

CHAPTER NINE

INVADING THE POOR

As our commerce spreads, the flag of liberty will circle the globe and the highway of the ocean—carrying trade to all mankind—will be guarded by the guns of the republic. And as their thunders salute the flag, benighted peoples will know that the voice of liberty is speaking, at last, for them...that civilization is dawning at last, for them.

UNITED STATES SENATOR ALFRED BEVERIDGE, 189.¹

THE NEO-IMPERIALISM of the previous chapter has been possible only because of another important aspect of the Western quest to save the poor, military force. The U.S. Army occupies Iraq and Afghanistan to spread democracy and capitalism and create benevolent states. The U.S. government justifies its military interventions to promote development as part of the “war on terror,” “nation-building,” or “regime change.”

In post-invasion Iraq, the U.S.-led Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) in 2003 drew up one of the most radical free-market reforms ever attempted anywhere. Stanford economist John McMillar likened it to the “big-bang” free-market programs that had failed in the ex-Communist countries. *The Economist* wrote in 2003 that the intention of the CPA for Iraq was to “abruptly transform its economy into a virtual free trade zone.”² Naomi Klein wrote in September 2004 in *Harper’s* magazine about the attempt to transform Iraq from the blank slate of post-invasion “Year Zero” into a “neoliberal utopia.” CPA chief Paul Bremer announced the layoffs of five hundred thousand soldiers and state workers, the privatization of two hundred state enterprises, no restrictions on foreign investment in the nonoil sector, minimal taxes, and no import tariffs. USAID gave a contract in 2003 to the KPMG consulting firm Bearing Point to create a free market from scratch in Iraq. A twenty-four-year-old American named Jay Hallen was put in charge of launching Iraq’s new stock exchange. A twenty-one-year-old college senior named Scott Erwin, a former intern to Dick Cheney, wrote home that he was “assisting Iraqis in the management of finances and budgeting for the domestic security forces.”³ This is what structural adjustment looks like when it has an army and a navy.

Harvard historian Niall Ferguson suggested in a 2001 book (and quoted this suggestion again in his 2004 book) that:

the United States should be devoting a larger percentage of its vast resources to making the

*world safe for capitalism and democracy...the proper role of an imperial America is to establish these institutions where they are lacking, if necessary...by military force.... Imposing democracy on all the world's "rogue states" would not push the U.S. defense budget much above 5 percent of GDP. There is also an economic argument for doing so, as establishing the rule of law in such countries would pay a long-run dividend as their trade revived and expanded.*⁴

If it were not for the U.S. Army trying to promote economic development, it would seem presumptuous for me as an economist to comment on military interventions. Yet even without recent rhetoric, military intervention is too perfect an example of what this book argues you should *not* do—have the West operate on other societies with virtually *no* feedback or accountability. The military is even more insulated from the interests of the poor than aid agencies are. People don't give reliable feedback at gunpoint. Invading soldiers and covert destabilization are not great ways to ascertain local peoples' interests. The poor on the receiving end have few votes on whether they want the Americans to save them. Military interventionists are inherently Planners; armies do not have Searchers.

Economists must protest against military policies when they make it even more unlikely that Western economic assistance will achieve benefits for the poor. During the Guatemalan civil war, USAID gave aid to train rural leaders in order to give more political voice to peasants. At the same time, the CIA supported the military's counterinsurgency campaign, which suppressed peasant activism in the name of fighting the Marxist guerillas. A later study found that the U.S.-trained Guatemalan military murdered more than 750 of the U.S.-trained rural leaders.

This chapter will ask questions such as: Did this military intervention done by Planners promote peace, democracy, and development? Were our guys the good guys? I use a mixture of episode analysis and case studies to shed light on these questions.

Cold War

The laboratory this chapter will use to study such interventions is the cold war. Various American presidents felt they had to fight the cold war in poor countries. Anyone fighting a Soviet-backed regime was a "freedom fighter" to be supported by American military aid. Some regimes considered too sympathetic to the Soviets were overthrown through CIA engineering.

I focus on the cold war because the interventions are old enough for an evaluation of long-run consequences. People who discuss military intervention today often dismiss the cold war as an aberration. Today advocates of Western military intervention see it as trying to introduce democratic capitalism. In the cold war, by contrast, the Americans tried to convince third world nations that a better system than communism was...democratic capitalism. In the bad old days of the cold war, Americans embraced some dictators as allies. In today's war on terror, the Americans embrace some dictators as allies. The various military interventions of the United States even involve some of the same people: for example, Vice-President Dick Cheney was chief of staff to Gerald Ford during the Angola intervention of 1975, and was influential as a congressional leader in support of the Contras in Nicaragua and Jonas Savimbi in Angola in the 1980s. John Negroponte was on the front line of the war against Nicaragua Contras as U.S. ambassador to Honduras in 1981–85 and was U.S.

ambassador to Iraq in 2004–5. Perhaps the cold war experience offers some lessons for today. I will briefly review today’s humanitarian military interventions at the end of the chapter to see if they are a dramatic improvement on cold war interventions.

The advocates of American military intervention during the cold war had good intentions. Communism *was* an evil economic and political system. The Soviets did their own meddling in poor countries, which *could* have required meddling by the Americans in response. Perhaps military action *may* have been necessary to get rid of some evil governments imposed by the Soviets.

However, even political opponents of evil governments show little gratitude for American invasion to modernize them. I won’t comment on how necessary military intervention was for American security or for winning the cold war, just as I have nothing to say about whether today’s military interventions are necessary for American national security. I *will* comment on the consequences of cold war interventions for the poor countries themselves, which may have some lessons on the likely consequences of today’s military interventions. Given the reality that the White Man’s Burden weights the interests of the rich more than the poor, slight benefits for the West were enough to justify high costs to the Rest. The following list will help get us started:

<i>Intervention</i>	<i>Negative consequences</i>	<i>Silver lining for United States</i>
Vietnam War, 1961–1975	Fifty-eight thousand American dead; Communists still rule Vietnam; one of poorest countries in world; millions of Vietnamese dead	Explosion of Vietnamese restaurants in the United States
Cambodia, 1970–1973; support of pro-American military ruler; American invading and bombing	Khmer Rouge genocide; Vietnamese invasion; today one of poorest, most corrupt, most tyrannized nations	Cambodian food is good, too
Arming mujahadeen against Soviets in Afghanistan from 1979 on	Civil war and chaos in Afghanistan continued after Soviets withdrew; destabilization of Pakistan; former mujahadeen supported perpetrators of September 11 attacks	CIA got practice for when it had to fight mujahadeen after September 11

<i>Intervention</i>	<i>Negative consequences</i>	<i>Silver Lining for United States</i>
CIA-backed coup in Guatemala in 1954	Decades of civil war and death squads; genocide against Indian population	Market for Guatemalan handicrafts boomed in United States
Korean War, 1950–1953	2.5 million Koreans killed in North and South; left behind rogue state of North Korea, the only nation that can achieve famine and a nuclear arsenal at the same time	Thank God for American ally South Korea!
CIA-backed coup in Iran in 1953	Shah's tyranny; Khomeini revolution; hostage crisis; Iran still ruled by clerics seeking nuclear weapons	Talented Iranian exiles became available to work in international organizations run by United States
Backing Liberian dictator 1945–1985 with massive foreign aid in return for American military base and Voice of America broadcasting station	Liberia collapses after 1985 into horrific and violent anarchy under born-again warlord Charles Taylor, who also fueled civil wars in Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire	American television evangelist Pat Robertson could pursue lucrative business deals with Mr. Taylor
Backing Haile Selassie in Ethiopia against Soviet-backed Somalia	Military overthrows Selassie and aligns itself with Soviets; two decades of civil war; Ethiopia still one of poorest countries in world	Live Aid concert to help Ethiopia in 1985 gave valuable experience to Live 8 musicians to help Africa twenty years later
Switching to backing Somalia against Soviet-backed Ethiopia	Devastation of Ethiopia-Somalia with war and famine; collapse of Somali state and descent into chaos; fiasco of American intervention of 1994	<i>Rach Hakim Dewar</i> was great book and movie
Backing army of El Salvador against Marxist rebels in 1980s	Twelve-year civil war kills seventy thousand; right-wing death squads rape and murder such dangerous guerrillas as American Catholic nuns	Salvadoran refugees became cheap housekeepers for desperate housewives
Backing Contras in Nicaragua against Soviet-backed Sandinistas in 1980s	Civil war in Nicaragua with atrocities on both sides; Nicaraguan economy destroyed by corrupt leftists	Corrupt leftists thrown out in 1990, so now have corrupt rightists

<i>Intervention</i>	<i>Negative consequences</i>	<i>Silver Lining for United States</i>
Assassination of Lumumba; support for pro-Western Mobutu in Zaire	Mobutu loots billions; collapse of state; civil war with intervention by virtually all of Zaire's neighbors; abysmal poverty	Needed stimulus to American and Swiss banking industry
Backing Jonas Savimbi against Soviet-backed Angolan government in 1975 and again in 1980s	Government wins anyway; civil war continues after Soviets and Cubans leave and American aid ends; Savimbi is power-hungry warlord; land mines outnumber people; spectacular misery today despite great mineral wealth	Can't think of any

Let me be a little more systematic and document how much peaceful democratic capitalism these countries have today. As of 2004, the typical nation described in table 8 was in the bottom 15 percent on democracy, the bottom 18 percent on rule of law, the bottom 22 percent on economic freedom. Statistically, the cold war countries in table 8 have far worse institutional outcomes than other developing countries on all six dimensions that World Bank researchers measured in 2004: democracy, political stability, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law, and corruption.

There is a selection problem with cold war interventions, just as there is in other aspects of the White Man's Burden. The countries the Americans selected for intervention during the cold war were already messed up—they were already at war, already under the threat or reality of Communist revolution, or might have been at war anyway without American intervention. Moreover, since both sides of the cold war intervened in many of these cases, it's hard to tell if it's the Americans' or the

Communists' fault that the countries wound up how they did. But, remember, Americans say we *won* the cold war. Whose victory is it when most of the poor countries where (and allegedly, on whose behalf) the Americans fought the cold war are still in such bad shape? A cursory reading of table 8 makes it hard to believe that things would have been even *worse* without American intervention.

Still, to try to get beyond the limitations of a superficial survey of interventions and outcomes, I turn to two more detailed case studies to see how American intervention worked out.

NICARAGUA

You...will know how to read the bitterness in my verses.... my grief for remote memories and black misfortunes...

NICARAGUAN POET RUBEN DARIO, "NOCTURNE," TRANSLATED BY
LYSANDER KEMP, 1983

Both the Right and the Left adopted the Contra war in Nicaragua in the 1980s as one of their defining achievements. To the Right, Reagan's support for the "freedom fighters" eventually forced the Communist Sandinistas from power, achieving a victory in the last days of the cold war. The Left saw itself as successful in cutting off Reagan's military aid for the thugs murdering the Nicaraguan peasants. Soon after the cutoff, the Contra war in Nicaragua ended. In the left's view, the heroic nationalists, the Sandinistas, stayed in power until they surrendered it voluntarily after losing an election. Both the Left and the Right were correct about part of the situation—the Left that the United States should not have intervened, and the Right that the Soviet-backed Sandinistas were bad. Conversely, neither the American Left nor the Right was well qualified to decide for Nicaraguans what was best for them—the Left wished the Sandinistas on them, while the Right wished on them the equally appalling Contras. Nicaragua was left only with the kind of woes described decades earlier by its national poet Darío.

Cold War in Quilalí

None of the conservatives or liberals in Washington had ever heard of Quilalí, a small municipality in the mountains of northeastern Nicaragua, near the Honduran border. During the war, a CIA-supplied land mine laid by the Contras, whom Reagan called "the moral equal of our Founding Fathers," blew up a passenger bus in Quilalí. Seventeen people died: ten men, two women, and five children. The youngest victim was four-month-old Juan Carlos Peralta. At the wake in Quilalí relatives surrounded the table on which Juan's corpse was laid out, wrapped in a white cloth. Flowers surrounded his body and a candle burned at his feet. His father could not attend the wake—he had died when the Contra land mine blew up the bus. Juan Carlos Peralta's mother could not attend

either—the same explosion had left her in critical condition.⁵

The killing of innocents was not an accident. The human rights organization Americas Watch in the 1980s talked about abuses by both Sandinistas and Contras, but singled out the Contras for the “deliberate use of terror” in the countryside. This terror campaign included sowing CIA-supplied land mines without regard for civilian lives. The Contras wanted to bring home to the peasants that the Sandinistas had brought a war upon them and could not protect them. Not all Contra violence was at a distance; the Contras executed on the spot any civilian associated with the Sandinistas, including schoolteachers and coffee bean pickers.

A lot of the Contras’ military victories consisted of overrunning peasant cooperatives, when their spies indicated the enemy soldiers were away, and opening up on the dwellings with AK-47s. Inés Delgado remembers the attack on El Coco cooperative in Quilalí on December 18, 1983 “People were killed when they ran out of ammunition and the Contras slit their throats. They sprayed gunfire inside one house and killed the children hiding under the bed. They cut out the eyes of a visiting doctor.⁶

The American government knew about Contra atrocities. Somehow they needed the homicidal Contras to defend against the “mounting danger” to the “security of the United States.⁷ The president did not specify how this nation of 3.4 million people with an average annual income of \$420 could threaten the world’s most powerful nation, although he did mention they might “interdict our vital Caribbean sea lanes” (impoverished Communists hassling cruise ships?⁸

The bereaved family of the infant Juan Carlos Peralta could have sympathized with their neighbors in Quilalí, the Galeano family. During the war, State Security agents of the Sandinista government took away the Galeanos’ adult son, Catalino Galeano, from the family home in Quilalí. He was never seen again. This disappearance was not the only one that happened during the Sandinista years. The Sandinistas, idealized as nationalists by the American and European Left invested a lot in their State Security apparatus, with Cuban, Soviet, and North Korean advice. The former dictator Somoza had about three hundred secret police; the Sandinistas had more than three thousand.⁹

The Galeano family in Quilalí was unpopular with State Security (the national head of which was the aptly named Lenin Cerna) because it included many Contra sympathizers. The clan had ever more Contra sympathizers after Francisco Galeano, who had fought with the Sandinistas against Somoza, was arrested by State Security, tortured at a prison known as La Perrera, and castrated after watching his wife being gang-raped by their captors. Juan Carlos Peralta and Catalino Galeano of Quilalí were two of the 30,865 Nicaraguans who died during the Contra war.¹⁰

Contrary to the legend of the American Left that the Contras were CIA mercenaries from the ranks of the former National Guard, the Contras had significant popular support in the northeastern mountains (despite their violence against civilians). Besides the land question, the population’s grievances included forced sales to the state of their grains and livestock at cheap prices (nice to maintain cheap food for those more politically influential people in the cities) and long lines for rationed goods that were often unavailable (the hallmark of Soviet economic systems everywhere).

However, the Left was right that the CIA made a bad situation worse. Injecting lethal weapons into this fracas was not a great boon to the people of Nicaragua. According to one of the founding Contras, the CIA made them “capable of inflicting great harm on Nicaragua.” The CIA trained the Contras “in guerrilla warfare, sabotage, demolitions, and in the use of...assault rifles, machine guns, mortars, grenade launchers, and...Claymore mines.” The CIA accomplished this even though CIA/

director William Casey mangled the name of the country, saying something like “Nicawawa,” prompting an outburst from an aide: “You can’t overthrow the government of a country whose name you can’t pronounce!”¹¹

President Ronald Reagan’s vision of Central America didn’t reflect reality in the mountains: “In the rest of this century is to witness the gradual growth of freedom and democratic ideals, we must take actions to assist the campaign for democracy.... Since the exodus from Egypt, historians have written of those who sacrificed and struggled for freedom—the stand at Thermopylae, the revolt of Spartacus, the storming of the Bastille, the Warsaw uprising in World War II.”¹²

Reagan got Congress to approve making war on the Sandinistas only to interfere with Sandinista arms supplies to the Marxist guerrillas in El Salvador. Congress even passed an amendment (the Boland Amendment) to the covert aid bill that forbade American assistance “for the purpose of overthrowing the government of Nicaragua.” So Congress gave aid to Contras, whose purpose was overthrowing the government of Nicaragua.¹³

Double-talk continued to characterize the Contra question in the U.S. Congress. After further political debate on Contra aid, the Senate reached a compromise on “humanitarian aid” for the Contras. The solons’ creative definition of “humanitarian” included trucks, helicopters, and communications gear,” as long as this equipment was not “used to inflict serious bodily harm or death.”

According to author Lynn Horton, whose brilliant work is the source of much of the material on Quilalí here, cooperatives were not the place to be in Quilalí. The Sandinistas resettled peasants from the mountains to join self-defense militias for the Sandinista cooperatives in the valleys.¹⁴ On July 28, 1986, forty Contras attacked one river valley co-op after they got word that the army was away on mission. They killed six residents, including three children, and wounded twenty-five. Repelled by this kind of humanitarian initiative, Congress finally cut off aid to the Contras in 1987. The cutoff had more to do with the Reagan administration’s misbehavior in the Iran-Contra Affair than the Contras’ misbehavior.

President Oscar Arias of Costa Rica negotiated a peace plan for Nicaragua (with support from other Central American presidents), for which he received the Nobel Peace Prize. As part of the deal the Sandinistas agreed to democratic elections, which both they and impartial international observers thought they would win.

But the Nicaraguan people and the people of Quilalí were not fans of schoolboy socialism and never-ending war. In the February 25, 1990, elections, the candidate of the united opposition, Violeta Barrios de Chamorro, the widow of a martyr in the struggle against Somoza, carried 55 percent of the popular vote against Daniel Ortega’s 41 percent.

Postwar Quilalí

Between May and September 1990, about five hundred ex-Contras and one thousand civilian families returned to Quilalí from their refuge in Honduras. The Organization of American States provided some aid to ex-Contras, such as kitchen utensils, tools, zinc roofs, and cash payments of fifty dollars. The ex-Contras found a Quilalí where, partly through their own actions, the infrastructure was ruined and about one third of the land lay fallow. The war had killed 300 Quilalí residents, leaving behind 900 widows and orphans. Another 185 were permanently handicapped. In a 1991 survey, only 23 percent of Quilalí’s people drank milk regularly and 30 percent ate any kind of meat, while 70

percent lived in overcrowded housing (defined as 4 to 10 people sleeping in the same room). Nearly half of the people over age ten were illiterate; only half of the children attended elementary school.¹⁵

Chamorro didn't keep a promise of land grants to the ex-Contras. Nor did the United States show interest in the plight of their former allies. The ex-combatants, with their usual directness, took matters into their own hands. In Quilalí, twenty-five families of ex-Contras invaded lands of the Panali cooperative on February 18, 1991, saying they were claiming the plots of land the government had promised them during demobilization. Cooperative members confronted them, and there was a standoff between two groups of peasants armed with machetes. Years later, the conflict was still not resolved, and the ex-Contras continued their occupation of the land. They couldn't get bank loans since they didn't possess land titles. The co-op members who lost their lands to the ex-Contras didn't get any compensation.¹⁶

This episode was symptomatic of the confused land question on a national scale. Pre-revolutionary owners of expropriated land, cooperative members, ex-Contras, ex-Sandinistas, and speculators who had bought land from any of the above, competed for the same plots of land. The Chamorro government confused things even more with its own land reform program. Ex-Contras, ex-Sandinistas, and even mixtures of the two again took up arms in some parts of the countryside to agitate for land. The IMF in 2003 summarized this situation as "inadequate protection of property rights."¹⁷ With such uncertainty about who owned the land, agricultural production did not rebound strongly after the new government took power.

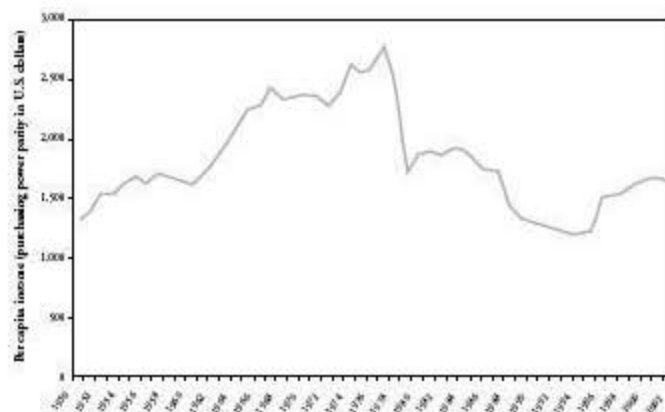


Fig. 30. Nicaragua Per Capita Income, 1950–2002

Economic growth in Nicaragua in the post-revolutionary era, while at least not as calamitous as it was under the Sandinistas, was anemic (see figure 30).

Nicaragua failed to recover despite the boatloads of aid money that arrived in the nineties: aid inflows averaged 40 percent of Nicaragua's income from 1990 to 1999. The World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank, and the International Monetary Fund once again offered their assistance (they had withdrawn in the early 1980s under heavy American pressure—the World Bank refers to Sandinista misrule and American intervention as "economic and political disarray in the 1980s").¹⁸

Nicaraguan politics remain chaotic. Of the first two post-Sandinista presidents, Violeta Chamorro and Arnoldo Alemán, the much-abused Nicaraguans say, "It took the Sandinistas twelve years to make a saint of Somoza; it took Violeta only five years to make saints of the Sandinistas; Alemán has needed only two years to make a saint of Violeta."¹⁹

Daniel Ortega lost two more presidential elections after he lost to Chamorro. The curren

president, Enrique Bolaños, put his predecessor, Alemán, in jail for gross corruption. The IMF in 2003 said Nicaragua's problem was one of "weak governance and rule of law" and "an inefficient public sector."²⁰

As we pursue new interventions for the war on terror, Americans have largely forgotten the land in which one of the most famous standoffs of the cold war took place.

ANGOLA

How many dead in this war? How many homes abandoned, how many refugees in neighboring countries, how many separated families? For what? When I think of all the suffering, the individual hopes destroyed, futures torn apart, I feel anger, impotent anger.

ANGOLAN NOVELIST PEPETEL.²¹

Henry Kissinger expressed concern about the proxy standoff in December 1975 in Angola, featuring Soviet-backed and American-backed independence movements: "I do care about the African reaction when they see the Soviets pull it off and we don't do anything. If the Europeans then say to themselves, 'If they can't hold Luanda, how can they defend Europe[?].'²² Such imaginative thoughts about America's reputation for saving Africa and Europe from communism motivated the decades of mayhem to follow in Angola.

White Man in Angolan History

Angola's tragic relationship with her European would-be saviors dates back a ways. Luanda was a slave port for the Portuguese beginning in the sixteenth century, well before its twentieth-century incarnation as the front line in the cold war. The Portuguese sent slave raiders from Luanda into the interior to buy slaves from African intermediaries, then shipped off the slaves to Brazil and Cuba. (Some of the descendants of those Cuban slaves would go back to Angola four centuries later, as part of Castro's expeditionary force to fight in the civil war.)

The first victims of the Portuguese in the sixteenth century were the Mbundu people, who in the late twentieth century would be backers of the Marxist guerillas fighting for independence, the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA, in Portuguese). By the eighteenth century, the Portuguese had reached into the interior plateau of Angola, the *planalto*, and begun enslaving the Ovimbundu people. The Ovimbundu were the base for the National Union for Total Independence of Angola (UNITA, in Portuguese).²³ The small Portuguese population on the coast was mostly men, with the usual result that a population of mixed race, known as *mestiços*, had sprung up. By the late nineteenth century, a small group of Africans were attending mission schools and learning to speak Portuguese fluently. They were known as *assimilados*. The *assimilados* and *mestiços* played a

leadership role in the colony as government officials and traders.

However, by the 1920s, the Portuguese had changed their minds and decided to sharply limit the role of Africans in government, in favor of Portuguese settlers. Under the dictatorship of António Salazar, from 1932 to 1968, Portugal sought to incorporate Angola as an overseas extension, giving aid to white Portuguese settlers to move there. The dregs of society, such as ex-convicts, were the most likely to take up the offer; they became known as the self-explanatory *degradados*. The restrictions on upward mobility of the *assimilados* and *mestiços* in favor of the white *degradados* explains why the former groups became leaders in the anti-colonial insurrection against the Portuguese. Together with the Mbundu ethnic group, the *assimilados* and *mestiços* founded the MPLA.

The Ovimbundu had a different history with the Portuguese. The increasing encroachment of the whites on the Ovimbundu homeland on the *planalto*, including the continuation of the slave trade inside Angola, created tensions between the two groups. White settlers were attracted into the *planalto* by the mild climate at three thousand to six thousand feet, which one settler called “perpetual springtime.” A random incident sparked a full-scale Ovimbundu rebellion against the Portuguese in 1902. The Ovimbundu saw the *assimilados* and *mestiços* as part of the colonial establishment, and thus part of the enemy. Using African troops from other parts of Angola, the Portuguese suppressed the rebellion within a few months, punishing the Ovimbundu leaders with banishment. One of those punished was royal counselor Sakaita Savimbi. His grandson, Jonas Savimbi, would be the leader of the Ovimbundu during the 1975–2002 Angolan Civil War.

After that, in the course of the twentieth century, the *mestiços* and the Ovimbundu switched positions, with the former becoming hostile to the Portuguese and the latter becoming compliant subjects. The Ovimbundu would agree to work in the homeland of the Mbundu on white-owned coffee plantations when the local people refused. The Mbundu, *mestiços*, and *assimilados* scorned the Ovimbundu as scabs.²⁴

The first leader of the MPLA, founded in 1959, was Mário de Andrade, an educated *mestiço* and a poet. The second leader was an *assimilado* and poet named Agostinho Neto, who became the first president of independent Angola in 1975. At a time when European powers granted other African colonies independence, Portugal insisted that Angola remain a colony. The MPLA and UNITA thus began a guerilla war for independence in the 1960s, starting with an uprising in 1961.

Ironically, the biggest surge in white settlement of Angola came in the last twenty-five years of the colony’s existence, from the end of World War II until independence in 1975. High coffee prices after World War II brought large profits to new white settlers, who started even more coffee plantations in the interior. By 1975, there were 335,000 whites in Angola, 5 percent of the population. The whites made up most of the economy’s managers, commercial farmers, business owners, and technicians.²⁵

Even more than in other African colonies, the colonizer made a mess out of decolonization. In 1975, after a socialist government came to power in Portugal, the colonizer hastily handed over power in Angola to whoever would take it, leaving the guerilla movements to fight it out among themselves. The white community fled en masse back to Portugal, amputating most of Angola’s economy. Angola has never recovered from the double blow of civil war and settler exodus.

Civil War in 1975

The inability of three egotistical Angolan leaders to agree on power sharing or elections was the proximate cause of the Angolan civil war in 1975. MPLA leader Agostinho Neto, UNITA leader Jonas Savimbi, and Holden Roberto (who led a movement called the National Front for the Liberation of Angola [FNLA in Portuguese])—based mainly on the Bakongo ethnic group in the north—decided to fight it out.

Three Angolan leaders, three white sponsors. The subsequent civil war became more destructive because of the intervention of the Soviets, the Americans, and the South Africans in Angola. The Soviets uncorked a massive arms flow to the MPLA. The Americans' typical reaction to Soviet arms flows was offering arms to whoever was fighting the Soviet-backed people. It didn't bother the Americans that one of these fighters they supported, Jonas Savimbi, himself solicited Communist support when he visited Eastern Europe, North Korea, North Vietnam, and China in 1965.²⁶ He stayed in China from July to November 1965, getting guerilla training along with eleven other members of UNITA (later known as the "Chinese eleven").²⁷ He subsequently incorporated some features of Maoism into his movement, above all a personality cult and a dictatorship of the proletariat. (Savimbi was the proletariat.) In Kissinger's worldview, American support of the Maoist Savimbi in 1975 was critical to preventing "a massive shift in the foreign policies of many countries" away from alliances with America, which would be "a fundamental threat over time to the security of the United States."²⁸

Communist countries such as China, Romania, and North Korea also supported the third Angolan leader, Holden Roberto. Kissinger nevertheless decided that Roberto's FNLA was the most "pro-Western faction," and decided to give most of the covert support to him.²⁹ The FNLA would disappear from the stage of history after losing the civil war, with most of its former supporters joining the MPLA. The American support to UNITA and the FNLA in 1975 was sixty-four million dollars.³⁰ The head of the CIA's Angola task force, John Stockwell, later admitted the classic Planner's shortcoming: "The glaring weakness of the program was a lack of information about our allies and about the interior of Angola. We were mounting a major covert action to support two Angolan liberation movements about which we had little reliable information."³¹ Two consecutive assistant secretaries of state for Africa predicted the failure of covert action in Angola; Kissinger forced them both out of their jobs.³²

The MPLA happened to control the capital, Luanda, at the moment that Portugal formally withdrew on November 10, 1975, so they portrayed themselves as the "legitimate" government of Angola, fighting UNITA and FNLA "rebels." A great many credulous countries around the world bought into this charade and recognized the MPLA as the "government of Angola."

China withdrew its support of the FNLA once South Africa intervened on the anti-MPLA side. South Africa invaded Angola from Namibia in October 1975, in support of UNITA; Cuba followed up on earlier support for the MPLA by sending troops in November 1975. The FNLA desperately tried to reach the capital before independence, but the MPLA and Cuban forces turned them back using Soviet-supplied rocket launchers known as "Stalin's Organs."

News of American covert support for UNITA and the FNLA leaked in late 1975, provoking Congress to pass a law forbidding American military aid to Angolan political factions (the Clark Amendment). The South Africans were unwilling to bear the burden of supporting UNITA alone, and they withdrew.³³ UNITA lost the civil war in 1975 and retreated into its rural Ovimbundu bases, to fight another day.

Jonas Savimbi and the Reagan Doctrine

Angola again came into cold war prominence after Reagan became the U.S. president and decided to provide aid to insurgents fighting Soviet-allied regimes (the “Reagan Doctrine”). Reagan’s man on Africa, Chester Crocker, said that aid to Savimbi “would be the African version of the ‘America is back’ message of the Reagan presidency.³⁴ According to this cold war Planner, supplying Savimbi and UNITA with land mines was “standing tall,” giving the Americans a “place where we can achieve victory, a psychological victory.³⁵

In one of the most bizarre episodes of the cold war, the Reagan administration sponsored an organization called Democratic International, which brought together the Contras in Nicaragua, UNITA in Angola, the Islamic mujahedin in Afghanistan, and anti-government rebels in Cambodia.³⁶ Representatives of these disparate groups met in Jamba, Angola, Savimbi’s base, in the summer of 1985. The lack of democratic credentials of these groups was perhaps most extreme for the Cambodian contingent, which had allied itself with the genocidal Khmer Rouge to fight the Vietnamese-backed Cambodian regime.³⁷ None of the other groups could be called excessively democratic, either. Reagan said of the Democratic International in 1988: “there is something in our spirit and history that makes us say these are our own battles and that those who resist are our brothers and sisters.³⁸

Savimbi was to democracy what Paris Hilton is to chastity. He was tarnished by such documented incidents as: (1) murdering dissidents, including burning alive a couple and their three children; (2) kidnapping foreign aid workers as hostages; (3) using famine as a weapon of war, such as attacking UNICEF and Catholic Relief Services food convoys to drought victims; and (4) establishing the personality cult that demanded total obedience to *O Mais Velho* (The Eldest One).³⁹

On February 1, 1986, Jeane Kirkpatrick, Reagan’s representative to the UN, called Savimbi “One of the few authentic heroes of our time.” Ronald Reagan welcomed Savimbi to the White House in 1986, saying that American support would enable UNITA to win “a victory that electrifies the world and brings great sympathy and assistance from other nations to those struggling for freedom.⁴⁰

The Reagan administration got Congress to repeal the Clark Amendment, allowing military aid to let loose the dogs of war in Angola. Chester Crocker explained the motivation: “Repeal changed the equation we faced. It would send a signal—a useful one—to Moscow, Havana, and Luanda that we had options if they continued to use our diplomacy as a cover for the pursuit of unilateral, military objectives. Now we could threaten to raise the price. Now we had the basis to acquire a stake of our own.⁴¹ The price of a stake of our own, Crocker later acknowledged, was a “wrecked Angola,” and the deaths of “an estimated 350,000 Angolans.” But Angolans don’t vote in U.S. elections.

Crocker declared victory when the MPLA and UNITA signed a peace agreement on May 31 1991: “I knew that we were celebrating the end of an era. Angolans could now begin to shape their own destiny after centuries of foreign domination, living with foreign legacies and foreign conflicts.⁴²

War to the Death

The foreign legacies in Angola were to have a longer shelf life than Crocker’s premature obituary. The Americans again showed their habit of not cleaning up after themselves. Their protégé Savimbi quickly violated the peace agreement after he lost an election to the MPLA.

The civil war that the cold war fueled would outlive the cold war by a decade. UNITA got new sources of funding by capturing diamond mines, whose revenues it used to buy arms on the black market. Ironically, the main source of weapons for UNITA was the late Soviet bloc, which sold its surplus weapons after the end of the cold war.

The civil war kept on, by the end killing 750,000 Angolans (7 percent of the population) and displacing 4.1 million people.⁴³ Peace came to Angola, long after the West stopped paying attention, only when MPLA forces killed in battle that authentic hero of our time, Jonas Savimbi, on February 22, 2002.

The combination of outside meddling, inside mismanagement, and civil war left the Angolan economy six feet under along with Jonas Savimbi. Even the surge in export revenues due to new oil discoveries did not help its recovery (see figure 31). The MPLA's blend of Soviet central planning and kleptocracy contributed to the disaster.

Today Angola is dependent on food aid, and it exports hardly anything besides oil (which Western companies extract on behalf of the government; during the civil war, Cuban troops defended American companies' oil wells against American-backed UNITA rebels). Provincial capitals have been without electricity for ten or more years.⁴⁴ Twenty-six percent of children die before reaching their fifth birthday, the third highest rate in the world.⁴⁵ AIDS already infects 5.5 percent of the adult population. It is spreading rapidly.⁴⁶

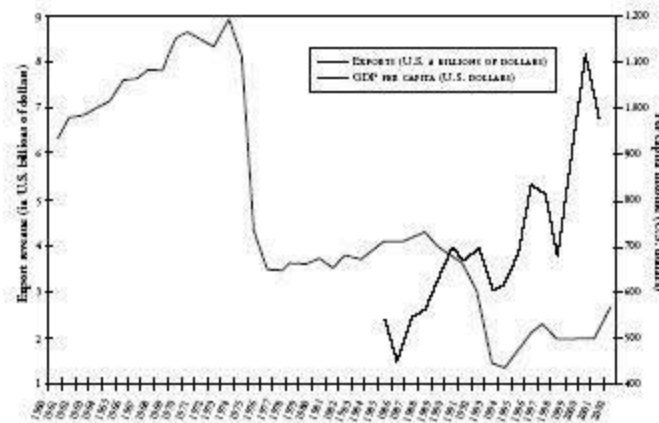


Fig. 31. Angola: Per Capita Income and Export Revenues

Nation-Building in the Americas

A previous incarnation of the utopian internationalism of the cold war was the American effort to stabilize unruly republics in the Americas. The United States did direct military interventions in Mexico, the Caribbean, and Central America to spread democracy and free markets in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. After bombarding Veracruz during the Mexican Revolution in 1916, Woodrow Wilson said, “The United States had gone to Mexico to serve mankind.”⁴⁷

Haiti is again illustrative. Chapter 4 discusses how the legacy of slavery left a toxic divisor between mulattoes and blacks in Haiti, forever destabilizing Haitian politics. Throughout the nineteenth century, the two factions called on foreign intervention to help them defeat their rivals. Americans, British, and Germans were often eager to intervene anyway to protect the business

interests of their citizens. Historian Hans Schmidt noted, "US Navy ships visited Haitian ports to 'protect American lives and property' in 1857, 1859, 1868, 1869, 1876, 1888, 1889, 1892, 1902, 1903, 1904,

1905, 1906, 1907, 1908, 1909, 1911, 1912, and 1913.⁴⁸

Finally, tired of all those round trips, the U.S. occupied Haiti from 1915 to 1934. Haiti's second colonial masters, according to Gendarmerie Commandant Smedley Butler, were "trustees of a huge estate...the Haitians were our wards and that we were endeavoring to develop and make for them a rich and productive property."⁴⁹ This patronizing attitude was only rarely contradicted, for example by the American journalist who pointed out that the Haitian mulatto elite was "so many layers in culture above the army or navy man and his wife that the visiting American must feel ashamed of his country's representatives."⁵⁰ But Haitians united again in resistance against the foreign invaders, and the Americans left in 1934.

The Americans left behind a newly trained Haitian army, the Garde, with black soldiers and mostly mulatto officers. Mulattoes dominated political office until 1946, when the black majority of the Garde revolted with a new vision of black pride and power, the *noirist* movement. After further political instability, a leading *noirist*, François Duvalier, defeated his mulatto opponent in the elections of 1957.⁵¹ Papa Doc Duvalier would rule until his death, in 1971, after which his son Baby Doc ruled until 1986.

After the fall of the Duvalier family, a mixture of military regimes tried to stave off the coming to power of the populist Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who was finally elected president in 1990. Another U.S. military intervention in 1994 restored Aristide to power after a coup.

The second U.S. occupation of Haiti was less ambitious than the first, obsessed above all else with avoiding American casualties. The writer Bob Shacochis pointed out the novelty of an invader to protect the invading soldiers from those they were invading.⁵²

After the United States spent two billion dollars to restore Aristide to power,⁵³ U.S. support weakened in Aristide's democratically challenged second term. Aristide government ministers diverted aid money into corrupt takings, as had their many predecessors. The World Bank in 2002 ranked Haiti as the world's second most corrupt country out of 195 countries rated.⁵⁴ After an armed rebellion in February 2004, Aristide took the traditional Haitian path into exile.

Aristide's jet had barely disappeared over the horizon when the World Bank convened a meeting of donors. The Bank announced "a joint government/ multi-donor Interim Cooperation Framework (Cadre de Coopération Intérimaire, or CCI).⁵⁵ In July 2004, the CCI believed that Haiti was now "primed to tackle many urgent and medium term development needs."⁵⁶ *The Economist* in June 2005 quoted people a little closer to reality, such as diplomats stationed in Port-au-Prince, as saying that Haiti was on the verge of being a "failed state." *Foreign Policy* magazine in August 2005 classified Haiti as a failed state, ranking it as more dysfunctional than the likes of Afghanistan, North Korea, and Zimbabwe.⁵⁷ The long years of military intervention have failed to produce anything constructive in Haiti.

As far as promoting democracy, one study on the historical record of American nation-building says that it doesn't usually work. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace scholars Minxin Pe and Sara Kasper analyzed sixteen American nation-building efforts over the past century.⁵⁸ Only four were democracies ten years after the U.S. military left—Japan and Germany after resounding defeat and occupation in World War II, and tiny Grenada (1983) and Panama (1989). Besides those already mentioned, the long list of twentieth-century intervention disasters includes Cuba (1898–1902, 1906–

1909, 1917–1922), the Dominican Republic (1916–1924, 1965–1966), Nicaragua (1909–1933), and Panama (1903–1936).

Peace Enforcement

What about today's "humanitarian" military interventions to bring peace, democracy, and prosperity to the Rest? I don't review them in detail because they are too recent to judge properly their long-run effects on the Rest. Anyway, other writers have already covered humanitarian intervention well (in particular, I recommend David Rieff's 2002 book, *A Bed for the Night: Humanitarianism in Crisis*). I will just review briefly here how the new interventionism (or, as the U.S. government now calls it, "peace enforcement").⁵⁹ has many of the same faults as cold war interventions, not to mention many of the same problems as more traditional foreign aid. Just as the argument for more aid money presumes that there is some all-knowing Planner who can get the right technical fix to the right place, the argument for humanitarian intervention presumes an omniscient and disinterested military force coming from outside. The triple tragedies of UN peacekeeping in Bosnia, Somalia, and Rwanda in the 1990s showed that such a force does not exist. The peacekeeping system then (which still exists today) could not get right the decisions about whether and how to intervene.

Like the cold war interventions, the new humanitarian interventions were distorted by serving the interests of the West rather than the supposed beneficiaries in the Rest. The French (motivated by their strategic interest in maintaining a French zone in central Africa, which was allegedly threatened by English-speaking Tutsi rebels.⁶⁰ played a shameful role in Rwanda, shipping arms to the Hutu extremists even after the genocide began in April 1994. In April 1994, the French evacuated from Kigali their embassy staff and citizens, some allies in the Hutu elite, and even the embassy dog, but left Tutsi employees of the embassy to their fate.⁶¹ Clinton eschewed American or UN military intervention in Rwanda in 1994 to kowtow to right-wing critics of "nation-building," but a few years later, when it became a useful rationale for occupying Afghanistan and Iraq, the right decided it liked "nation-building" after all. Strategic interests also dictated that international peacekeepers avoid casualties to their own forces even if this effort magnified many times the local loss of life, a situation that writer Alex de Waal labels "humanitarian impunity."⁶² The widespread Somalian rage at UN/U.S. forces in 1993, shown in the book and the movie *Black Hawk Down*, had a lot to do with the humanitarian impunity that had killed many civilians.

Like the cold war interventions and like Planners' efforts everywhere, the interventionists suffer from ignorance of local conditions. The UN team sent to scout out peacekeeping in the former Yugoslavia in 1991 consisted of "two men in a jeep," neither of whom was a Yugoslavia expert.⁶³ The UN Planners in New York could only fit reports from the field in Rwanda into such preconceptions as "civil war" or "violent chaos," arguing against intervention by not processing the evidence that Hutu extremists were organizing a campaign of extermination against the Tutsis. In Somalia, by contrast, lurid images of gunmen and famine victims argued *for* intervention, exaggerating the crisis (one TV journalist instructed an aid worker to "pick the children who are most severely malnourished" for filming) and fatally ignoring the complexity of clan politics.⁶⁴

Peacekeeping has an even worse problem than foreign aid in dealing with gangsters. The interventionists alternate from one extreme to the other. Either they (1) maintain neutrality between the government and its opponents (operating only with the consent of both parties) or (2) force change on (or terminate) some evil governments. These oscillations seem unrelated to the realities on the

ground. Thus, the peacekeepers first followed the principle of consent in Bosnia when Serbs were murdering and raping civilians, then took sides against the Aidid faction in Somalia when the factions were close to equally reprehensible, then maintained neutrality for far too long in Rwanda between the genocidal Hutu government and the Tutsi victims (a policy described by the Czech member of the UN Security Council at the time as “like wanting Hitler to reach a cease-fire with the Jews”).⁶⁵

International intervention also suffers from the same collective responsibility system that plagues foreign aid. Peacekeeping could be good, but just who is willing to be accountable for its success or failure? When something goes horribly wrong, like the Rwandan genocide, the UN blames the Western powers, while the Western powers blame the UN and each other. Iqbal Riza, assistant secretary general for peacekeeping at the UN at the time of the Rwandan genocide, more diplomatically uses the passive voice, indicating that “mistakes were made” but nobody made them. Riza also used the bureaucrat’s classic “that’s not my department” excuse: “Our mandate was not to anticipate and prevent genocide.”⁶⁶ Nobody pays for mistakes. After presiding over debacles like Rwanda, virtually the entire peacekeeping department of the UN ascended to run the whole organization when Kofi Annan (the former head of peacekeeping) became secretary-general.⁶⁷

Interventionism suffers from the patronizing assumption that only the West can keep the locals from killing each other. Stanford political scientist Jeremy Weinstein notes that peace usually succeeds war because of a decisive victory by one side, not because of negotiated settlements by outsiders. The intuition is simple: military victors are likely to form a more stable government, whereas a coalition of recent antagonists imposed by outside planners is likely to be unstable. Weinstein calculated the likelihood of a stable peace: at least ten years without the resumption of war. UN interventions produced a stable peace only a quarter of the time. With no UN intervention, a stable peace resulted nearly half the time.⁶⁸

In Somalia, the “international community” has sponsored fourteen rounds of fruitless peace talks since the collapse of government in 1991, not to mention the failed UN/U.S. military intervention. Meanwhile, without outside intervention, foreign aid, or even international recognition, the breakaway Republic of Somaliland in the north of Somalia has enjoyed peace, economic growth, and democratic elections over the same period. There can be awful military victors as well as good ones, but local actors are statistically more likely to find peace on their own.

Such common sense has little impact on the overconfidence of the interventionists. The World Bank issued a 2003 report proclaiming that “our new understanding of the causes and consequences of civil wars provides a compelling basis for international action... International action...could avert untold suffering, spur poverty reduction, and help to protect people around the world from... drug-trafficking, disease, and terrorism.” With the predilection of the Planner for precise quantification, the report suggests that Western-led military peacekeeping forces, reforms based on Western advice, and Western aid can halve the risk of civil war in poor economies, from 44 percent to 22 percent.⁶⁹

There is a strange confluence of the neoconservatives on the right supporting “regime change” and the humanitarians on the left calling for military intervention in whatever human rights emergency makes the headlines at the moment. As David Rieff notes, this logic would require “endless wars of altruism,” given the ubiquity of human rights violations.⁷⁰ This is yet another area where the Planners’ utopian goals—universal peace, democracy, human rights, and prosperity—substitute for modest tasks that may be more doable by Searchers, such as rescuing innocent civilians from murderous attacks.

The pre–cold war, cold war, and post–cold war record on intervening militarily to promote the more ambitious goals of political and economic development yields a cautionary lesson—don't. Maybe one should never say never, but one should learn from history that the typical Western error is to do too many military interventions in the Rest, not too few.

Silvia

Silvia Neyala Zinga of Huambo, Angola, is not a fortunate person. Her mother, Deofina Chinima, can no longer walk since a mortar shell destroyed her left foot during the Angolan civil war. Her father died fighting in late 1992, after Savimbi again took up arms after losing the election. Her eldest brother, Alberto, has been missing ever since the siege of Huambo by UNITA rebels beginning on January 8, 1993. The only food the family had for long periods was cornmeal donated by the Red Cross. Silvia is two years old.⁷¹

The best rule of all for Western helpers is, first, do no harm.

SNAPSHOT: CHEMIST TO THE POOR

THIRTY-NINE PERCENT OF Ugandans are malnourished. Malnutrition in children and teens causes fatigue, listlessness, reduced immunity to disease, swollen gums, decaying teeth, painful joints, slow growth, and trouble paying attention in school. A pregnant woman who is malnourished is more likely to have a low-birth-weight baby, who has a smaller chance of survival. Some studies estimate that 60 percent of all deaths of children under five are directly or indirectly related to malnutrition. The poor in Uganda eat a diet heavy in carbohydrates (such as cassava and bananas) with little protein.⁷²

George Mpango is a chemistry professor on the faculty of Makerere University in Uganda founded in 1922 by the British. George studied at Makerere himself during the horrific rule of Idi Amin. He saved enough money from tutorials to finance half the cost of a plane ticket to the United States; a wealthy friend of his father paid for the rest. He got a Ph.D. in chemistry at the University of Waterloo, in Ontario, in 1980.

As his father's eldest son, Dr. Mpango returned to Uganda in the late 1980s to fulfill his duties as the head of the extended Mpango family after his father died. He took up a job as assistant professor at Makerere, earning a hundred dollars a month. Coffee trees and cassava on his family farm in the countryside brought in another hundred dollars a month. Dr. Mpango had ideas that could help hungry Ugandans: developing a high-protein biscuit, teaching the next generation of Ugandan chemists, and developing improved varieties of cassava on his family farm. The obstacles were tremendous: Dr. Mpango's lab at Makerere was chronically short of funds, with thirty-year-old chemicals, no new beakers for the past fifteen years, no pH meter, no academic journals since the 1970s, periodic water cutoffs for failing to meet the bills, and not even enough lightbulbs. Aid donors gave unneeded items such as a German chemical reactor, with no instructions on how to use it, and fire extinguishers. "The donors give us what they have, not what we need," said the head of the Makerere chemistry department.

Eventually things looked up for Dr. Mpango. The government changed the policy of free tuition at Makerere to charge tuition for an expanded number of students (shrewdly offering scholarships to the same number who had gotten free tuition before). Students from all over Uganda and neighboring countries came to Makerere to take Dr. Mpango's chemistry classes, which would enable them to get high-paying jobs as chemists for private food companies. Faculty salaries tripled. The high-protein biscuit was now ready for the market; Dr. Mpango also developed an orange juice powder for the local market. He started a private high school back in the family's home village. Despite troubles in the extended family he heads and years of hardship, Dr. Mpango has found a path to his own success and benefits for those around him.*