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The first question that comes to mind about "humanitarian intervention" is whether the category exists. Are states moral agents? Or were Machiavelli, Adam Smith, and a host of others correct in concluding that they commonly act in the interests of domestic power – in Smith's day, the "merchants and manufacturers" who were "by far the principal architects" of policy and whose interests were "most peculiarly attended to," whatever the effects on others; in ours, corporate and financial power centers, increasingly transnational in scale? A second obvious question has to do with those who are to be in charge: what do their institutions and record lead us to expect?

There is ample documentary material supporting the belief that states are moral agents, in fact uniformly so. Without having read the texts, I presume that when the invasion of Afghanistan began to go sour, pre-Gorbachev Pravda portrayed it as having begun with "blundering efforts to do good" though most people now recognize it to have been a "disastrous mistake" because Russia "could not impose a solution except at a price too costly to itself;" it was an "error" based on misunderstanding and naiveté, yet another example of "our excess of righteousness and disinterested benevolence."

The quoted phrases are those used to describe Kennedy's invasion of South Vietnam, later expanded to all of Indochina, at the dissident extreme, well after the Tet offensive convinced US business leaders that the enterprise should be liquidated (Anthony Lewis, John King Fairbank). There is no need to sample the harsher parts of the spectrum.

Furthermore, these examples generalize, though it is true that only in cultures with a deeply totalitarian strain do we find such notions as "anti-Soviet" or "anti-American," applied to the miscreants who see something other than righteousness and benevolence in the actions of their noble leaders; imagine the reaction to a book on "anti-Italianism" in Milan or Rome, or any society with a functioning democratic culture.

The pattern is familiar since biblical days. But the conventional pronouncements plainly do not suffice to refute skepticism about the morality of states. It is necessary to review the record, which reveals, unequivocally, that the category of "humanitarian intervention" is vanishingly small.

One might take the heroic stand that in the special case of the United States, facts are irrelevant. Thus the Eaton Professor of the Science of Government at Harvard instructs us that the United States must maintain its "international primacy" for the benefit of the world, because its "national identity is defined by a set of universal political and economic values," namely "liberty, democracy, equality, private property, and markets" (Samuel Huntington). Since this is a matter of definition, so the Science of Government teaches, it would be an error of logic to bring up the factual record. What may have happened in history is merely "the abuse of reality," an elder statesman of the "realist" school explained 30 years ago; "reality itself" is the unachieved "national purpose" revealed by "the evidence of history as our minds reflect it," and that shows that the "transcendent purpose" of the United States is "the establishment of equality in freedom in America," and indeed throughout the world, since "the arena within which the United

gas," the President assured the UN – offered $15 million, "money left over from contributions to a previous UN program in northern Iraq," the director of Middle East Watch reports.

Finally, the conclusions that a rational observer will draw about US-led "humanitarian intervention" do not answer the question whether such intervention should nevertheless be undertaken. That is a separate matter, to be faced without illusions about our unique nobility. We can, in short, ask whether the pursuit of self-interest might happen to benefit others in particular cases, or whether unremitting public pressure might overcome the demands of the "principal architects" of policy and the interests they serve.

There is also a more fundamental question: Can our political and intellectual culture, our society and institutions, undergo the radical transformations that would be required for an American citizen to use such phrases as "American humanitarian intervention" or "enlargement of the world's free community of market democracies" without shame? The fate of much of the world depends on the answer we give to that question.

States must defend and promote its purpose has become worldwide" (Hans Morgenthau).

Assuming these doctrines, it would be an elementary error, in evaluating Washington's promotion of human rights, to consider the close correlation between US aid and torture, running right through the Carter years, including military aid and independent of need, an inquiry that would be pointless to undertake as Shultz, Abrams, et al. took the reins. And our love of democracy is also immune to empirical evaluation. We may put aside the conclusions of years of scholarship, recently updated for the 1980s by Reagan State Department official Thomas Carothers: democratization in Latin America was uncorrelated (in fact, negatively correlated) with US influence, and the United States continued "to adopt prodemocracy policies as a means of relieving pressure for more radical change, but inevitably sought only limited, top-down forms of democratic change that did not risk upsetting the traditional structures of power with which the United States has long been allied." We need not waste words on the nature of these "traditional structures." In practice, "democracy" has been defined in terms of outcome, not conditions and process. But that cannot affect what is true by definition of our "national identity."

Those who are still not satisfied can be offered the doctrine of "change of course," soberly invoked whenever the stance of noble intent becomes impossible to sustain. True, bad things have been done in the past for understandable reasons, but now all will be different. So our terrorist wars against the church and other deviants in Central America in the 1980s, leaving the region littered with hundreds of thousands of tortured and mutilated victims and ruining its countries perhaps beyond recovery, was really a war with the Russians. Now we will "change course" and lead the way to a bright future. The same line of argument had been used to dismiss as irrelevant the enthusiastic support for "that admirable Italian gentleman" Mussolini (FDR, 1933) and for the moderate Hitler, both barring the Bolshevik threat; the resurrection of fascist col-

laborators and destruction of the anti-fascist resistance worldwide after the World War; the overthrow of democracies and support for neo-Nazi monsters throughout the world in subsequent years; and on, and on. Similarly, the second superpower invoked the threat of the Evil Empire as it carried out its atrocities at home and in the region.

To evaluate these useful doctrines, we must again investigate cases, impossible here. What such inquiry reveals is that for both superpowers, the threat of the other served primarily as a device of population control, providing pretexts for actions taken on quite different grounds. Furthermore, we discover that policies were hardly different before and after the Cold War. True, Woodrow Wilson needed different pretexts. He was protecting the country from the Huns, not the Russians, when he invaded Haiti and the Dominican Republic, where his warriors – as viciously racist as the Administration in Washington – murdered and destroyed, reinstituted virtual slavery, dismantled the constitutional system because the backward Haitians could not see the merits of turning their country into a US plantation, and established the National Guards that ran the countries by violence and terror after the Marines finally left.

The story has been the same since the origins of the Republic. The first great massacre, of the Pequots, was imposed upon us by "base Canadian fiends," the President of Yale University explained. Thomas Jefferson attributed the failure of "the benevolent plan we were pursuing here for the happiness of the aboriginal inhabitants of our vicinities" to the English enemy, who forced upon us "the confirmed brutalization, if not the extermination of this race in our America…" And on through the conquest of the national territory, the Philippines, the marauding in our "backyard," and the rest of the disgraceful history, continuing through the Cold War without essential change – though as a global power, the United States by then placed Third World intervention in a much broader context of domination and control.

the prime example of "humanitarian intervention" in recent years. The United States and its allies at once reconstituted the defeated Khmer Rouge at the Thai border so that they could resume their depredations. There was furious denunciation of the "Prussians of Asia" who had dared to remove Pol Pot (New York Times). The doctrinal system shifted gears: instead of invoking the issue of MIAs, we would henceforth punish Vietnam for the crime of ridding Cambodia of the Khmer Rouge. When it became impossible to deny that Vietnamese troops had withdrawn, the system shifted smoothly back to the old pretext – which remains unsullied by any notice of the lack of interest about MIAs from earlier wars, the atrocious US treatment of POWs in Vietnam, Korea, and the Pacific War, or the obscenity of the entire enterprise of holding Vietnamese to account for what they have done to us.

Furthermore, unlike states, people are moral agents. Occasionally, the population has compelled the state to undertake humanitarian efforts. I need not discuss the Somalian intervention, transparently cynical from its first days. But consider a real example: the protection zone that the Bush Administration reluctantly extended to the Kurds in northern Iraq, after tacitly supporting Saddam Hussein as he crushed the Shiite and Kurdish uprisings. Here public opinion played a decisive role, overcoming the Administration's commitment to the rule of a unified Iraq by an "iron fist," whether wielded by Saddam or some clone, as Washington explained by way of the Times chief diplomatic correspondent.

The sincerity of the concern for the Kurds is demonstrated by what happened as public attention waned. They are subject to Iraqi embargo in addition to the sanctions against Iraq. The West refuses to provide the piddling sums required to satisfy their basic needs and keep them from Saddam's hideous embrace. The UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs prepared a 1/2 billion dollar relief and rehabilitation program for Kurds, Shiites, and poverty-stricken Sunnis in central Iraq. The Clinton Administration – "haunted by the pictures of Kurdish women and children cut down by poison

national law and the UN charter. At the Security Council, Clinton's Ambassador defended the resort to force with an appeal to Article 51 of the UN Charter, which authorizes the use of force in self-defense against armed attack until the Security Council takes action, such self-defense being authorized when its necessity is "instant, overwhelming, and leaving no choice of means and no moment for deliberation," according to standard interpretations. To invoke Article 51 in bombing Baghdad two months after an alleged attempt to assassinate a former president scarcely rises to the level of absurdity, a matter of little concern to commentators.

The prospective leader of "humanitarian intervention" is also notorious for its ability to maintain a self-image of benevolence whatever it does, a trait that impressed de Tocqueville 150 years ago. Observing one of the great atrocities, he was struck that Americans could deprive Indians of their rights and exterminate them "with singular felicity, tranquilly, legally, philanthropically, without shedding blood, and without violating a single great principle of morality in the eyes of the world." It was impossible to destroy people with "more respect for the laws of humanity," he wrote. So it has always been, to this day.

Several qualifications must be added. The United States is not significantly different from others in its history of violence and lawlessness. Rather, it is more powerful, therefore more dangerous, a danger magnified by the capacity of the elite culture to deny and evade the obvious.

A second qualification is that intervention undertaken on the normal grounds of power interests might, by accident, be helpful to the targeted population. Such examples exist. The most obvious recent one is Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia in December 1978 after years of murderous Khmer Rouge attacks on Vietnamese border areas; under comparable conditions, the United States would probably have nuked Phnom Penh. The Vietnamese invasion removed Pol Pot, terminating major atrocities, though that was not the motivating factor. And we recall the response in the West to

As the Cold War ended, new pretexts had to be devised. George Bush celebrated the fall of the Berlin Wall by invading Panama, installing the regime of a tiny minority of bankers and narcotraffickers who, as predicted, have turned Panama into the second most active center for cocaine money laundering in the Western Hemisphere, the State Department concedes, the United States still holding first place. The Red Menace having disappeared, he was protecting us from Hispanic narcotraffickers led by the arch-demon Noriega, transmuted from valued friend to reincarnation of Attila the Hun, in standard fashion, when he began to disobey orders. And we were soon to learn that in the Middle East, long the major target of our intervention forces, the "threats to our interests … could not be laid at the Kremlin's door" (Bush National Security Strategy Report, March 1990); after decades of deception, the Soviet pretext can no longer be dredged up to justify traditional Pentagon-based industrial policy and intervention forces, so it is "the growing technological sophistication" of the Third World that requires us to strengthen the "defense industrial base" (AKA high tech industry) and maintain the world's only massive intervention forces – a shift of rhetoric that at least has the merit of edging closer to the reality: that independent nationalism has been the prime target throughout.

The end of the Cold War has broader effects on intervention policy than change of pretext. As US forces bombarded slums in Panama, Elliott Abrams noted that for the first time, the United States could intervene without concern for a Soviet reaction anywhere. Many have observed that the disappearance of the Soviet deterrent "makes military power more useful as a United States foreign policy instrument … against those who contemplate challenging important American interests" (Dimitri Simes, Senior Associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Dec. 1988). Such considerations aside, a rational person will recognize that policy flows from institutions, institutions remain stable, and

thus intervention is likely to be undertaken, when deemed necessary, for much the same reasons as before.

It is in this light that a reasonable person will evaluate policy pronouncements. Suppose that Brezhnev had announced that the USSR would no longer be content with containing the Evil Empire; rather, it would move to a policy of "enlargement" of the community of free and democratic societies. If they did not merely collapse in ridicule, rational people would ask just how the USSR had been defending freedom and democracy before. And they would react exactly the same way when Clinton's National Security Adviser explains that we can now go beyond containment to "enlargement – enlargement of the world's free community of market democracies," adding that we are "of course" unlike others in that "we do not seek to expand the reach of our institutions by force, subversion or repression." A reasonable person will ask just how we have been protecting democracy and markets, and will quickly discover our antagonism to democracy (unless "top-down" rule by the traditional gentle hands can be assured) and to markets (for us, that is; they are fine, indeed obligatory, for the weak, who are not entitled to the massive state intervention and protection that has always been a leading feature of policy, as in every successful developed society). As for our distaste for "force, subversion or repression" – again, no words need be wasted.

It is a useful exercise to compare the actual reaction to Anthony Lake's announcement of the new Clinton foreign policy with the reaction that minimal rationality would dictate. We can learn a good deal about our political and intellectual culture by carrying it out.

It is not that the reaction lacked honesty. Thus *The New York Times*'s chief diplomatic correspondent, Thomas Friedman, outlined "the Administration's foreign policy vision" quite accurately: its "essence" is "that in a world in which the United States no longer has to worry daily about a Soviet nuclear threat, where and how it intervenes abroad is increasingly a matter of choice"; the insight of Simes and others, when we understand the "nuclear

and Salvadoran claims that the United States was violating their sovereignty by imposing on Nicaragua, safely occupied by Wilson's troops, a treaty granting the United States perpetual rights over any canal. The United States has sought to undermine the UN ever since it fell "out of control" in the 1960s. Washington is far in the lead in vetoing Security Council resolutions in these years, followed by Britain, with France a distant third and the USSR fourth. The record in the General Assembly is similar on a wide range of issues concerning human rights, observance of international law, aggression, disarmament, and so on, though the facts are rarely reported, being useless for power interests. The United States record at the 1989p;90 Winter session of the UN, right after the Berlin Wall fell, is particularly informative in this respect; I have reviewed it elsewhere, and there is no space to do so here. Such facts, available in abundance, have yet to disrupt the chorus of self-praise.

The standard rendition of the unreported facts is that "the Soviet veto and the hostility of many Third World nations made the United Nations an object of scorn to many American politicians and citizens," though with these disruptive elements gone and the UN safely under US rule, "it has proved to be an effective instrument of world leadership, and, potentially, an agency that can effect both peace and the rule of law in troubled regions" (David Broder, Washington Post). The same message has resounded through the doctrinal system with scarcely a discordant note – yet another achievement that any dictator would admire.

Nothing changes as we move to the new Administration. Clinton won great praise for his courage in launching missiles at a defenseless enemy without loss of American lives (only expendable Iraqi civilians). In a typical reaction, the Washington Post praised him for "confronting foreign aggression," relieving the fear that he might not be willing to resort to violence as freely as his predecessors; the bombing refuted the dangerous belief that "American foreign policy in the post-Cold War era was destined to be forever hogtied by the constraints of multilateralism" – that is, by inter-

pants in the crushing of the beasts of burden by the tyrant who had long been a US favorite, and whose murderous National Guard was supported by the Carter Administration right through its massacre of tens of thousands of people in July 1979 – and beyond. Shortly before, the Senate had cut off aid until Nicaragua proves that it is not engaged in international terrorism, the stern judges being those who were condemned by the World Court for the "unlawful use of force" against Nicaragua, and ordered to pay compensation, which would have amounted to billions of dollars; naturally Washington, with the applause of intellectual opinion, dismissed the Court with contempt as a "hostile forum" (New York Times). US threats finally compelled Nicaragua to withdraw the claims for reparations after a US-Nicaragua agreement "aimed at enhancing economic, commercial and technical development to the maximum extent possible," Nicaragua's agent informed the Court. The withdrawal of just claims having been achieved by force, Washington has now abrogated the agreement, suspending its trickle of aid with demands of increasing depravity and gall. The press maintains its familiar deafening silence.

Torture of Vietnamese, Cubans, Nicaraguans, Iraqi children, and others, is a policy priority for the reasons already mentioned, which are understood in the Third World, though excluded from our well-insulated political culture. The prevailing mood was captured by a leading Brazilian theologian, Cardinal Paulo Evaristo Arns of São Paulo: throughout the South "there is hatred and fear: When will they decide to invade us," and on what pretext?

The Nicaraguan case raises another issue that will not be overlooked by serious people considering the prospects for "humanitarian intervention." The leader of such intervention will be a state that is remarkable not only for its violence, impudence, and moral cowardice, but also for its lawlessness, not only in recent years. Washington's dismissal of the World Court decision had its counterpart when Woodrow Wilson effectively disbanded the Central American Court of Justice after it had the audacity to uphold Costa Rican

threat" appropriately. The "essence" of policy was clarified further the following day in a report on the conclusions of the White House panel on intervention, announcing the end of the era of altruism. No more "nice guy," as in the days when we turned much of the world into graveyards and deserts. Henceforth intervention will be where and how US power chooses, the guiding consideration being: "What is in it for us?" – the words highlighted in the Times report. To be sure, the "vision" is cloaked in appropriate rhetoric about "democracy" and all good things, the standard accompaniment whatever is being implemented, and by whom, hence meaningless – carrying no information, in the technical sense.

The declared intent, the record of planning, and the actual policies implemented, with their persistent leading themes, will not be overlooked by someone seriously considering "humanitarian intervention," which, in this world, means intervention authorized or directed by the United States.

Consider, for example, the torture of Cubans, intensified with Cold War pretexts removed. It has two major elements: first, to ensure that the island is returned to its status as a US economic dependency and haven for rich tourists, drug traffickers, and the like, perhaps under a facade of democracy (with outcome controlled). Second, to punish Cubans for the crime of disobedience. Servants elsewhere must be taught the heavy cost of standing up to the Enforcer.

Since these are natural policy imperatives, we find them quite generally. It was not enough to slaughter millions of people in Indochina and destroy three countries; two decades later, its people must still be ground to dust by economic warfare to teach the proper lessons, while in our peculiarly American way we whimper piteously about the tragic fate we have suffered at the hands of our Vietnamese tormentors, setting "guidelines" that they must follow for entry into our "civilized world" – and relaxing our grip

only when the business community comes to fear that substantial profits are being sacrificed.

Or consider Nicaragua, now reduced by US violence and economic warfare to virtually the level of Haiti, with thousands of children starving to death on the streets of Managua and far worse conditions in the countryside. Its people must suffer much more; the United States is nowhere near satisfied. In October 1993, the US-run international economic institutions (IMF, World Bank) presented new demands to the government of Nicaragua. It must reduce its debt to zero; eliminate credits from the national bank; privatize everything to ensure that poor people really feel the pain – losing water, for example, if they cannot pay. Nicaragua must cut public expenditures by $60 million, virtually eliminating much of what remains of health and welfare services, while infant mortality rises along with disease, malnutrition, and starvation, offering new opportunities to condemn the "economic mismanagement" of the despised enemy.

The $60 million figure was perhaps selected for its symbolic value. Last year the already privatized banks shipped $60 million abroad, following sound economic principles: playing the New York stock market is a far more efficient use of resources than giving credits to poor bean farmers. The bean harvest was lost, a catastrophe for the population, though the sophisticated understand that such considerations are irrelevant to economic rationality. Nicaragua has now been ordered to fully privatize banks, to ensure that what capital there is will be efficiently used, with consequences that are evident.

On Nicaragua's Atlantic Coast, 100,000 people are now starving to death, with aid only from Europe and Canada. Most are Miskito Indians. Nothing was more inspiring than the laments about the Miskitos after a few dozen were killed and many forcibly moved by the sandinistas in the course of the US terrorist war, a "campaign of virtual genocide" (Reagan), the most "massive" human rights violation in Central America (Jeane Kirkpatrick), far outweighing the

slaughter, torture, and mutilation of tens of thousands of people by the neo-Nazi gangsters they were directing and arming, and lauding as stellar democrats, at the very same time. What has happened to the laments, now that 100,000 are starving to death? The answer is simplicity itself. Human rights have purely instrumental value in the political culture; they provide a useful tool for propaganda, nothing more. Ten years ago the Miskitos were "worthy victims," their suffering attributable to official enemies; now they have joined the vast category of "unworthy victims" whose far worse suffering can be added to our considerable account. The pattern is remarkably uniform in time and place, along with the impressive inability to perceive it.

Not surprisingly, terrorism has the same status. When the State Department confirmed that its Honduran-based terrorist forces were authorized to attack agricultural cooperatives, Michael Kinsley, again at the liberal dovish extreme, cautioned against thoughtless condemnation of this official policy. Such international terrorist operations cause "vast civilian suffering," he agreed, but they may nevertheless be "sensible," even "perfectly legitimate," if they "undermine morale and confidence in the government" that Washington seeks to overthrow. Terror is to be evaluated by "cost-benefit analysis," which we are authorized to conduct to determine whether "the amount of blood and misery that will be poured in" yields "democracy," in the special sense of US political culture. Our wholesale terrorism need satisfy only the pragmatic criterion; retail terrorism by others, who lack our innate perfection, is the "plague of the modern age" to be punished with arbitrary harshness by the same judge and executioner, amidst a chorus of praise for his unparalleled virtue.

As in the case of Vietnam and Cuba, so we now stand in judgment over Nicaragua for its crimes against us. In September, the Senate voted 94p;4 to ban any aid if Nicaragua fails to return or give adequate compensation (as determined by Washington) for properties of US citizens seized when Somoza fell – assets of US partici-