

# “Rethinking International Intervention”

Mike Aaronson  
Keele World Affairs  
11 October 2012

# Introduction: What I will cover

- What do we mean by “International Intervention”?
- How has thinking about intervention evolved in the modern era?
- What are the key institutions, who are the key actors, what are the key norms in this debate?
- Do we need to rethink our approach to “International Intervention”?

# What do we mean by “International Intervention”?

I shall be using the term to mean:

- “External actions that are intended to influence the domestic affairs of a sovereign state or states” *after Nye 2009*

In other words, a very broad terrain:

- Not just military intervention; not just by states; can be proactive/preventive as well as in response to crisis.

# Types of “International Intervention”

- Development assistance
- Emergency relief
- Public diplomacy incl. criticism
- Private diplomacy incl. threats
- Preventive deployment (deterrent)
- Economic sanctions
- Weapons and other inspections
- Conflict mediation
- Peace-keeping (consensual)
- Peace enforcement (coercive)
- Post-conflict stabilisation and nation/state building
- Prosecutions under international law e.g. ICC
- War to secure regime change

# Key Events (i)

- “Post-Westphalian world” – rise of the nation-state – nadir of 2 World Wars
- 1945: creation of the UN.
  - Collective desire to end the scourge of war (only permitted in specific circumstances)
  - But also to end colonialism and to protect human rights
  - Emphasis on ‘sovereignty’ needs to be seen in this light.

# Key Events (ii)

- Cold War period:
  - Deadlock in UN: nuclear threat uppermost so no UNSC action India/E Pakistan, Vietnam/Cambodia, Tanzania/Uganda
  - Colonial independence; UN intervention in Congo (but not Biafra); sanctions Rhodesia/SA
  - World energy crises
  - But significant evolution of international humanitarian and human rights regime incl Helsinki

# Key Events (iii)

- Post-Cold War – “The End of History” and growing Liberal Interventionism
- 1991 Gulf War followed by “humanitarian intervention” in N Iraq.
- 1992 “Agenda for Peace” Boutros Ghali
- 1993-7 Failures in Somalia and Rwanda
- 1992-5 Bosnia – closer to home but poorly conceived and executed

# Key Events (iv)

- 1998-2002 International Criminal Court
- 1999 Kosovo : “illegal but legitimate”; Blair speech in Chicago
- 2000 Brahimi Report: response to UN failures and marginalisation
- 2001 ICISS Report: “R2P” concept
- 9/11: into Afghanistan. “Global War on Terror”. Securitisation agenda.



# Key Events (v)

- 2003: Invasion of Iraq
- 2005/6: R2P adopted by UNGA and UNSC
- 2005 Darfur: crisis of non-intervention.
- 2007/8 Kenya: R2P in action or failure of prevention?
- 2008 Burma/Cyclone Nargis: limits of R2P
- 2011/12 Libya and Syria: success and failure.

# Key Actors

- States and their governments at the UN
- UN secretariat and specialised agencies
- Regional organisations (as in UN Charter)
- Defence alliances, especially NATO
- NGOs “in consultative status” with UN
- ICRC and wider Red Cross Movement
- Non-state actors e.g. rebel groups
- Private diplomacy (“Track 1 ½ or 2”)

# Key Norms (i)

- “Just War” theory:
  - Jus ad Bellum, Jus in Bello, Jus post Bellum?
- Law of Armed Conflict/IHL: Hague and Geneva Conventions
- UN Charter:
  - state sovereignty, peaceful resolution of disputes, self-defence, collective action against threats to “international peace and security”

# Key Norms (ii)

- Human Rights conventions:
  - Universal Declaration on Human Rights
  - Genocide Convention
  - ICCPR, ICESCR, CEDAW, UNCRC etc.
- “Humanitarian Intervention”
- “Responsibility to Protect”
- International Criminal Court
- Countering terrorism; spreading democracy (cf Bush and Obama)

# A Continuum of Intervention:

- Speeches
- Broadcasts
- Economic Aid
- Military Advisers
- Support to Opposition
- Blockade
- Limited Military Actions
- Military Invasion

*after Nye (2009)*

# Some common features of all types of “Intervention”

- Interfering with the natural course of events – e.g. medicine.
- Based on a set of beliefs about how things should be – i.e. not values-free.
- Brings responsibility: for the decision to intervene, for the means of intervention, and for the consequences.
- Therefore as important to focus on the intervener as the “intervened upon”.

# Some obvious questions about “International Intervention”

- For whose benefit?
- With whose consent?
- How justified/authorised?
- Is there a “duty to intervene” – or even a “right to intervene”?
- What is the relationship between international law, ethics, and politics in understanding intervention?

# Some concerns about intervention:

- Disruption of local processes (which may not be fully understood)
- Unequal power relationships
- Possible unintended consequences
- Securitisation of development
- Tension between self-interest and altruism can lead to dishonesty about motives



# ‘Humanitarian Intervention’

- “Military action taken by a state, group of states or non-state actor, in the territory of another state, without that state’s consent, which is justified, to some significant extent, by a humanitarian concern for the citizens of that state”

*Hehir 2010 p20*

But interventions are perceived differently by different people (i):

- “Justified attempts by well-meaning outsiders to make life better for other people whose human rights are being denied.”

Or:

- The various ways the powerful seek to bend the weak to their will.”

But interventions are perceived differently by different people (ii):

- “Over-ambitious and usually unsuccessful attempts by outsiders to shape the course of events in countries they don’t understand.”

Or:

- “Ending or preventing conflict, improving the lives of women and children, and helping to secure a stable democratic future.”

# Time for a Rethink?

- Are we entering a new era? (Lessons from Iraq, Afghanistan?) Or does Libya suggest otherwise? What about Syria?
- If so, maybe we should take a broader view of “international intervention” – look for new forms of engagement with the “periphery”?
- Certainly we should seek to broaden our understanding of the world and how it works.

# Is IR obsessed with coercive forms of intervention?

- IR is more about war than peace?
- IR focuses more on power and therefore the Great Powers?
- Consensual intervention is more the domain of non-state actors? UN, NGOs?
- IR is more concerned with the outsider's viewpoint than local actors' viewpoints?
- Other disciplines jealously guard their turf?

# How important is the academic/practitioner interface?

- Academics strive to develop general laws and theories.
- Practitioners believe they are guided not by theory but by the here and now.
- “In practice, theory is unavoidable.”
- Public policy needs to be informed by both perspectives.
- Shared interest in effective intervention, lesson learning, and improvement.

# Some Conclusions

- International intervention can take many different forms; wrong to focus just on military “humanitarian” intervention.
- Coercive intervention remains a highly contested topic.
- Continuing importance of neutral, independent, humanitarian assistance.
- Intervention needs to be more intelligent.

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<http://www2.surrey.ac.uk/politics/cii/>

(Or Google cii)