The New Humanitarianism

How military intervention became the norm

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⏩ Famines, genocides, tyrannies, and civil wars punctuate the world's post–Cold War narrative, a grim rondelet of disasters with the familiar refrains of starving children, chaotic refugee camps, harried aid workers, pleas for assistance, and endings indistinguishable from beginnings. These "complex humanitarian emergencies" are no less intense and disturbing in the September 11th aftermath, in which a new form has been added via preemptive war. The major industrial powers of the world respond to these emergencies as if the human tumult were completely unexpected and the task itself an act of sheer altruism. Nonprofit aid groups mobilize their memberships with vivid portrayals of deprivation, United Nations officials organize yet another underfunded mission, and television networks run through a hasty media life cycle from discovery and horror to peace-keeping soldiers cuddling rescued babies. The refrain now includes Somalia, Eritrea, Rwanda, Sudan, Congo, Bosnia, Afghanistan, Cambodia, Bangladesh, and Iraq, a ledger of suffering colossal in scale and inexplicability.

Of course, such suffering is not inexplicable, and a growing intellectual enterprise is grappling with this enormous, and enormously complex, phenomenon. Often written by former aid workers, this literature chips away at the self-seducing pretexts of the humanitarian industry—the fabricated sense of urgency, the manipulation of images, the neglect of underlying causes. While far from offering an exhaustive account (the scale and costs of humanitarianism, after all, run to the hundreds of billions of dollars in dozens of countries), these authors shift perceptions of the whats and whys of these emergencies. At the same time, an intersecting academic and policy discourse on the legal and moral grounds of military intervention for humanitarian reasons is also taking shape, spurred in part by America's post–9/11 pursuits, a discourse that is far less satisfying precisely because it has the scent of a classroom (or courtroom) and not the killing fields.

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Nowadays, the notion of humanitarian intervention almost always means the use of armed force, and the principal examples are the controversial U.S. actions in Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Iraq, and the absence of action in other desperate places, notably in Rwanda in 1994. Humanitarianism has roots in war—the Red Cross was founded to aid its victims—and the public's favorable attitude toward the concept accounts for its ready use by political leaders. (It is so popular that "save the world" images are now a standard of advertising, especially in the apparel industry.) The Bush administration listed the liberation of the Iraqi people from Saddam's yoke as one reason for going to war last spring, and what once appeared to be an afterthought became the main rationale when all others collapsed. This episode, whose outcome will

remain doubtful for many months (perhaps years), gave fresh prominence to the normative disputes at the center of the new discourse on humanitarian intervention: once a large-scale human disaster is verified, who has the right to intervene, under what conditions, and with what means?

Humanitarian Intervention, edited by J. L. Holzgrefe and Robert O. Keohane, explores this set of quandaries with the precision one expects of leading scholars of international law and politics searching for the ethical bases and conditions of intervention. The book includes nine essays by, among others, Tom J. Farer, Fernando R. Tesón, Thomas M. Franck, and Michael Ignatieff, as well as an introduction by Keohane. The chapters explore and also seek to mitigate the tensions between norms of international law—which generally protects state sovereignty from outside intrusions, according to the rule engraved by the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648—and a set of broader, vaguer obligations to humans who are in distress. The emphasis on human security over the sanctity of states as the reference point for international action has gained favor in the post–Cold War period, but even before the fall of the Berlin Wall, emerging global norms supported action to protect human rights and to save lives. The embryonic value that animates much of the discussion nowadays is "sovereignty as responsibility," first articulated by Francis M. Deng in 1993 and quickly adopted by the UN Secretary General, which holds that sovereignty not only protects a state from unwarranted outside interference but also obligates the state to respect the basic rights and interests of its members. But the when, why, and how of intervention—especially military intervention—remain troublesome, because it is states that have armies and therefore tend to be careful about trampling the system that protects their prerogatives as well as those of the bad boys in Serbia, Liberia, Somalia, Iraq, and so on.

The Holzgrefe-Keohane volume collects a series of subtle theoretical explorations on how to balance the competing values of state sovereignty and human rights, and when ill-treated people should be rescued. It is likely to become a key text in this debate, along with Nicholas J. Wheeler's *Saving Strangers*, which brings many of the same arguments into sharp relief through a series of case studies. Wheeler argues for a fairly restrictive standard for legitimate intervention: "First, there must be a just cause, or what I prefer to call a supreme humanitarian emergency . . .; secondly, the use of force must be a last resort; thirdly, it must meet the requirement of proportionality; and, finally, there must be a high probability that the use of force will achieve a positive humanitarian outcome." This is the template, though its simplicity belies intense debates about when these conditions are met. In the case of the 1999 NATO intervention to protect civilians in Kosovo, Wheeler writes:

The humanitarian motives behind NATO's action have to be located in the context of the overriding constraint that the operation be "casualty free." Without this assurance, there would have been no intervention in Kosovo. It was this requirement that dictated the selection of bombing as the means of humanitarian intervention, which, in turn, produced results that contradicted the humanitarian justifications of the operation. . . .The intervention precipitated the very disaster it was aimed at averting.

But the outcome, Wheeler concedes, may have produced a much more favorable view of the intervention. Such are the complexities of nearly all such interventions, and Wheeler is particularly adept at identifying the competing claims and stacking them against his standards.

Why states intervene at all—how and why "saving strangers" is now viewed favorably—is explored in Martha Finnemore's valuable book, *The Purpose of Intervention*. Finnemore traces the emerging concern with human security, namely, the growing acceptance of new norms about who is human and our obligations to such people. "New beliefs about social purpose reconstitute the meaning and rules of military intervention, and ultimately change intervention behavior," she writes. "By creating new social realities—new norms about interventions, new desirata of publics and decision makers—new beliefs create new policy choices, even policy imperatives for intervenors." Her argument challenges "realists" who regard state interests, not squishy sentiments, as the engine of world politics. Norms are at the center of the intervention enterprise, emerging norms like sovereignty as responsibility—that's the good news—but consequences and underlying motivations do not always conform with the newly minted social beliefs that drive publics to demand intervention.

The consequences of action are a thicket of uncertainty, and some are far less clear than the experience in Kosovo. Interventions in Somalia, Afghanistan (1980–92), and West Africa arguably have left matters worse than before, and many others remain dubious. The theorizing "takes place in a state of vincible ignorance," Holzgrefe acknowledges; "the empirical claims upon which different ethical theories rest are little more than guesswork"—a warning that might have been heeded by Pentagon planners in Iraq. Theorists generally assume that "better coordination" or "good governance" will take care of post-intervention chores, a managerial—and, one is tempted to say, imperialist—mindset that is often a prelude to failure. Intervention (whether military or not) has powerful social and political impacts, and while one might sincerely calculate that the good from intervening will outweigh the bad, little attention in the academic theory or in the practice of states is given to unintended outcomes, a central theme of the practitioners writing on these topics.

More significant, the contributors to *Humanitarian Intervention* essentially leave out any discussion of causes—the reasons why humanitarian emergencies arise in the first place. If obligations exist to ameliorate calamities underway, are there obligations to prevent calamities? Are not the origins of a crisis useful in sorting out remedies? In his contribution, Michael Ignatieff does speak of failed states as a principal challenge in preventing human-rights violations, and mentions quickly that "[s]tructural adjustment programs that force governments to cut payrolls, slash services, and privatize state enterprises have been unpopular and sometimes counterproductive." Giving such short shrift to a central cause of weakening states is very much in keeping with the official discourse about humanitarian crises—that they have everything to do with the dictator, the warlords, or the ethnic rivalries, and nothing to do with us in the Western democracies. Fortunately, Wheeler does take this up forcefully at the end: "The West's conception of humanitarian intervention is so ideologically biased that the 'silent genocide' of death

through poverty and malnutrition is rendered natural and inevitable." But because humanitarian intervention is constructed as a military act, and rarely are militaries called on (or should be) to prevent or ameliorate famine and other deprivations, this topic is marginal in the theorists' view.

This lacuna of accountability, to which we will return, is consistent with the general picture of humanitarian crises as being somewhere else—in some godforsaken corner of the globe among, as Condoleezza Rice famously put it, the roadkill of the earth—and also as being *emergencies*—sudden ruptures in the normal order of things. As my colleague Craig Calhoun said in a speech last year, "we tend to think of disasters as in principle avoidable, even while we contribute to them and while the death toll grows. . . . Yet, we insist in thinking of them as exceptions to the rule, unusual and unpredictable events. In fact, emergencies have become normal." As "normal" events they have causes that rise from the global social and political order. They are not merely predictable, but probably avoidable. The identification of "humanitarian intervention" with military action is, paradoxically, a tacit claim of powerlessness to do anything short of war to prevent the streams of refugees, the genocides, the famines. It is as if to say, we will tolerate brutal regimes and human deprivation unless and until conditions are so severe that only the military can rescue the victims. This is another form of avoiding responsibility and shifting blame.

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In fact, much of the wealthy world does act to prevent or ameliorate human suffering, through economic development aid and, when things go badly, through intervention with food, medicine, and shelter. Sudan, Somalia, Haiti, Mozambique—this list is long, though no two cases are precisely alike. These situations of deprivation, disease, and conflict are, as one scholar puts it, the "dark side of globalization." Increasingly, analysts see a troubling connection between two roles played by the powerful and wealthy countries of the world. The implements of development—aid, loans, trade accords, etc.—are applied as a set of reforms to ensure that the beleaguered countries fit into a global system emphasizing stability, markets, and democratic practice. At the same time, globalization can undermine the ability of states to respond to crises while creating conditions conducive to war economies. In this account, humanitarianism itself is seen then as the superficial if pervasive policing (i.e., intervention) of the complex and often deteriorating situations that liberal economic and political governance (i.e., globalization) has been so intimately involved in creating. Processes of globalization and processes of intervention are thus intertwined.

Nowadays, intervention—or, in the currently acceptable parlance, *humanitarian action*—draws an abundance of players (a variety of nongovernmental organizations, private militaries, health professionals, faith-based groups, and so on), many of which are contracted by states or multilateral agencies. That they tend to be from the West, often work for U.S. or European agencies, and offer their services by fostering new kinds of social and economic organization raises questions about these proxies, their values, goals, and conduct. The matter of *coherence* in responding to emergencies is

an often-cited problem in this regard, but the discussions about coherence among practitioners and think tanks focus on optimizing coordination of policies among agencies and multiplying the tasks of humanitarian response—for example, adding democratization to famine relief. That is a very difficult set of tasks to undertake, singly or in combination, and the results are often disappointing, but the pursuit of multiple agendas is demanded by Western governments to stretch their dollars and euros further than perhaps they should go. This sometimes-ideological agenda also subverts the bedrock principle of neutrality among the relief groups: it can make them appear to be tools of the powerful and can even make them more vulnerable to attack. So humanitarian practice grudgingly has moved from the Red Cross ideal of helping civilian victims during wartime to a vast enterprise of relief *and* development (political and economic) in places the international community's most powerful members deem important.

This set of issues has been taken up in recent years by a number of people who have worked for the likes of Oxfam or Médecins Sans Frontières and have published damning critiques of humanitarianism. Joined by a few skillful journalists such as Deborah Scroggins and Michela Wong, they pose a vigorous challenge to the popular beliefs and political bromides typically associated with saving strangers. (It remains a mystery why there are virtually no first-hand accounts by victims of emergencies in the literature, or fictional treatments of much note beyond the new French novel, *Frontières*, by aid leader Sylvie Brunel.) This literature is remarkably frank and self-searching about the international community and its claims—without sacrificing intellectual quality. Three stand out in this group: Mark R. Duffield's *Global Governance and the New Wars*, Alex de Waal's *Famine Crimes*, and Fiona Terry's *Condemned to Repeat?* They outclass the peevish *The Road to Hell* by Michael Maren, and other journalists who dip in and out and never quite get it right. Among a very few others, these three have worked in places like Sudan and Cambodia, and have since taken the time to reflect and to construct a framework for understanding the chaos and suffering.

The first task is to get a picture of what the challenge actually is. Fiona Terry concisely debunks widely held perceptions about the post–Cold War chaos, promoted by sensationalists such as Robert D. Kaplan, who predict, for example, a "coming anarchy," new ethnic conflict and failed states, civil wars and attendant disasters derivative of newly inflamed hatreds. There is nothing new about large-scale refugee flows or famine or ethnic wars, nor are attacks on relief workers or other atrocities uniquely post-1989 ("respect for the laws of war was not uppermost in the minds of combatants during the Cold War conflicts in Vietnam or Central America"). Mortality in wars and refugee numbers were declining through the 1990s. We witness these dislocations more dramatically than before, not least because the humanitarian enterprise expanded so quickly in that decade and was more centrally placed in conflicts. This central place, often negotiated with warring parties to gain access to victims, also makes the aid agencies targets for lucre: along with pillaging locals, stealing resources, and other crimes—also scarcely new—the warriors can now grab the humanitarian assistance itself. Food and other supplies are valuable commodities, and looting of aid caravans is now such standard practice that many relief workers transact how much the warlords will seize. It

is this phenomenon writ large, the introduction of a new force of non-military humanitarian intervention—often unaccountable, badly planned, politically disruptive—which is new and disturbing in the sincere attempt to help the world's neediest people.

Terry not only details the troubling consequences of the "new humanitarianism," but accuses political leaders of willful ignorance. "The causes of most crises are political; some consequences may be humanitarian," she writes. "But labeling them 'complex emergencies' and 'humanitarian crises' disconnects the consequences from the causes and permits the international response to be assigned—and confined—to the humanitarian domain." This is the nub of it: in what ways are the crises of famine, displacement, or even conflict—always depicted as challenges to the international order—in fact a consequence of that same order?

Duffield's entire book is an impressive attempt to answer that sort of question. "The new humanitarianism represents a government-led shift from humanitarian assistance as a right to a new system framed by a consequentialist ethics," he asserts. "That is, humanitarian action is now only legitimate as long as it is felt to do no harm and generally support the conflict resolution and transformational aims of liberal peace." Those transformational aims include, perhaps most importantly, a global trade regime that favors the wealthy and punishes poor nations, and conditions for membership in the global system that demand much smaller government services.

The latter—"structural adjustment" is the felicitous term used by its chief enforcer, the International Monetary Fund—has reduced the size of Third World countries' expenditures on education, health, infrastructure, etc. These policies have weakened states in their capacity to deal both with chronic problems, from food shortages to tepid economic growth, and with more acute crises, such as the collapse of the price of its main export commodity or the rise of a warlord. In varying degrees, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Congo—altogether, places where millions of people have been killed in the last 20 years—are consequences of a global economic system that has, in effect, favored a form of warlordism (often exercised from the capital) over governance in which strong states, via government bureaucracies, can deliver services and are accountable. The mechanism by which global economic forces lead to warlordism appears to be fairly direct in some cases: the IMF (or an individual donor government) demands that state enterprises be sold, reducing patronage and income; a foreign investor both cuts services and is lured into paying protection to an emerging warlord, who trades on the state's decline and deals in drugs and guns, which then become new sources of social dislocation and the only viable economic activity. It is easy enough (and partially true) to say that the real problem lies with corrupt political leaders. But weak states tend to be more corrupt, and opportunities and incentives for corruption are multiplied by the system of privatization in particular.

That Africa and other troubled regions are poorer today, with less control over their own destiny than when they were liberated from colonialism, has much to do with the global economic order and not very much to do with the "new

humanitarianism." Still, as Duffield argues, there is a troubling connection. "Complex emergencies arise on the borders of liberal peace where it encounters political systems whose norms differ violently from its own." Taming these borderlands is an international security decision, and sometimes requires military intervention; at the very least, such decisions (in Washington, London, Brussels, the IMF, etc.) see economic and political development, market reform, relief, and security as bundled together to achieve the goals of the "liberal peace"—marketization, in short, supported by "good governance."

Consider the problem of cattle rustling in the Horn of Africa. Tens of thousands of pastoralists are in a chronic war with bandits and each other in this semiarid region where land and water resources have tenuously supported their nomadic way of life for centuries. Beginning with British colonialism, the pastoralists have faced a gradual closure of the common resources long available to them, most recently as a result of large-scale privatization of land and water. Traditional authority systems are undermined, and conflict has become intense due to social dislocations, land tenure transformation, and the ample supply of small weapons made available during the Cold War and from various armies in the region. These "borderlands," still rich in natural resources desired by the West (including wildlife tourism), are thus "disciplined" by marketization and proxy security forces, while humanitarian agencies are called in to deal with localized famine that the donors and their NGO agents dutifully attribute to bad weather and outmoded forms of husbandry. Meanwhile, displaced pastoralists fill the cities with new shantytowns and raise an alarming level of street crime. "Good governance" in this case is the fulfillment of privatization, delivery of aid to the beleaguered herders, and clamping down on the crime in the cities—-but it is governance that cannot address proximate causes of the problems.

For Duffield and others, this comprehensive system poses a painful dilemma for practitioners—the good-hearted minions of Oxfam, CARE, Save the Children, and the hundreds of others who rush to the scenes of disaster. Much is made in some quarters of how such NGOs exploit suffering to raise money and go so far as to manipulate journalists keen for scoops and exaggerate the scale of misery. Both Terry and de Waal document and prescribe remedies for this. The larger problem, however, is NGO "complicity" in the liberal peace. Says Duffield:

A new security framework has emerged in which stability is now regarded as unfeasible without development, while development is non-sustainable without stability. For a number of NGOs, this fusion has led to an uncomfortable realization. It has become increasingly difficult to separate their traditional non-governmental development and humanitarian activities from the wider aims and implications of this new security framework. At the same time, those who support such agencies or help them achieve their aims are also implicated through this strategic realignment.

This dilemma, very much on display in the U.S. wars in Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Iraq, is an obsessive concern for this group of writers, who faced such choices as practitioners. In the manifold ways that NGOs are both the

manipulated and the manipulators, this realignment with what is now American hegemonic power is deeply troubling. Are the aid groups merely handmaidens of a destructive globalization?

Duffield in particular forwards a number of questionable ideas, such as how oppositional the marginal places are to global capitalism (other research disputes his depiction); it may be that they simply lag, or present relatively little value (hence, "roadkill"). He also takes at face value anodyne statements of donor agencies as core ideological constructions, which is lazy. His is a photograph with heightened contrasts and not many grainy grays. As a theoretical construct itself Duffield's book underscores the need for deeper empirical understanding of the connections between globalization and conflict, for example, and the new humanitarians' alleged role as unwitting go-between. Still, there is much to admire when Duffield works on firmer ground, such as his lengthy treatment of how food aid to Sudan was misused by the Islamic regime, pointing to how famine relief—possibly the most honored mission of the humanitarians—can be a grisly tool of repression, indeed a form of war loot, when it is manipulated, misdirected, or denied to the needy.

Alex de Waal, who was codirector of African Rights in London, which Fiona Terry cites as the first organization to raise questions about problems in the humanitarian world, takes on the food security issue in *Famine Crimes*, now in its third printing. While he also avoids the grays, his writing is lucid and compelling, deeply informed by the many specific episodes of famine in Africa and South Asia that began during the colonial period.

De Waal begins with a challenge to the thesis forwarded by Amartya Sen 20 years ago, which (using India as an example) held that democracy prevents famine through free exchange of information—i.e., widespread knowledge that food shortages are incipient—and because the government is held accountable. This useful thesis is limited, de Waal argues, because global marketization has severely constrained the power of governments to respond to crises. "Despite the commitment to 'democratization' and 'good governance' of the early 1990s," he writes, "neo-liberalism tends to encourage authoritarianism, to reorient governmental accountability towards external financiers, and to weaken the mechanisms that mediate state responsibility for famine." But he goes further: only empowering local authorities will prevent famine. Not only have the policies of the wealthy states weakened local authority, but so, too, have the global instruments of humanitarianism:

. . . the struggle against famine has become professionalized and institutionalized. Technical mastery—especially in public health—is important. But these processes represent a leaching of power from those who suffer famine. Generalized, internationalized responsibility for fighting famine is far less valuable than specific, local political accountability. The struggle against famine cannot be the moral property of humanitarian institutions. An important step in that struggle is for those directly affected by famine to reclaim this moral ownership. . . . [T]he intractability of famine is the price that is paid for the ascendancy of humanitarianism.

His critique is broad and sharp. Development aid itself—not just relief—is regarded as a crippling blow to self-government. De Waal claims that the NGOs, who are the conveyers of humanitarianism, engage in "intense competition, political naiveté and the promotion of salvation fantasies," although de Waal does stand up for the well-motivated individual aid worker and the more established groups that are less likely to manipulate media images to raise money. There are legitimate questions about humanitarianism's expeditionary forces: the international NGOs tend to dash from one crisis to the next, which privileges technical skill and experience over local knowledge. Hidden agendas, poor planning, and patronizing the locals are also well-worn criticisms. Perhaps less appreciated is the near absence of advocacy NGOs to monitor the donor governments and UN agencies—not one in Italy, for example, monitors the activities of the World Food Programme. In some important ways, civil society has been captured and thereby silenced in the structure of humanitarianism, another side of the complicity argument. "NGOs may have gained influence at the margin in ministries of development co-operation," he writes, "but they have lost the capacity to set themselves against the entire system."

When viewing the failed states, civil wars, famines, and now the HIV pandemic, placing the NGOs at the center of the problem is a bit like blaming an ambulance driver for a patient suffering from a heart attack. The humanitarian international is—as all these writers argue with great acuity—a symptom of the systemic problem, which is to say, how the wealthy nations have organized the global order.

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The famines in Africa today reveal the dissonance of reigning attitudes. In Malawi, for example, 30 percent of the population was starving when a June 2003 report, issued by a major British think tank, cited the ravaging effects of HIV/AIDS, which hits women hardest and sharply reduces agricultural production. Poverty, of course, is a root of the famine, too, and the report dutifully cites market-based solutions. A July 2003 report from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), another Rome-based UN agency, notes that food consumption in African households hit by AIDS has dropped by 40 percent. "Lighter ploughs and tools that can be used by older children, women, and the elderly" are needed, says FAO's director-general.

These are among the more enlightened actors, and still they seem to concentrate on market economics and technical fixes. True, HIV/AIDS is a new wrinkle in an old story (although disease has always been one of the four horsemen of disasters), and a startling one in its cumulative impact: we are facing the social dissolution of Africa. But even the causes of the epidemic are in part attributable to weakened states, with their inability to educate, to communicate, and to maintain the credibility, order, and authority that can cope with crises—or to compete with the humanitarian agencies that send out contradictory messages. The notion that a country like Malawi, in which one in three were starving and where young men and women have been dying in staggering numbers, can solve its problems by magically producing market-driven exports—a "solution" that hasn't worked for Africa in pre-HIV days—

speaks to the power of the market idea, not to the dying and their families. (Malawi has since been declared free from hunger, thanks to a bumper crop of corn made possible by free distribution of seeds.)

The Bush administration has recognized the public concern on these issues and has stepped forward with two initiatives—one on AIDS in Africa, the other the Millennium Challenge Account, a kind of reform of U.S. foreign aid. The latter is widely viewed in Washington as an attack on the Agency for International Development, America's principal foreign-aid mechanism, yet another episode—in the topsy-turvy world of George W. Bush—in which a key instrument of U.S. policy during the Cold War and a leading purveyor of globalization is being punished for being too liberal. In any case, the Millennium Challenge Account, which will expend $10–15 billion over five years in the poorest countries, has certain conditions—good governance, accountability, investments in education and health care, and, in the fine print, "free market policies." Now, as we have seen, free-market policies and good governance (structural adjustment) tend to include demands for smaller government size and *reductions* in things like education and health care. Free markets in practice mean that U.S. companies can sweep in and buy up local resources, but that the United States need not open its own markets to African-produced cotton and other commodities.

The Millennium Challenge Account will thus perpetuate the same policies that have proven to be ineffective in eliminating poverty, at a minimum, and contribute to the weakening of local authorities—government and social institutions—that then creates the kind of instability that yields food shortages, disease, and warlordism. Oh yes, and other aid budgets for Africa are being cut, so there will be a net reduction during the Bush years.

The five-year, $15 billion AIDS initiative has similar problems. Reportedly, 40 percent of the allocation will go to U.S. pharmaceutical companies for drugs. (This recalls Lawrence H. Summers's comment in the 1990s, while he was at the U.S. Treasury, that for every $1 spent on foreign aid, $1.35 of revenue ultimately is returned to American corporations.) Spurning an allocation to the UN Global Fund for AIDS, the White House bypassed the Global Fund's practice of purchasing generic drugs at much lower cost. But the emphasis is also on prevention through abstinence and faithfulness (and disparaging the use of condoms), and will exclude NGOs that promote "family planning." Altogether, the plan is a neat match between Christian fundamentalism and the monetary interests of pharmaceutical giants. Its probable ineffectiveness, coupled with the bankrupting of the Global Fund, almost ensures that the pandemic will deepen in Africa and spread elsewhere, a specter that worries even the CIA. The agency reckons that countries with a 10 percent infection rate or more are likely to suffer from social dissolution, a condition in which crime, political violence, and civil war (emergencies!) are more likely to thrive.

Authors like Terry, Duffield, and de Waal could not have created more vivid examples of how humanitarian concern itself is warped by the liberal economic order and contemptible cultural impulses. The same dissembling was on view in the war in Iraq, which has managed to combine war and humanitarian crisis in one swift invasion. Those of us who suspected that

weapons of mass destruction or al Qaeda were not the issue in Bush's drive to war could see, as Perry Anderson explained in *New Left Review*, that the Middle East is "a region in which––unlike Europe, Russia, China, Japan, or Latin America––there are virtually no regimes with a credible base to offer effective transmission points for American cultural or economic hegemony."

The global order of liberal, democratic capitalism could not forever tolerate Nasserite socialism or Charles Taylor warlordism. But the conditions that allow such monsters to thrive—whether the structure of global petroleum dependency or unregulated commodity exploitation—are not suppressed by their ouster. When the peace-keeping troops and relief workers depart, when the extraction companies return, when the miracle of the free market is nowhere to be found, the cycles of deprivation and violence reappear. The rondelet then begins anew. ■

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Further Reading

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Saving Strangers: Humanitarian Intervention in International Society, by Nicholas J. Wheeler (Oxford University Press, 2003

the Purpose of Intervention: Changing Beliefs about the Use of Force, by Martha Finnemore (Cornell University Press, 2003)

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