neutral because it alters the balance of military power.

By 1993, the Muslim–Croat alliance had fractured, so that the most intense fighting and targeting of civilians during the summer was between these erstwhile allies. The United States still sought to reverse previous Serb gains in Bosnia, which required repairing the Muslim–Croat alliance. Through intense diplomacy and pledges of military assistance, the United States succeeded in March 1994 in forging the Washington

Agreement: a new alliance among Bosnia's Muslims and Croats and neighbouring Croatia. Retired US military officers began training the Croatian Army, and the United States stopped enforcing the arms embargo against Croatia, in return for it transferring a portion of imported weapons to Bosnia's Muslims and Croats. Such steps were all but certain to fuel renewed fighting, and, indeed, were intended to. This reveals that the human rights imperative of reversing aggression and displacement took precedence over the humanitarian imperative of minimizing harm to civilians.

Escalation of Intervention

Starting in 1994, NATO threatened and employed a variety of air strikes against the Serbs on humanitarian grounds, authorized initially under the previous year's UN Resolution 836 that called for 'all necessary measures, through the use of air power, in and around the safe areas'. In January, NATO threatened to bomb Serb forces near Sarajevo, compelling them to turn over heavy weapons to UN peacekeepers and withdraw further from the city. In February, NATO's governing council declared that it would use air strikes to enforce a heavy-weapon exclusion zone of 20 kilometres (12 miles) around Sarajevo. In March, NATO launched close-air-support strikes to help UN peacekeepers confronting Serb forces. In April, NATO bombed Serb forces surrounding Gorazde, compelling them to withdraw and permit the entry of UN peacekeepers. In August, NATO bombed Serb forces in retaliation for their retaking weapons from UN custody, persuading the Serbs to return the weapons. In September, NATO bombed Serb forces for violating the Sarajevo exclusion zone. In November, the Muslim-led Bosnian army launched an offensive from the Bihać safe area; Serb forces counter-attacked, and NATO responded by bombing a Serb-controlled air base in Croatia. Throughout 1994, these small-scale air strikes succeeded in compelling the Serbs to permit humanitarian deliveries and not to crush the safe areas that they surrounded, but air power could not end the war or compel Serb forces to surrender territory. This demonstrates the limits of small-scale air strikes as a tool of humanitarian intervention, at least in the absence of coordination with capable ground forces. Advocates of more robust military intervention against the Serbs derided the 1994 air strikes as mere 'pinpricks'.

The moral hazard arising from anticipated humanitarian intervention also exacerbated the fighting. Bosnia's Muslim-controlled government and army repeatedly resisted ceasefires, even though the main victims of continued fighting were fellow Muslims, because of the expectation that such suffering would attract humanitarian military intervention sufficient to help them win the war. The UN's first commander of peacekeepers in Bosnia, Canadian General Lewis MacKenzie (1993, pp. 159, 308), declared that the Muslim-led 'Bosnian Presidency was committed to coercing the international community into intervening militarily'. A successor, British General Michael Rose (1998, p. 141), likewise reported that the Muslims rejected ceasefires because 'if the Bosnian Army attacked and lost, the resulting images of war and suffering guaranteed support in the West for the "victim State"'. Even James Gow (1997, p. 96), an academic overtly sympathetic to the Muslims, concedes that the Bosnian army broke ceasefires 'in the hope of provoking a U.S. intervention'. A senior Bosnian Muslim official, Omer Behmen, later admitted that the strategy had been to 'put up a fight for long enough to bring in the international community' (Kuperman, 2008). If not for this expectation of humanitarian military intervention, the Muslims might well have agreed to an early ceasefire, truncating the war and the resultant civilian suffering.

Peace Plans Rejected

Diplomatic efforts failed for three years to end the war because the proposed peace deals did not adequately reflect the military facts on the ground. In January 1993, the UN and the EC proposed the Vance–Owen peace plan: an internal division of Bosnia into a patchwork of ethnic cantons. This was similar to the pre-war Cutileiro plan, which had been proposed by the EC and accepted by the Serbs but rejected by the Muslims, the Croats, and the United States. During the first months of 1993, the Vance–Owen plan overcame initial resistance from the United States, Bosnia's Muslims and Croats, and Serbia's leader Slobodan Milošević. In spring 1993, however, Bosnia's Serbs rejected the proposal on grounds that, in light of the onset of war, security concerns now dictated a single contiguous Serb territory, not a patchwork.

The second diplomatic attempt by the UN and the EC, in August 1993, was the Owen–Stoltenberg plan, which responded to the Serbs' complaint by granting them a single, contiguous territory comprising 52 per cent of the republic, and dividing the rest into Muslim and Croat zones. This proposal was initially opposed by

the Muslims, on grounds that it represented an ethnic 'partition' of Bosnia, and later by the Serbs who were loath to give back so much of the 70 per cent of the republic's territory that they still controlled militarily.

The third diplomatic effort was sponsored by a new transatlantic coalition, the 'Contact Group', initially including the United States, Russia, France, Britain, and Germany. Its July 1994 peace plan built on the renewed Croat–Muslim alliance by proposing a two-way partition of Bosnia into a contiguous Serb entity, comprising 49 per cent of the republic, and a Muslim–Croat entity in the remainder. But the Serbs again refused to surrender peacefully the territory that they had captured in war.

A Double-Edged Sword

The double-edged nature of humanitarian military intervention is well illustrated by the events of 1995. Since the previous year, the United States had facilitated the arming of Bosnia's Muslim–Croat alliance and Croatia to reverse the military advantage of the Serbs and thereby compel them to surrender territory and end the war. In May 1995, Croatia demonstrated its new-found strength by recapturing western Slavonia (see 'UN Western Zone' in Figure 21.2), an area of its country that since 1991 had been controlled by Serbs, who now fled in terror, creating a new refugee crisis.

Bosnian Serb leaders realized that humanitarian intervention had tilted the military balance against them—via aid, sanctions, air strikes, the no-fly zone, and especially the arming and training of their Croat and Muslim adversaries—so they moved to consolidate their territorial gains. For three years, the Serbs had been deterred from capturing the Muslim enclaves that they surrounded in eastern Bosnia (designated as safe areas by the UN in 1993), hoping to avoid triggering a more robust humanitarian military intervention. But now such intervention was upon them anyway, which removed their incentive for restraint. In May 1995, Serb forces violated the Sarajevo exclusion zone, prompting NATO air strikes, which the Serbs responded to by shelling safe areas and seizing 370 UN peacekeepers as hostages. More consequentially, in July 1995, Bosnian Serb forces seized the safe areas of Srebrenica and Zepa. In Srebrenica, Serb forces killed an estimated 8,000 Muslim men—the single largest crime of the war—in a savage revenge for the Muslims previously having used the safe area as a base for attacks. A small battalion of Dutch UN peacekeepers was present in Srebrenica but chose not to confront the better-armed Serb forces. This illustrates the danger of attempting to deter humanitarian crimes with only air power and under-equipped ground forces, which offer a false sense of security that may actually increase the vulnerability of the populace. The events also demonstrate that, when humanitarian intervention is not neutral, it can provoke a violent backlash from those who perceive the interveners as being biased against them.

Decisive Intervention

The Srebrenica massacre and the seizure of UN hostages galvanized international support for more robust humanitarian military intervention against the Serbs. UN peacekeepers were consolidated in defensible areas to reduce their vulnerability, and a NATO rapid-reaction force was deployed to Mt Igman near Sarajevo. Ironically, the next major war crime in the region was committed not by Serbs but by Croatia's army, which in August 1995 seized control of its country's main Serb enclave, Krajina (see Figure 21.2), and expelled more than 100,000 Serbs. This represented another unintended consequence of humanitarian intervention: military aid intended to help the Croats and Muslims rectify past humanitarian offences inadvertently facilitated revenge crimes. The United States did not intervene against the Croatian troops—indeed, it had helped to arm and train them—which spurred criticism by the Serbs of a double standard. The Croatian army then proceeded to assist Bosnia's Croat and Muslim forces to reverse Serb gains in western Bosnia, causing further displacement of civilians.

The final escalation of humanitarian military intervention came in late August 1995, in response to an alleged Serb attack on a marketplace in Sarajevo. The next day, NATO initiated Operation Deliberate Force, a two-week bombing campaign against Serb military targets in Bosnia. The air strikes facilitated a renewed Croat–Muslim offensive in western Bosnia that rapidly diminished Serb control of the republic's territory from 70 per cent to less than 50 per cent. A ceasefire was agreed in October, and the following month the United States convened a peace conference in Dayton, Ohio. The Dayton Peace Accords, modelled on the Contact Group plan, were initialled in November and then signed in Paris in December 1995. These accords divided Bosnia internally into a contiguous 'Serb Republic' in 49 per cent of the territory, a contiguous Muslim–Croat Federation in most of the rest, and a sliver of land in the north whose sovereignty was still to be determined. Bosnia's Serb leaders, who had rejected the offer of 49 per cent

of the territory when they controlled much more, now willingly accepted it in light of their abject retreat. Operation Deliberate Force illustrates that air power can be an effective tool of humanitarian intervention, at least when coordinated with capable ground forces.

Looking back over the entire episode, Bosnia demonstrates several dilemmas of humanitarian intervention. During the war, the provision of subsistence commodities reduced some civilian suffering. But this aid also enabled the Muslims to break the siege of Sarajevo in summer 1992, and thereby perpetuated a war that might otherwise have ended quickly. The militarization of humanitarian intervention in Bosnia had even more complex consequences. Prior to the war, expectations of such intervention convinced the Muslim leadership to reject the Cutileiro plan and declare the independence of Bosnia as a unitary state, despite Serb threats to respond with violence, as soon transpired. After the fighting started, even though Muslim civilians were the main victims of the war, the Muslim leadership resisted ceasefires because it hoped that humanitarian suffering would attract military intervention on its behalf. These events demonstrate that the prospect of intervention contributed to both the outbreak and perpetuation of war. (See Box 21.2 for a discussion of whether humanitarian intervention does more harm than good.)

Military intervention—including weapons supply, training, a no-fly zone, and air strikes—gradually enabled the Muslims and Croats to reverse Serb military gains. But, by changing the balance of power, such intervention also unintentionally spurred humanitarian crimes, including the ethnic cleansing by Croatia of Serbs in Krajina and the slaughter by Serb forces of Muslims in Srebrenica. Overall, it is difficult to determine whether humanitarian intervention did more good or harm in Bosnia. But the experience does suggest ways to improve humanitarian intervention, which are discussed in this chapter's final section.

BOX 21.2 ALTERNATIVE POINTS OF VIEW: DOES HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTION DO MORE GOOD THAN HARM?

This chapter suggests that humanitarian intervention is justified only in some conflicts that threaten civilians, and only if implemented in a manner likely to do more good than harm. Critics offer at least three contending views. Optimists claim that intervention almost always does more good than harm, especially as 'political will' grows for earlier and longer intervention. Proponents include Thomas G. Weiss (2012) and Alex J. Bellamy (2014).

Pessimists argue that intervention, even if well-intentioned, invariably does more harm than good for both the interveners and those they intend to help. Exponents include Barry R. Posen (2014). Sceptics contend that humanitarian intervention is merely a cover for imperialism. This perspective is applied to Bosnia by Diana Johnstone (2003), and more broadly by Jean Bricmont (2007).

KEY POINTS

Bosnia's war started because of distrust and disagreement among its three main ethnic groups. Serbs wanted Bosnia either to stay in Yugoslavia or to be divided internally along ethnic lines prior to independence. Muslims and Croats wanted Bosnia to become independent without internal ethnic division.

When the Muslims and Croats declared Bosnia independent as a unitary state, Serb forces responded by quickly capturing 70 per cent of Bosnia's territory and killing, expelling, or detaining many non-Serbs.

Humanitarian intervention alleviated some civilian suffering but also helped to perpetuate a war that eventually killed 97,000 Bosnians—including 40,000 civilians—and displaced two million.

Muslim leaders rejected ceasefires because they expected the suffering of their own civilians to attract humanitarian military intervention that would help them win the war—which illustrates the moral hazard of humanitarian intervention.

Economic sanctions compelled Serbian leader Slobodan Milošević to reduce military aid to Bosnia's Serbs but not to terminate it, because he faced domestic pressure to support fellow Serbs.

Non-neutral military intervention enabled the Croats and Muslims to reverse territorial losses and return to their homes, but also led to the ethnic cleansing of Croatia's Serbs and the massacre of Srebrenica's Muslims. These events illustrate that sometimes there is a trade-off between promoting human rights and humanitarian.

Limited humanitarian military intervention—including air strikes, a no-fly zone, and deployment of peacekeepers—proved inadequate to guarantee the protection of civilians, as demonstrated in Srebrenica.

Proposed peace plans failed for three years to end the war because they did not reflect the military facts on the ground, whereas the Dayton Accords succeeded by recognizing those facts, as they had been altered by intervention.

KEY POINTS *(Continued)*

Critical Thinking Questions:

In Bosnia, humanitarian intervention saved thousands of lives by providing subsistence commodities to at-risk populations. However, intervention also cost thousands of lives by encouraging the Bosnian Muslims to reject peace proposals and continue fighting in the hope of attracting further intervention to achieve their political goals. On balance, do you think intervention saved or cost more lives in Bosnia? In retrospect, what should the international community have done differently: more or less intervention?

Conclusion: Lessons of Humanitarian Intervention

Some advocates of forceful intervention claim that it can simultaneously promote humanitarian and human rights objectives. In reality, there may be a trade-off between the two. This is most obvious for military intervention in support of 'freedom fighters'—militants who claim to be fighting for their group's human rights, as in Bosnia. Such intervention encourages the launching and perpetuation of rebellion or armed secession, which often provokes states to retaliate in a manner that inflicts suffering on the group's civilians. Forceful intervention to promote human rights thus often undermines humanitarian aims. In theory, a timely and robust military intervention might achieve both objectives, but logistical and political obstacles inhibit such an ideal use of force.

This dilemma can be overcome through less forceful and more precise intervention methods. Relief aid should be delivered in ways that benefit mainly civilians—for example, by distributing it at refugee and displacement camps that are policed to exclude rebels, or at least their weapons. Human rights may be supported by intervening diplomatically and economically on behalf of non-violent protest groups—for example, by offering trade and aid to states that address the legitimate grievances of such opposition movements. Threats of forceful intervention should be reserved for cases in which states either attack non-violent groups or respond disproportionately to rebellion by deliberately targeting civilians. Such an enlightened approach, aiming to discourage opposition groups from rebelling while raising the incentives for states to accommodate their demands, has the potential to promote both humanitarian and human rights objectives.

These lessons are illustrated by further investigation into the case of Kosovo (Kuperman, 2008). Starting in 1989, Serbia revoked the autonomy of this province, disenfranchised the local ethnic Albanian majority, banned public education in the Albanian language, dismissed most ethnic Albanian professionals from their jobs, and instituted repressive police patrols—a widespread and systematic violation of human rights. For the next eight years, the ethnic Albanians resisted by non-violent means, which provided an ideal window of opportunity for the international community to use diplomatic sticks and carrots to persuade Serbia to restore their human rights. Such international pressure would have been unlikely to provoke a genocidal backlash from the Serbs, because they faced little violent opposition in the province. Analogous non-violent movements, typically benefiting from international support, have succeeded in promoting human rights in many countries (Schock, 2005), including India, the United States, South Africa, the Philippines, the former Soviet Union and other communist states of Eastern Europe, Indonesia, Serbia, Lebanon, and—in the Arab Spring of 2011—Tunisia.

Regrettably, the international community devoted insufficient support to Kosovo's non-violent human rights movement. As a result, this pacifist resistance eventually gave way in 1997 to a rebellion by militant ethnic Albanians, who provoked a violent counter-insurgency by Serbian forces that also endangered Albanian civilians. Interveners might still have mitigated violence if they had targeted humanitarian aid mainly to the affected civilians. Instead, the United States coordinated with the rebels and threatened to attack Serbia, and then NATO followed through on that threat—which only fuelled the Albanian rebellion, exacerbated Serbian retaliation, and magnified several-fold the humanitarian suffering.

The Kosovo case demonstrates that, in order to promote both human rights and humanitarianism, the international community should focus its

leverage to persuade oppressive states to meet the legitimate demands of non-violent groups. Failing that, if a rebellion breaks out, intervention should be aimed at helping civilians, not rebels, to avoid exacerbating rebellion and the resulting backlash against civilians.

The good news is that it is possible simultaneously to promote human rights and humanitarianism. The cautionary note is that, unless intervention is properly designed to avoid rewarding rebels, the promotion of one of these admirable goals could well undermine the other.

QUESTIONS

Individual Study Questions

1. What is the traditional definition of humanitarian intervention, and how and why has it changed since the end of the Second World War?
2. What is the difference between humanitarian intervention and the promotion of human rights?
3. What is the responsibility to protect, and how does it differ from the traditional norm of sovereignty?
4. What is the difference between impartiality and neutrality?
5. How was military force used in humanitarian intervention in Iraq, Somalia, Kosovo, and Libya, and in what cases was it conspicuously absent?
6. Why did war break out in Bosnia?
7. What were the military aspects of humanitarian intervention in Bosnia?

Group Discussion Questions

1. When is humanitarian intervention compatible with the promotion of human rights, and when are they in tension?
2. What are the obstacles to effective humanitarian military intervention?
3. How and why does humanitarian intervention sometimes backfire, and what is the 'moral hazard' problem?
4. How did humanitarian intervention both reduce and increase civilian suffering in Bosnia?
5. What steps should be taken to improve humanitarian intervention?

FURTHER READING

Anderson, M. (1999). *Do No Harm: How Aid Can Support Peace—Or War*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.

A simple guide for would-be humanitarians.

Betts, R. (1994). The Delusion of Impartial Intervention. *Foreign Affairs*, **73**/6, 20–33.

An argument for either taking sides or staying out.

Burg, S. and **Shoup, P.** (1999). *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*. New York: M. E. Sharpe.

The quintessential account of this case.

Crawford, T. and **Kuperman, A.** (eds) (2006). *Gambling on Humanitarian Intervention: Moral Hazard, Rebellion and Civil War*. New York: Routledge.

Scholars debate the moral hazard hypothesis, especially regarding Kosovo.

de Waal, A. (1998). *Famine Crimes: Politics and the Disaster Relief Industry in Africa*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

De Waal explains how and why humanitarian NGOs veer off course.

Kuperman, A. (2001). *The Limits of Humanitarian Intervention: Genocide in Rwanda*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.

An explanation of why political will is not the only obstacle to timely and effective intervention.

Kuperman, A. (2008). The Moral Hazard of Humanitarian Intervention: Lessons from the Balkans. *International Studies Quarterly*, **52**/1, 49–80.

This article shows how expectations of intervention helped trigger and perpetuate violence in Bosnia and Kosovo.

Kuperman, A. (2015). Obama's Libya Debacle: How a Well-Meaning Intervention Ended in Failure. *Foreign Affairs*, **94**/2, 66–77.

An illustration of how intervention can backfire for both the target country and interveners.

Posen, B. (1996). Military responses to refugee disasters. *International Security*, **21**/1, 72–111.

A useful typology of intervention scenarios.

WEB LINKS

http://www.globalhumanitarianassistance.org Website for Global Humanitarian Assistance.

http://www.crisisgroup.org Website for the International Crisis Group.

http://www.nato.int/docu/handbook/2006/hb-en-2006.pdf The NATO Handbook details NATO Intervention in Bosnia.

http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/unprofor.htm This website details the UN Intervention in Bosnia.

NOTES

1. See http://www.globalhumanitarianassistance.org/data-guides/datastore.
2. Kuperman (2011).

Visit the Online Resource Centre that accompanies this book for updates and a range of other resources: www.oxfordtextbooks.co.uk/orc/goodhart3e/