

A Brief History of Post-Cold War US Intervention

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Why Are We Talking about This?

- There are a lot of bad men in the world.
- The United States has a lot of military power and is (or at least pretends to be) slightly idealist.
- Why don't we kick a little more dictator butt?

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- Why don't we kick a little more dictator butt?
- Answer: Wars are costly, particularly this specific type of intervention.

Preview

- Vietnam (Prologue)
- Iraq (Part 1)
- Somalia
- Rwanda
- Serbia
- Afghanistan
- Iraq (Part 2)
- Libya
- Syria (?)

Vietnam

- The United States' last major engagement before Afghanistan/Iraq.
- Fought to prop up a democratic government (South Vietnam) against communism.
- Epic failure: 58,000 dead, 300,000 wounded; US exited in 1973; South Vietnam fell in 1975.
- Sparked huge anti-war movement.

Iraq (1991)

- US went 18 years before another major engagement.
- Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990.
- UN was not happy; large coalition strikes back.
- Massive success: US lost only 300 soldiers, most due to *accidents*; Iraq had more than 20,000 casualties; Kuwait freed.
- We did *not* pursue Saddam Hussein, however.

Somalia (1993)

- Somalia was (and is) a...mess.
- The US sent a small contingent of soldiers to arrest Mohammad Farrah Aidid, a warlord inhibiting UN humanitarian aid.
- Failure: 18 dead; Americans at home wonder why we were even over there.
- *Black Hawk Down* is based on this battle.

Rwanda (1994)

- Rwanda has two major ethnic groups: Hutu (84%) and Tutsi (15%).
- Juvénal Habyarimana, president of Rwanda in 1994, dies in a suspicious plane crash.
- Leads to Hutu slaughtering of Tutsis.
- After Somalia, US looked the other way.
- *Hotel Rwanda* takes place during the genocide.

Serbia (1999)

- Slobodan Milošević is a bad person and enjoyed killing people who weren't Serbian.
- His latest target: Kosovars, an ethnic minority in Serbia.
- US took care of business: Kosovo (eventually) becomes an independent republic; Milošević loses an election in 2001, tries to resist, fails, and eventually gets shipped to the Hague.

Afghanistan (2001-Today)

- Note to dictators: if you want to stay in power, don't aid and abet people who attack the United States...
- ...but winning the war is not the same as winning the peace.

Iraq (2003-2011)

- This time, we actually went for Saddam Hussein, who was captured on December 13, 2003.
- But winning the war is still not the same as winning the peace.

Libya (2011)

- Muammar Gaddafi had been a stylish (but still evil) dictator since 1979.
- Uprising starts in early 2011.
- Gaddafi cracks down.
- NATO installs a no-fly zone and “defensively” attacks key Libyan military outposts.
- Months later, rebels take the capital.

Syria (2011)

- Bashar al-Assad is another bad person.
- Ongoing uprising in Syria; lots of deaths.
- Western powers not really doing much.
 - Our best hope: al-Assad's wife nags him into submission.

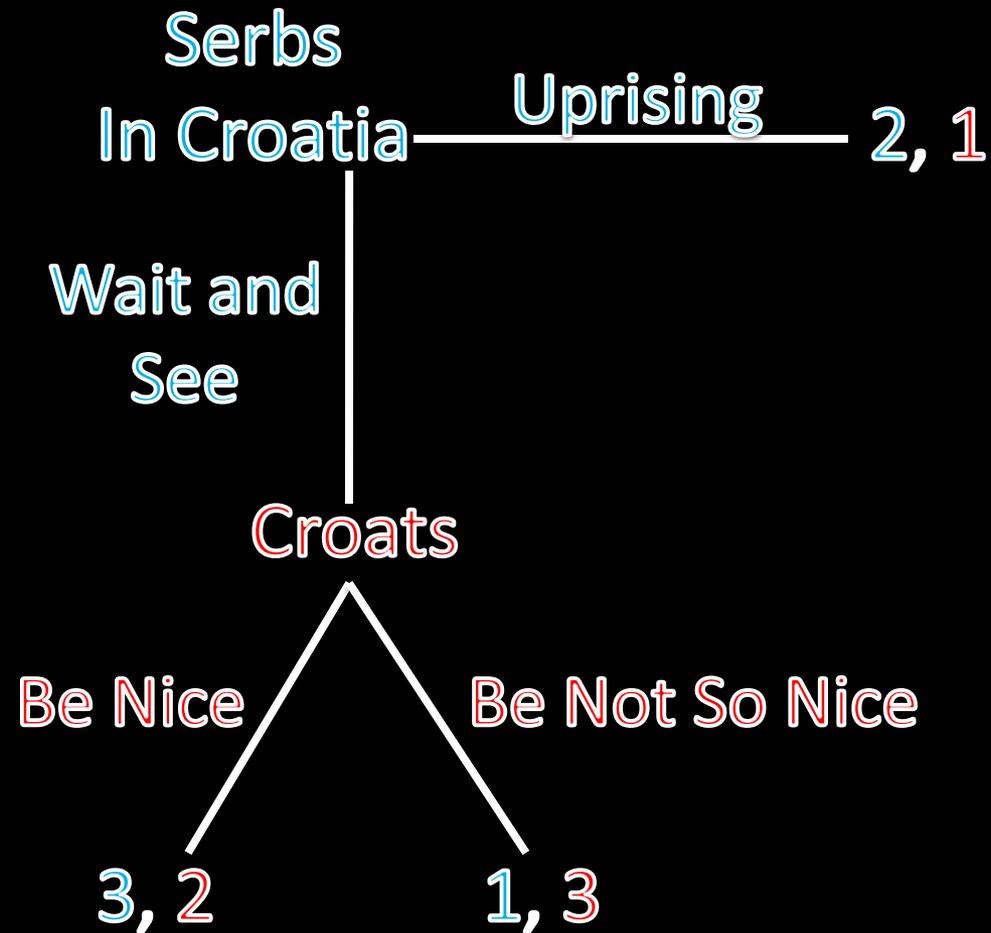
Why Don't We Intervene More?

- Cost is the obvious answer.
 - Not all wars can be fought as cheaply as the Libyan intervention was.
 - The US simply does not have the resources to intervene everywhere every time.
- But these types of wars have a particular problem...

Critical Barrier to Civil War Settlement

- Civil wars ultimately leave power in the hands of one side.
- Thus, there is a *commitment problem*.
 - The victor cannot guarantee an equitable peace to the loser.
 - In turn, the losing side has incentive to continue fighting even if it is very unlikely to win.

**Commitment
Problem**



Critical Barrier to Civil War Settlement

- Barbara Walter (1997) explains the critical barrier to civil war settlement.





Walter

Walters



Critical Barrier to Civil War Settlement

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- Warring sides need a third party to enforce the terms of the settlement.
- But, to be credible, the third parties actually have to care enough about the issues to be willing to pay costs of war.

Critical Barrier to Civil War Settlement

- The US cares enough about the short term, but we don't care enough about the long term.
 - Afghanistan/Iraq: Easy to win, hard to ensure the post-war government is significantly better than the previous one.
- Rebels strategize accordingly.