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BOSNIA AND SOMALIA: STRATEGIC, LEGAL, AND MORAL DIMENSIONS OF HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTION

Many legal scholars favor intervention against states that perpetrate massive human rights violations; their arguments are based upon moral principles and international standards of justice. But at present, policymakers and government leaders often allow their political interests to outweigh these other considerations. In affirming respect for the sovereignty of states, they fail to acknowledge that sovereignty is not necessarily absolute, and they ignore other provisions of international law that in some situations should be given priority. This short-sighted position has prevented the United States and Western Europe from mounting an effective cooperative effort to deal with the Bosnian conflict.

A number of newspaper columnists have contributed to the paralysis. Aware that the crisis in Bosnia has reached a point where a military commitment would be required to end the campaign of ethnic cleansing, they evoke the image of young Americans dying for the sake of nebulous policy objectives. But the sensible way to meet this concern is not to rule out intervention, but rather to insist that it combine precise policy goals, clear strategic objectives, and tactics that are suited to the desired end-

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