

## FOREIGN POLICY &amp; DEFENSE

## Black Hat Humanitarians

**THE SOURCE:** "Humanitarianism Transformed" by Michael Barnett, in *Perspectives on Politics*, Dec. 2005.

FOR MORE THAN A CENTURY AFTER Henry Dunant founded the International Red Cross in 1863, the principles of humanitarian aid were plain. Most humanitarian groups devoted themselves to the "impartial, independent, and neutral provision of relief" to the victims of natural disaster or war, carefully avoiding involvement in political questions of any kind. That all began to change during the 1990s, according to Michael Barnett, a political scientist at the University of Minnesota. Today, "the purpose of humanitarianism is becoming politicized, and the organization of humanitarianism is becoming institutionalized."

Traditional humanitarianism has obvious limitations. In steering clear of politics and insisting on simply serving

the afflicted, humanitarian groups pass up the opportunity to address the root causes of human suffering. In any case, change may have been unavoidable, writes Barnett. The end of the Cold War brought a slew of humanitarian crises around the world, from Rwanda to Kosovo. At the same time, governments became more willing to engage in or subsidize humanitarian efforts; their outlays tripled during the 1990s, reaching \$6 billion and producing a bumper crop of aid-giving nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).

Some humanitarian agencies were ambivalent, but a partnership seemed to make sense. A few, such as Oxfam and Save the Children, had already made the leap into politics. "Many lobbied states to apply military and political muscle to stop the bloodletting. . . . Agencies occasionally sought outside intervention to provide armed protection to help deliver relief." Worthy causes, perhaps, but Barnett thinks the results were disastrous: "Humanitarian principles were completely shattered in places like Kosovo, Afghanistan, and

Iraq, where many agencies were funded by the very governments that were combatants and thus partly responsible for the emergency."

As humanitarian groups began accepting money from governments, they found strings attached. In Kosovo, NATO insisted on "coordinating" relief efforts. In Iraq, the United States has put relief organizations under pressure to "show the American flag." As one NGO official put it, the choice has become to "play the tune or they'll take you out of the band." Increasingly, grant-giving governments even play a role in determining which countries receive humanitarian aid, with places where few major powers have interests, such as Sudan, Congo, and Uganda, getting short shrift.

Swelling budgets and government involvement have also fostered a new institutional culture in the humanitarian world, with a growing emphasis on formal systems of rules and measuring results. "Rising concerns with efficiency in getting 'deliverables' to 'clients' hinted of a growing corporate culture," notes Barnett, prompting some in the field to wonder why private firms couldn't just as well be hired to carry out the work. And, like other bureaucratic organizations, the humanitarian agencies became increasingly preoccupied with institutional self-preservation and responsiveness to funders, further compromising their disinterestedness.

Two big questions of self-identity face humanitarian groups. Now that so many are large organizations, with bureaucratic interests of their own and budgets sometimes rivaling those of the governments in the countries where they work, can they continue to insist that they operate strictly on behalf of the unfortunate? And as they intervene



Red Cross workers evacuate children from a Rwandan hospital under attack in 1994. Such conflicts have made it difficult for humanitarian relief organizations to maintain their historical policies of neutrality.

Archive password: SWALLOW

in the politics of developing countries, can they still claim to be disinterested representatives of humanity, or are they, as a growing number of critics in those countries claim, merely part of an effort to impose Western values on the world?

Humanitarianism, in other words, doesn't seem to be wearing a snow-white hat anymore.

FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

## A 'Realistic Wilsonianism'

**THE SOURCE:** "After Neoconservatism" by Francis Fukuyama, in *The New York Times Magazine*, Feb. 19, 2006.

WHEN THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION ends three years from now, so, in all likelihood, will the effective life of neo-

conservatism, the ideology that inspired the war in Iraq. Francis Fukuyama, the onetime neoconservative oracle, writes that neoconservatism "has evolved into something I can no longer support." But it would be "a huge tragedy" if, in reaction to neoconservative overreaching in Iraq, America retreats from the Wilsonian ideals of democracy and human rights that the movement embodied and embraces instead either isolationism or "narrow and cynical" Kissingerian foreign-policy "realism."

"The problem with neoconservatism's agenda lies not in its ends, which are as American as apple pie, but rather in the overmilitarized means by which it has sought to accomplish them," Fukuyama argues.

The "war against terrorism," for example, is the wrong name and the

wrong concept for what must be a long-term struggle for the "hearts and minds of ordinary Muslims around the world." Contrary to what many "realists" argue, it is in America's interest to continue to promote good governance abroad:

Democracy, the rule of law, and economic development are "critical to a host of outcomes we desire, from alleviating poverty to dealing with pandemics to controlling violent conflicts." Yet the United States shouldn't imagine that it can impose democracy where it is not wanted; it can only cultivate favorable conditions.

Contrary to neoconservative hopes, democracy and modernization in the Middle East will not solve the problem of jihadist terrorism. In the short run, they will likely exacerbate tensions, as Hamas's victory in the recent Palestinian

EXCERPT

## The Shame of Darfur

*During the Holocaust, the world looked the other way. Allied leaders turned down repeated pleas to bomb the Nazi extermination camps or the rail lines leading to them, and the slaughter attracted little attention. My newspaper, The New York Times, provided meticulous coverage of World War II, but of 24,000 front-page stories published in that period only six referred on page one directly to the Nazi assault on the Jewish population of Europe. Only afterward did many people mourn the death of Anne Frank, construct Holocaust museums, and vow: Never Again.*

*The same paralysis occurred as Rwandans were being slaughtered in 1994. Officials from Europe to the U.S. to the UN headquarters all responded by temporizing and then, at most, by holding meetings. The only thing President Clinton did for Rwandan genocide victims was issue a magnificent apology after they were dead.*

*Much the same has been true of the Western response to the Armenian genocide of 1915, the Cambodian genocide of the 1970s, and the Bosnian massacres of the 1990s. In each case, we have wrung our hands afterward and offered the lame excuse that it all happened too fast, or that we didn't fully comprehend the carnage when it was still under way.*

*And now the same tragedy is unfolding in Darfur, but this time we don't even have any sort of excuse. In Darfur genocide is taking place in slow motion, and there is vast documentary proof of the atrocities. . . .*

*In my years as a journalist, I thought I had seen a full kaleidoscope of horrors, from babies dying of malaria to Chinese troops shooting students to Indonesian mobs beheading people. But nothing prepared me for Darfur, where systematic murder, rape, and mutilation are taking place on a vast scale, based simply on the tribe of the victim. What I saw reminded me why people say that genocide is the worst evil of which human beings are capable.*

—NICHOLAS KRISTOF, columnist for *The New York Times*, in *The New York Review of Books* (Feb. 9, 2006)