

LIMITS TO ARMED INTERVENTION

LESSONS FROM AFRICA, THE MIDDLE EAST & AFGHANISTAN

OUTLINE

Many Canadians will contend that Western intervention in various crises, particularly in North Africa and Western Asia, have generated more harm than benefit. See, for instance, Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya, and now the semi-intervention against ISIS in Syria and Iraq. The result has been prolonged and escalated conflict, state failure and chronic agony for millions of civilians, plus fuel for a growing number of violent groups. Canada's role in these actions has varied and continues to change, but it remains part of the western alliance that continues to struggle with policies and actions that apparently do not lead to peaceful solutions for deeply troubled populations. Should the West have left these situations alone, should it have intervened in a different way or did it engage ineffectively or insufficiently? Are there lessons to be learned from crises in which the West did not intervene, for example Rwanda, Burundi and Darfur? What triggers the West's perceived need for intervention in the first place?

There are many avenues to intervention – military, diplomatic/political, economic, humanitarian – yet the West, and particularly the United States, has relied predominantly on the military response to crisis. Most will acknowledge that a strong, forceful intervention is sometimes required to prevent international aggression and the global community has given itself the instrumentation to do so, through the United Nations Security Council. Yet this means is rarely used and is not apt for cases of “internal aggression” by states against their own people. In such cases, the global regime for major conflict prevention and resolution has been failing, perhaps has rarely been effective.

What is the best approach in future? Under what circumstances is forceful intervention justified? What is its utility? How should it proceed? What other types of intervention should accompany it or replace it? Who decides? What are the lines around national sovereignty? Are regional actions preferable and how can they be made effective? When and how should the doctrine of the Responsibility to Protect be applied, if at all?

This theme and these questions will be explored in the Group of 78's annual policy conference, in Ottawa, September 23 & 24. The aim of the conference is to provide a forum for dispassionate analysis on the place of armed intervention in global geopolitics and to consider policy and action options particularly for the Canadian Government to consider.

PROGRAM

Friday, September 23, 6:00 p.m. **Keynote Address** at Army Officers Mess: 149 Somerset St W, Ottawa

Ernie Regehr: **Armed Intervention in the Post-Cold War Era – The Record & Issues**

Saturday, September 24, 9:00 a.m. **Panel 1** at Bruyère Center: 75 Bruyère St, Ottawa

Alternatives to Armed Intervention

To explore how potential crises can be spotted and addressed early & prevented; the political & diplomatic actions available and how to deploy them; economic sanctions as a non-violent pressure; lessons from the mismanagement of recent crises; the role for development programming and humanitarian assistance; “Do no harm”; disarmament & control of arm.

Panelists: 1. Gar Parady
2. Monia Mazigh

Moderator: Angela Mackay

11:15 a.m. **Panel 2**

Armed Intervention: If, why, when & how

To address the institutions and instruments designed for intervention and how they can be applied effectively; big power stalemates & the Security Council; the possible application of R2P; regional and non-Western approaches to crisis management; roles for the African Union, Regional Blocs, the Arab League; the role of NATO; dealing with terrorism; policing & security coordination.

Panelists: 1. Walter Dorn
2. Jane Boulden

Moderator: Peggy Mason

1:00 p.m. Lunch & Presentation

Manfred Bienefeld: **The Political Economy of the Looming Geopolitical Crisis**

Moderator: Richard Harmston

3:30 p.m. Conclusion

4:00 p.m. **Group of 78 Annual Meeting**

5:00 p.m. Adjournment