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The Morally Good State and Its Intervention Obligations¹

On 21 August 2001, the NATO minister Lord Robertson announced that TF Harvest (~3500 peacekeepers) will deploy to Macedonia to keep the warring factions apart and begin the disarmament of the Albanian rebels in the region.² By deploying these international forces into the area, NATO experts estimate that the fighting will end, the number of arms will significantly shrink, the refugees will be able to return home, and the region will stabilize.³ Furthermore, NATO now has another chance to stop a war before it truly begins. As Roderick von Lipsey, an international political theorist, wrote, “Stopping the violence and preventing its recurrence are the first and most essential tasks ... of the intervention cycle. Without these, other forms of intervention will be premature and likely to fail.”⁴ Paying for years of inaction in Bosnia, Europe wants to ensure war in its backyard is something that does not happen again.

¹ ©Copyright by David M. Barnes 2002. This is the shortened version of “The Morally Good State and Its Intervention Obligations” I presented at JSCOPE 2002. I want to thank the audience for the great questions, comments, and feedback I received after the presentation. I have tried to capture some of them here, and any problems remaining are my own. This paper reflects my own views only and not the Army’s or any official policy.

² Donald G. McNeil Jr., “NATO Conditionally Approves Troops for Macedonia,” New York Times, August 22, 2001. TF Harvest and Essential Harvest were discussed in detail by Philip Reeker, Deputy State Department Spokesman, on 23 August 2001, televised on CSPAN.

³ Ian Fisher, “Macedonians Say they Meet Rules for NATO Troops” New York Times, August 15, 2001 and “NATO in Macedonia: Splendid Little Disarmament,” New York Times, August 27, 2001.

⁴ Roderick von Lipsey, “Intervening Mechanisms,” in Breaking the Circle: A Framework for Conflict Intervention, ed. Roderick von Lipsey (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997), 56.

Nevertheless, many believe that this military intervention (or any other) while permissible is not morally obligatory. What moral ties do we have to the people of Macedonia? What are our national interests there?

I think these questions however seem too dismissive. Certainly, we view the brutal fighting associated with recent civil wars with horror, especially when the cost to innocents is so high. Further, regional stability is paramount to trade, policy, and defense. Ending the fighting, reducing the arms, and establishing some peace and security in a region previously wracked by civil war are all generally considered good ends—ones we should be trying to attain. Preventing a war seems an even greater good. Even if one believes that we in the western community have no business answering every call for help in every far-flung region of the world, she cannot deny that the loss of innocent lives is a tragedy. So if our conscience recognizes the dire problems facing these people, might our ethical make-up demand some action? This is not such an easy question to answer. International intervention,⁵ by any workable definition, involves the intrusion of forces, supplies, and/or observers into the territory of another state. Intervening into the affairs of another state by its very nature is a violation of that state's sovereignty. Thus, any proposal that obligates, let alone permits, intervention has to address these issues.

⁵ By "intervention," I am referring to the definition: Intervention =df an agency interference, by force or coercion, into the affairs of a target (i) to protect the agency's nationals, (ii) to protect interests considered vital to the agency, (iii) to support succession, (iv) for counter-intervention, or (v) to prevent or to put a halt to serious violations of human rights. In addition, I will define a "humanitarian intervention." as Humanitarian Intervention =df an intervention authorized by relevant organs of the internationally recognized authority where states are voting members for the sole purpose of preventing or putting a halt to a serious violation of fundamental human rights; such that this interference has (a) a humanitarian cause, (b) a declared humanitarian end, (c) a humanitarian outcome, and (d) is conducted through humanitarian means. These include any humanitarian-type military supported intervention such as military interventions with humanitarian intent (threatened air strikes in Kosovo), military supported distribution of humanitarian aid (Rwanda, Northern Iraq, Somalia), and peacekeeping missions (Bosnia, and Cyprus). For a full discussion see Chapter Two, "What is Intervention?" in David M. Barnes, The Problem of Intervention, (University of Massachusetts, Amherst, 1999).

There are various arguments for why humanitarian intervention is morally permissible, even (in some cases) morally obligatory. Furthermore, large portions of moral writings recently published on the question of intervention are limited to deontological theories. They are interpretations and applications of deontological normative ethics and concern themselves with whether an intervention can be obligatory because it would be wrong not to intervene.⁶ But these views could lead to a prima facie duty to intervene or even an intervention categorical imperative. Consequentialist proponents of intervention on the other hand also face other potential shortcomings. These pitfalls include an objection of unforeseen consequences and an objection regarding the problem of providing continuing aid. Perhaps we need to look at the decision to intervene in a different light. We should not be looking specifically at which acts are right or wrong because views as proposed by deontological and consequential theories often fail to capture the essence of moral behavior—i.e. what it means to *be* good—and they often are severally challenged by their own limitations.⁷ While these theories have their merits, I propose that we address the question of intervention by focusing on a character-based framework: What kind of state do we want to be: a just and moral state or an unjust, immoral state? What I propose is that good states will intervene for humanitarian reasons. Furthermore, intervention itself may be a good, and intervention may sometimes be necessary for a state to be morally good.

⁶ Some of these recent publications include Julia Driver, “The Ethics of Intervention,” Philosophy and Phenomenological Research LVII, no. 4 (December 1997): 851-870; Gerard Elfstrom, “On Dilemmas of Intervention,” Ethics 93 (July 1983): 709-725; Pierre Laberge, “Humanitarian Intervention: Three Ethical Positions,” Ethics and International Affairs 9 (1995): 15-36; Michael J. Smith, “Ethics and Intervention,” Ethics and International Affairs 3 (1989): 1-26 and “Humanitarian Intervention: An Overview of the Ethical Issues,” Ethics and International Affairs 12 (1998): 63-79; and Kok-Chor Tan, “Military Intervention as a Moral Duty,” Public Affairs Quarterly vol. 9 no. 1 (Jan 1995): 29-46.

⁷ Alasdair MacIntyre does a good job of outlining these limitations in After Virtue, (Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1984). For an in-depth discussion of interventions through the lens of these other theories, see

But first allow me to digress. Aristotle thought that Man becomes morally good by performing good acts—thereby habituating morally good behavior.⁸ Similarly, if states can act as agents, then they must habituate acts to develop as moral states. Another words, in order for a state to be a morally good state, the state must perform good, moral acts. Although the concept of a morally good state may seem like a stretch, historical and ethical precedents exist. Apart from the international legal position of a state’s right of sovereignty, Hegel and other philosophers have suggested that states also enjoy the right of moral autonomy in addition to sovereignty. Political philosopher Gerard Elfstrom also proposed that “nation-states themselves possess a moral autonomy analogous to the moral autonomy possessed by individual human beings.”⁹ Therefore, if states possess a moral autonomy, then they can also act as moral agents, even as morally good ones.

The separate issue is whether an intervention is a good. (Certainly not all interventions are good. In fact, some may use the guise of humanitarian help to mask other intentions.)¹⁰ If intervention is indeed a good, then good states will intervene because the states are de facto morally good. Furthermore, it seems that in some cases, states ought to intervene to continue to develop as a morally good state.

Chapters Three and Four, “A Deontological Approach to Intervention” and “A Consequentialist Argument for Intervention” in David M. Barnes, The Problem of Intervention, (University of Massachusetts, Amherst, 1999).

⁸ Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, Book II, Chapter 1.

⁹ Gerard Elfstrom, “On Dilemmas of Intervention,” Ethics 93 (July 1983): 713. See also Michael Walzer, Just and Unjust Wars (New York: Basic Books, 1977), 53-54.

¹⁰ The Argentinean invasion of the Falkland Islands during 1982, the civil war in El Salvador from 1979 to 1990, the Gulf War during 1991, the August 2, 1914, German invasion of Luxembourg, the Vietnam War (1965-75), and the UN deployment to Angola (1989-1995) all have something in common – they are all examples of international military intervention of one type or another. However, as I mentioned earlier, I take a more restrictive definition of intervention and humanitarian intervention in particular. My restriction, however, has little bearing on a state’s decision to use the rhetoric for its own benefit.

First I will present some background on the virtuous individual and how she develops a virtuous nature; I will call this virtuous individual the Morally Good Guy. Next, I will show that states can be virtuous and thus should act in a virtuous manner. Since the Morally Good State seeks to maintain its morally good nature by being good and acting good, I will show how intervention is a good. Thus, the morally good state intervenes as a habitation of its good nature.

Are we a morally good state? Perhaps. We certainly like to believe we are. Most of the time, however, we consider ourselves a superpower—a name which often connotes ideas of power: military, political, and financial, and also abuse. Does this mean that as a morally good state we are a “good” superpower? Do we as the sole superpower have international obligations? I think the answer to both these questions is “yes.” The name “superpower” can entail obligation. But with this obligation comes the danger of over-involvement or even abuse of our influential role. I will discuss this superpower dilemma and its impact on our country’s decision to intervene.

Should we as a superpower even worry about intervention outside our sphere of national interests? Henry Kissinger raises several issues with the intervention in Bosnia and how there are differing perceptions about our international obligations.¹¹ I will show how we can adapt the perceptions of the role of a superpower and undertake those interventions obligated by our morally good character, our leadership role, and our resources.

¹¹ Henry A. Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, (New York: Touchtone Book, 1994). Kissinger’s book is a look at the history of diplomacy and the history of US diplomacy in particular as the struggle between Teddy Roosevelt’s national self-interest and Wilson’s idealism and democracy expansion. Kissinger’s last chapter, “The New World Order Reconsidered” focuses on (1) the question of future relationships with Russia as a focus of foreign policy and (2) the struggle for identity of a comprehensive foreign policy between interests and principles. It is this struggle and its effects on intervention policy that I question.

The Morally Good Guy¹²

I like to consider myself a good person. In fact, I would bet that most everyone reading this paper thinks of themselves as being good. Although we sometimes wish our children would behave well, stop tattling, or do the right thing, we really hope they grow to *be* a good person. I want my son to meet a *nice* person one day. But what does it mean to be a good person? Put another way, when we say X is a good person, what does the predicate “is a good person” mean?

If we adopted these same virtues as Aristotle for our MGG, we could say that “is a good person” is roughly equivalent to “is a person with virtues of courage, temperance, liberality, ...”

S’: ‘is a good person’ = ‘is a person with virtues of courage, temperance, and liberality...’

In a crude bastardizing of set symbology it might look like this:

S’’: X is a good person = X Σ {courage, temperance, and liberality, ...}

But are courage, temperance, and liberality the only virtues? Could there be others?

Other virtue ethicists have proposed other sets of virtues. Aristotle himself refers to a “catalogue of virtues” in Book II, Chapter 7. Christianity thought that faith, love, hope, prudence, fortitude, temperance, and justice were the virtues that should guide our lives; while wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice were thought of as virtues by Plato and others, and the virtues of courage, patience, and leniency are discussed by Mayo.¹³ We could also consider

¹² Morally Good Guy. The Morally Good Guy or MGG is a convention I adopted in 1999 to help teach virtue ethics in my undergraduate Introduction to Philosophy and Ethics class at the United States Military Academy. Although rather unsophisticated, the MGG formulation allows me to discuss the virtues themselves and enables the students to “picture” the golden mean, virtue and vice, and Aristotle’s point that each of us aims for these virtues as our being allows.

¹³ William Fankena, “A Critique of Virtue-Based Ethics,” in Ethics, 2d ed., (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1973) and Mayo, Ethics and the Moral Life.

benevolence, honesty, considerateness, or even beneficence. Although identifying which virtues make up the set of virtues for the MGG is an important task, we do not need to identify them here in order to look at some of the MGG's obligations. Let us assume that there are three and only three virtues that a morally good person needs to have; for this project the set of virtues necessary and sufficient for a MGG are I, J, and K.¹⁴ Thus,

MGG: X is a good person = X Σ {I, J, and K}

How then does the MGG come to possess these virtues? It is a matter of self-development. Furthermore, it is through this very process of self-development that the MGG becomes obligated. What obligates the MGG comes from the very virtues themselves because the person develops the virtues through habit, and habit entails performing some act or act type more than once. The MGG must do good to habituate good and to be good. Aristotle wrote

but the virtues we get by first exercising them,
For the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them,
; so too we become just by doing just acts, temperate by doing temperate acts,
brave by doing brave acts (Book II, 1103a27-1103b1).¹⁵

To be good it is necessary to do good. Or as BG Wakin might say, "the way to do is to be."¹⁶

As Aristotle suggests, this process of habituating virtue is not a quick process. Rather it requires a lifetime of developing a virtuous nature by performing virtuous acts. Only by consistently instantiating a virtue can one habituate oneself to it. Thus the MGG with a set of virtues {I, J, K, ...} must habituate the virtue of J; she must perform J-boosting acts. If A_j is a J-

¹⁴ I, J, and K are arbitrary virtues. Whatever virtues are necessary and sufficient for a MGG to be good is not vital for this project as long as we can assume that one (J in this case) exists.

¹⁵ Aristotle, (Book II, 1103a27-1103b1).

¹⁶ BG (Ret.) Malham M. Wakin, former chair of the United States Air Force Academy Philosophy Department.

boosting act available to X, and X can perform A_j , and there are no other J-boosting acts available to X, then X may be obligated to perform A_j .

“Aha,” one might ask, “what if X has more than one J-boosting acts available to her?”

The choice between acts is not unrealistic; in a lifetime, we are faced with countless of choices.

Yet, X must act to develop her J-virtue. Tony Pfaff writes,

[The MGG], when confronted with a choice, acts to instantiate the appropriate virtue. He does not calculate the effect instantiating this virtue will have. Being virtuous, in and of itself, is good. Being uncompromisingly committed to being trustworthy, courageous, etc. is then the only way to be sure that, ..., you are doing the right thing.¹⁷

The Morally Good State

According to Michael Smith, Aristotle (in 1252b27-1253a1) believed “... the goal of political organization is not merely to provide what is basic for survival. Rather, the goal of the political community is the good life: of attaining happiness, of engaging in virtuous actions, ..., and, in general, of showing the benefits which only life in common can provide.”¹⁸ If Aristotle’s idea is true—that the *raison d’état* of the political government is the well-being of the community—then it may be possible for morally good states to exist, ones who pursue the good life for their communities.

The key assumption here is that there is a correlation between states and individuals as responsible agents.¹⁹ Thus if states can be responsible as individuals are responsible, can we not

¹⁷ Charles A. Pfaff, “Virtue Ethics and Leadership” Presented at JSCOPE 1998, 12.

¹⁸ Michael Smith Human Dignity and the Common Good in the Aristotelian—Thomastic Tradition. Lewiston, NY: Millen University Press, 1995, 62.

¹⁹ The whole idea that states or other collective agency is highly contentious and has far reaching consequences. One way to look at the notion of states as collective agents is the theory of emerging states. (Thanks to a commentator at this year’s JSCOPE). There are others as well. Larry May lays out the difficulties inherent when discussing collective agency and an augment for collective responsibility in The Morality of Groups: Collective

say that “X is a good person” can equate to “X is a good state” when we increase scope?

Assuming MGSs exist, we modify MGG to reflect the change in scope from individual to state to get

MGS: X is a good state = X Σ {I, J, and K}

Thus a state must habituate and instantiate I-virtues, J-virtues, and K-virtues to be a MGS.²⁰ The MGS with a set of virtues {I, J, K, ...} must habituate the virtue of J; it must perform J-boosting acts. Much like the MGG, if X is a MGS, A_j is a J-boosting act available to X, and X can perform A_j , and there are no other J-boosting acts available to X, then X may be obligated to perform A_j .

Is Intervention a Good?

“The good has been well defined as that which all things aim.”²¹

You witness a mugging in an alley while walking downtown. An old man is lying on the ground yelling, “Help! I need help!” What do you do? Should you intervene? You were just walking along minding your own business. Suppose your only two alternatives are to either assist the injured man or continue walking past. If you stop to render assistance, you will be late to your destination, but you will also be helping the injured man. Yet, if you continue walking you might feel guilty. Are you obligated to intervene? Some argue that by ignoring the cries for help, you will be violating a right of the injured man—the right of assistance. Elfstrom says, “[You] will be criticized for violating the universal right of all individuals to receive assistance

Responsibility, Group-based Harm, and Corporate Rights, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987). Thus, I leave the debate for a different forum.

²⁰ I, J, and K are arbitrary virtues. Whatever virtues are necessary and sufficient for a MGS to be good is not vital for this project as long as we can assume that one (J in this case) involves intervention as a good.

²¹ Aristotle, NE Book 1 Chapter 1.

when they are in serious difficulty....”²² But what of the virtue of beneficence? Might being good entail being beneficent? Certainly, we view helping others as good and helping total strangers even more so. And wouldn’t helping the old man instantiate your being beneficent?

Normally, obligations from beneficence like the above scenario are discussed in terms of rights. The universal right to receive assistance is the foundation for the so-called “Good Samaritan Laws.” It has become illegal to pass an accident scene and not render some appropriate form of assistance. This right to receive assistance generates an obligation to all of us as witnesses or bystanders to a disaster, an accident, or to a crime.²³ As one commentator writes:

The story of the Good Samaritan is an example of the right of all individuals to receive assistance from others in time of need. The Good Samaritan’s obligation is the duty correlative to this right ... our obligation to assist those who are suffering violations of their rights is a sub-class of our general right to assistance in a time of need....²⁴

Under any other circumstances, the old man in the mugging example is obligated to look after himself. Thus, the intervening agent has no obligations to intervene in the man’s life while the man can care for himself. At any other time, the agent’s intervention might be considered interference in another’s affairs. However, because the old man was incapable of acting for himself, intervention on his behalf became the duty of the agent walking by.

The Samaritan only has a duty in this situation because the stranger obviously is not in a position to look after himself. [Normally,] it would be the duty and the prerogative of the stranger to look after himself, and it would be the normal duty of the Samaritan to refrain from interfering in his affairs. It is only because this

²² Elfstrom, 718.

²³ Additionally, recent legislation has focused on protecting Good Samaritans from unforeseen consequences when the intervention unintentionally causes additional injury.

²⁴ Elfstrom, 719.

normal circumstance has been overturned that it is no longer presumptuous but is instead the duty of the Samaritan to intercede in the vital affairs of the stranger.²⁵

One adopted convention in the discussion of ethics and moral behavior is the notion of rights, but I believe the discussion of rights is somewhat suspect. Rather, as we changed the focus from “What should I *do*?” to “What should I *be*?,” the above example illustrates the obligations of the MGG. We not only consider the Samaritan’s act good, we also consider her beneficent. The Samaritan renders aid because she is good. She is instantiating the virtue of beneficence—thereby aiming to the good.

Similarly, in the international community, states are normally obligated to refrain from interfering in one another’s affairs. However, should a state or a group of individuals lose their ability to protect themselves, the international community has an obligation to assist. A MGS’s beneficence obligates it to help. As the Samaritan was obligated to help the mugging victim, the MGS must render aid to the victims of the other state. Intervention becomes obligatory.

Obligation as a Just Cause²⁶

One problem with tying the development of virtue through habit to the act is the mindset of the individual acting. Merely performing the act accidentally is not enough to instantiate the virtue. The agent must be acting *to* instantiate the virtue. The Samaritan would not be beneficent if she were not in the mindset of being beneficent; the mindset must be aligned with the act. For example, a soldier inadvertently throwing a grenade and destroying an enemy bunker because he tripped is not being brave; his act does not instantiate his being brave. His

²⁵ Elfstrom, 719-20.

²⁶ For a full discussion of applying Just War tenets to interventions see David M. Barnes, “Interventions and the Just War Tradition,” in The Problem of Intervention, (University of Massachusetts, Amherst, 1999), presented at JSCOPE 2000.

fellow soldiers may think he is brave, but he was not *being* brave. Likewise, the corresponding intention is necessary for the MGG or MGS to instantiate being morally good. If conducting an intervention or declaring a war instantiates a good to aim for, then a MGS must have just cause.

A state can declare war only if the cause is just. Similarly, the international community must show just cause when it resorts to intervention in a sovereign state. Furthermore, I believe the suffering of the innocents is just cause for the international community to intervene. Additionally, if an operation was intended to keep warring factions apart (peacemaking) or enforce a peace settlement (peacekeeping), the cause would also be just.²⁷ Thus, for an intervention to have a just cause, the cause must meet one or more of the following: prevent genocide, prevent ethnic cleansing, prevent other serious human rights violations, or it must be undertaken for the purpose of peacemaking, peacekeeping, or providing a rapid method for distributing humanitarian aid. Applying the tenet of just cause will help ensure interventions are undertaken for the right reasons. Ensuring an intervention has just cause aligns the act and intention to the virtue the MGS is trying to instantiate.

The Superpower Dilemma.

Is the United States a MGS? Many in our country believe we are. Even so, some of our past actions could be called into question, and other countries are certainly quick to highlight our so-called abuses around the world. Aside from the issue of whether mistakes are sometimes allowed when perusing the good by habituating virtuous acts, perhaps being a good state means only looking after the interests your own community. Should these interests conflict with others, then too bad.

²⁷ For a further discussion see David Fisher's "Some Corner of a Foreign Field," in Some Corner of a Foreign Field: Intervention and World Order, ed. Roger Williamson (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 29.

Yet I think that this state-egoist view is too narrow for two reasons. First, completely ignoring the plight of others seems to fly in the face of the very founding ideals of our country. Certainly looking after the interest of the American citizens is the top priority, but it shouldn't be the only one. The U.S. Catholic Bishops wrote:

Geography and political divisions do not alter the fact that we are all one human family, and indifference to the suffering of numbers of that family is not a moral option.... [Furthermore,] military intervention may sometimes be justified to ensure that starving children can be fed or that whole populations will not be slaughtered.²⁸

Second, the United States is currently the only superpower or country with the political, economic, and military might to look after its interests just about anywhere in the world. These attributes allow the US to extend its policies beyond its borders, and with or without authority the US can (and does) intervene in the affairs of other states. To watch someone suffer when we have the wherewithal to prevent that harm seems incredulous. Walzer captures this point when he writes, "In the face of human disaster, however, internationalism has a more urgent meaning. It is not possible to wait; anyone who can take the initiative should do so. Active opposition to massacre and massive deportation is morally necessary; its risks must be accepted."²⁹

Nevertheless, the end of the Cold War left the United States as the sole superpower in the world. And on our shoulders seems to rest the economic future and political security of the world. Furthermore, both conservative and liberal administrations alike need to deal with these responsibilities now that they are reality. Even if we lose our standing as the sole superpower

²⁸ US Roman Catholic Bishop's Conference, The Harvest of Justice is Sown in Peace discussed in Roger Williamson, "An Ethical Framework – Or Just Intervention," in Some Corner of a Foreign Field, ed. Roger Williamson (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1998), 255.

²⁹ Michael Walzer, "The Politics of Rescue," Dissent (Winter 1995), 38.

due to the increased development of the European Union and China, there are few military operations in the world that do not have U.S. backing or at least tacit approval.

But our superpower stature does not guarantee our intervening, even when the costs to refuse are so high. For example we delayed and delayed our intervention in the Former Yugoslavia,³⁰ and we completely ignored the plight of hundreds of thousands in Rwanda. Also, because of the problems during the intervention in Somalia, fear over the inability or unwillingness to continue aid has caused a kind of paralysis in the international community. This type of paralysis has led the U.S. government and the UN to become victims of what is being termed the “Somalia syndrome.”

Michael Peceny identifies the problem of deciding when to intervene in Democracy at the points of Bayonets. He writes,

This is precisely the pattern of interventionist behavior that one should expect of any liberal state. Cultural values cause liberal states such as the United States to intervene in response to humanitarian crisis, human rights violations, and political tyranny in [like] states... . At the same time, however, the political constraints imposed by liberal institutions of governance make these states reluctant to use force or to pay high costs to achieve liberal goals. Thus, liberal values and liberal political institutions have somewhat contradictory impacts on military interventions.”³¹

However, it is this same debate over where to intervene and when to intervene that highlights that we still consider intervention a good and that we still consider ourselves a good state.

Nevertheless, we as a superpower need to exercise care. Certainly, the superpower has the ability to intervene, but what is to keep a superpower from intervening to further its own

³⁰ Richard Holbrooke, To End a War, (New York: Random House, 1998). Holbrooke offers a unique, in-depth study into the policy decisions involving the eventual commitment of US troops in Bosnia.

³¹ Michael Peceny, Democracy at the Point of Bayonets (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 1999), 180.

agenda?³² The answer quite simply is nothing but an equal or greater force. No, the superpower must aim for the good: countries committed to being MGS must instantiate those virtues that aim for the good—the mindset must be aligned with the act. As I mentioned, his fellow soldiers may think the clumsy soldier is brave, but he was not *being* brave.

The United States is a superpower. And although this power may wane in the future, being a superpower entails obligations; being a MGS and a superpower entail even more. Our actions have a widespread effect over the world. Indecision about intervention can be as damaging as any diplomatic misstep. Why are we obligated to intervene? Warren Christopher sums up the MGS's reasoning well; he says,

We cannot ignore the human toll. Serbian ethnic cleansing has been pursued through mass murders, systematic beating and ...rapes...prolonged shelling of innocents in Sarajevo and elsewhere, forced displacement of entire villages, inhumane treatment of prisoners in detention camps, the blockading of relief to sick and starving citizens.... Our conscience revolts at the idea of accepting such brutality.³³

Conclusion

In this paper I sought to show that if intervention is indeed a good, then good states will intervene because the states are de facto morally good. Furthermore, it seems that in some cases, states ought to intervene to continue to develop as a morally good state.

Are we a morally good state? I believe we are. I also believe that we as the sole superpower have international obligations. But we need to watch for the danger of over-involvement and abuses of our influential role.

³² Thanks to Dr. Thomas J. Nagy for bring this issue to my attention at last year's JSCOPE. Although he seemed to agree that states could be obligated to intervene, and superpowers had a special obligation based on their ability to project power, he was still concerned that a state that powerful could intervene for all the wrong reasons.

³³ Warren Christopher, "New Steps towards conflict resolution in the Former Yugoslavia." 10 Feb 93, U.S. State Department Dispatch 4(7). Quoted in Peceny, 170.

I agree with Kissinger that we need to clearly define our national interests. But I believe those interests will include periodic interventions. Even in a *Realpolitik* world our perceptions of the role of a superpower is changing, and we must undertake those interventions obligated by our morally good character.

When international atrocities are severe and the cost of ending the conflict outweighs the potential losses, there appears to be little strength in arguing for non-intervention. Nevertheless, there remains one formidable barrier to humanitarian intervention. Michael Howard writes, “The most difficult problems that now confront us are those not so much ethical or even military as political. Even if we accept that there is a duty to intervene, how do we in democracies generate the will to do so?”³⁴

Yes, the norm is not to intervene in other peoples’ countries; the norm is self-determination. But not for these people, the victims of tyranny, ideological zeal, ethnic hatred, who are not determining anything for themselves, who urgently need help from the outside. And it isn’t enough to wait until the tyrants, the zealots, and the bigots have done their filthy work and then rush food and medicines to the ragged survivors. Whenever the filthy work can be stopped, it should be stopped. And if not by us, the supposedly decent people of this world, then by whom?³⁵

The obligations for intervention by us and other MGSs will not end the human suffering and depredations. Yet, we as members of the international community must act. First, we must acknowledge that human suffering *is* our business. Then, only when we recognize that massive suffering constitutes a threat to international peace, will we universally condone interventions to stop the atrocities. Justified interventions will lead to the international community’s recognition that widespread indiscriminate killing is unacceptable and must be stopped. The MGSs committing forces now to stop these depredations will allow us to continue to grow as morally

³⁴ Michael Howard, “Introduction,” in *Some Corner of a Foreign Field: Intervention and World Order*, ed. Roger Williamson (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998), 12.

³⁵ Walzer, “The Politics,” 41.

good states, and intervening now will prevent us from having to commit troops later to repair a shattered peace.