

IQ2 - 03-09-2018 - Humanitarian Intervention Does More Harm Than Good

Moderator: John Donovan

For the Motion: Frank Ledwidge, Rajan Menon

Against the Motion: Bernard Kouchner, Kori Schake

Start Time: (00:00:00)

Male Speaker:

Thank you and the issue, as you'll see, that we're going to discuss is one that is, I mean, obviously one of the most vexing ones on the international agenda -- whether we're talking about Syria or events in Africa, or elsewhere. And it's also been our Brussels forum agenda for many years. So, it makes it important. But the other thing is, simply, that this has been a great partnership. And I know the two institutions, with Intelligence Squared and GMF, we share this interest in objective reasons -- informed debate. And so, in that sense, we couldn't have possibly had a better partner. Robert, thank you very much indeed to you and to your team, and we look forward to this very much.

Robert Rosenkranz:

Well, thank you very much. It's really an honor to be here. And I think we can all take some pleasure in the idea that at least in America, there's a big audience for this kind of debate. We have over a million people who engage with us regularly on public radio, and podcast, and television network program. And so, it's really an honor to bring this here, to such a knowledgeable and informed audience.

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John Donovan:

And we've done at this point, Bob, more than 145 debates. But how does this one fit in to sort of the pattern of what we do?

Robert Rosenkranz:

Well, it's sort of interesting, because I think this debate will turn, to some degree, on the tension between idealism and pragmatism. And we've done a number of debates that kind of had that as the gravament [spelled phonetically] of the argument. We did one on "Aid to Africa does more harm than good." We did one on "The U.S. should admit 100,000 Syrian Refugees." In a slightly different context, "Life Spans are Long Enough." So, this is within an intellectual tradition for us. And yet, of course, as Ian says, it's incredibly timely.

John Donovan:

All right. Well, gentlemen, thank you very much. You can take your seats, and I'm going to have a little bit of a chat with the audience before we actually start. Thank you so much.

00:02:00

And again, Ian, thanks so much for having us here. So, as I mentioned, I wanted to have a little bit of a chat with you, to tell you who we are and what we do. I'll do this in, I hope, under two minutes.

We're actually -- we, as I mentioned, have done more than 140 of these programs. And we -- I want to point out that number one, we are producing and always do produce while we're doing this a radio show, a podcast, and a television program. So, you are part of that. And I also want to point out that this is a competitive event. It's not a panel discussion. There are two teams here who are trying to persuade you of their point of view. And to that end, I want to let you know that we're going to ask you to choose the winner. In addition to asking questions, you get to pick the winner. But I would like you to listen not only critically, but with enthusiasm, and with a certain amount of boisterousness. The audience that hears this would -- will benefit from knowing that you are here, that you are acting as judges. And so, I want to encourage you to -- at various points throughout the program, when I specifically ask for it -- to applaud.

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So, I'll do one of these, and it's my asking you to applaud spontaneously, however. But also, if you hear points you like, it's not like a U.S. presidential debate, where you need to sit on your hands. If you hear a point that you support and like, feel free to applaud. We encourage that, and it helps the debaters know how they're doing. We can do a little practice run like that right now.

[applause]

Yeah. Okay. All right. It's not quite the New York City crowd, but it's almost there.

[laughter]

So, you know what you're up against. The other thing is I want to ask you to do your preliminary vote now. If you go to the Brussels forum app, look at Interactivity. And then you scroll down a little bit, you'll find that. And then make the choice to vote. And you will be presented with our resolution, which is "Humanitarian Intervention Does More Harm than Good." And you can, at this point, tell us what you believe about this resolution. If you agree with it, you vote yes. And if you disagree, vote that you are against.

00:04:04

Sorry. It's for, against, and undecided. Vote for -- you're for the motion, for the resolution, you're against the resolution, or you're undecided, which is a perfectly reasonable starting position to hold. So, we'll leave that open for a few minutes for those of you who might come in late. You can do that, or you can complete the process. But I'd like to get the show on the road, and at this point, actually begin the formal program, the part that will be part of our radio show, podcast, and television program. And you can help me out with that. One other thing. I just want -- there's a structure to this. We have timed rounds. I have the -- and assume the right to interview [sic] debaters who are going off topic, who are taking too much time to make their

point, because we would like to keep things back and forth. So, I want to tell you ahead of time so that no one is offended by it that I'm interrupting in order to keep things moving along. So, no offense to anyone. But if we could launch things now with a round of applause. I would appreciate it. Thank you.

00:05:03

[applause]

It has gone down in history as a case of moral failure on a massive scale: The genocide nearly a quarter-century ago in the African state of Rwanda, where up to a million people were slaughtered while the outside world watched what was going on and did almost nothing to stop it. And yet, out of that catastrophe came new impetus for a new concept called humanitarian intervention, the idea, the principle that when a state is unable or failing to protect its own people from genocide and crimes against humanity, then other states have a moral responsibility to go in, to protect the vulnerable, and to use military force if necessary.

And a quarter-century on, how has that principle worked out in practice? In places where it's been tried -- say, Kosovo, or Libya -- does the record show that, on balance, such interventions are successful, or, on balance, do unintended consequences take over and undermine the goal?

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And right now, with what's going on in Syria, what's unfolding there, does the past argue for humanitarian intervention there, or the opposite? Well, we think this has the makings of a debate, so let's have it. Yes or no to this statement: Humanitarian Intervention Does More Harm Than Good. I'm John Donovan of Intelligence Squared U.S. It is a pleasure to be at the Brussels Forum in partnership with the German Marshall Fund. We have four superbly qualified debaters who will argue for and against the resolution. As always, our debate goes in three rounds, and then this audience votes to choose the winner, and only one side wins. Let's bring on our debaters with a round of applause. First, Frank Ledwidge.

[applause]

John Donovan:
Rajan Menon.

[applause]

John Donovan:
Bernard Kouchner.

00:07:02

[applause]

John Donovan:
Kori Schake.

[applause]

John Donovan:
Our resolution, again, is this: Humanitarian Intervention Does More Harm Than Good. We have a team that will be arguing in support of the motion. Let's meet them, get a little -- to know them a little bit. Please -- again, let's please welcome Frank Ledwidge.

[applause]

John Donovan:
That was one of those. Frank, you are a senior fellow at the Royal Air Force College. You worked in military intelligence; you also write a lot. You had a great-uncle who happened to have the same name as you, Frank Ledwidge. He was a military man; he was also a renowned writer. He was a poet of World War I who died fighting in that war, so, obviously, you did not have the chance to know him. But do you feel a connection to that Frank?

Frank Ledwidge:
Yeah, absolutely, John. But what has to be said is that what we suffered over the last 15 years was nothing to what they did in the first World War.

00:08:01

John Donovan:
Okay, getting a sense of your theme right away. I'd like to now introduce your partner again, Rajan Menon. Ladies and gentlemen, Rajan Menon.

[applause]

John Donovan:
Rajan, welcome to Intelligence Squared. You're a professor at City College; you're also a senior research scholar at Columbia University. I happen to know that for you to be here in Brussels today you needed to get a colleague to cover one of your classes. So, obviously that worked out, but what price did you have to pay?

Rajan Menon:
Well, I will not divulge his name, but the secret is a good bottle of single-malt Scotch. Works every time.

John Donovan:
[laughs] So, it worked out for everybody.

Rajan Menon:
It did.

John Donovan:
Once again, ladies and gentlemen, the team arguing for the motion.

[applause]

John Donovan:
Now, let's meet the team arguing against the motion, which again is Humanitarian Intervention Does More Harm Than Good. Please first welcome Bernard Kouchner.

[applause]

John Donovan:
Bernard, you are a former foreign minister of France, renowned as the co-founder of Doctors Without Borders. Little-known fact to many, I think, that, as a youth, you went to Cuba, and you went fishing with Fidel Castro, with the important question being, was the fishing good?

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Bernard Kouchner:
Yes, I did.

John Donovan:
Yeah? It went well?

Bernard Kouchner:
It was not a purpose of my travel --

John Donovan:
We understand.

Bernard Kouchner:
-- I'm sorry to say.

John Donovan:
But it worked out. Ladies and gentlemen, Bernard Kouchner.

[applause]

John Donovan:
And Kori Schake, welcome to Intelligence Squared, also debating against the motion. It's great to have you back. You've debated with us before. You're a deputy director general of the International Institute for Strategic Studies. You are a regular on a podcast I love called Deep

State Radio, where you are often awarded the tiara of optimism.

Kori Schake:

[laughs] That's right. I --

John Donovan:

What is -- what is the tiara of optimism?

Kori Schake:

It is a confidence that problems can be solved, that people make choices and choices make history instead of a deterministic conclusion of that question.

John Donovan:

So, you are almost wearing the tiara right now.

Kori Schake:

I always wear it.

John Donovan:

Okay. Please -- ladies and gentlemen, the team arguing against the motion.

00:10:02

[applause]

So, let's move on to Round 1. Round 1 are opening statements by each debater in turn. They will be five minutes each. And here to start us off in Round 1, our first debater who will argue in support of the resolution -- Humanitarian Intervention Does More Harm than Good -- Rajan Menon. He is professor at the City College of New York and senior research scholar at Columbia University. Once again, ladies and gentlemen, Rajan Menon.

[applause]

Rajan Menon:

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen. Before you get boisterous, because John told you to be, I should tell you that Frank and I will sound a little bit like Grinch at a Christmas dinner. And the reason for that is who wants to hear, after all, that humanitarian war does more harm than good? This is a project that saves lives, that ends atrocities, and invokes universal human rights.

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It is an idea that should unify the world. Alas, it has divided it and divided it deeply on fundamental issues. Who has the right to intervene? Under what circumstances? With what objective? To stop atrocities, and end there, or to then overthrow the regime -- as happened in Libya -- or to stop atrocities and midwife the birth of a new state -- as happened in Kosovo? These issues have not been resolved. Now, critics of humanitarian intervention worry

about something else, and that is, "Will this ostensibly universal principle be applied universally in practice or bent and twisted by the powerful and applied selectively?" They're -- they have good reason to be worried. If you are a great power -- the United States, China, Russia -- you do not have to fear intervention directed against you no matter what you do.

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Consider Russia and Chechnya in '94. If you are a middle power -- India, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Israel, Egypt -- you don't have to worry about intervention either, because you've got the military muscle to make an intervention costly. So, who does that leave? A miserable gaggle of friendless, isolated states. They, ladies and gentlemen, will be on the receiving end of this universal principle. I'll give you some examples. Saudi Arabia today is waging a ruinous and vicious war in Yemen. Let's put the strategic issues aside. Hundreds of people have died in air strikes by the Saudis. They have put down a blockade that has contributed to a cholera epidemic that has afflicted 1 million people -- 1 million.

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10 million people are on the brink of starvation. Have you heard anyone -- even from the humanitarian intervention camp -- calling for penalties against Saudi Arabia? No. They're arming the Saudis. And as we speak, the crown prince is being received by Her Majesty's government.

Let's look at another example. Myanmar. The government of Myanmar has killed 7,000 Rohingya, and the toll is amounting, and chased 600 others out of their homes. Do you think the government of Myanmar is worried about the hoofbeats of humanitarian intervention, the generals lie in bed worrying? Not at all, because they have China in their corner. Now, I wanted to speak about another problem that humanitarian intervention faces, and that is the law not just of unintended consequences, but uncontrollable consequences -- uncontrollable consequences.

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Only one example because the clock is ticking. And that is Libya. Libya post-intervention is a violent, anarchic mess -- two governments, a multitude of militias, Al-Qaeda and ISIS, with chapters newly created in Libya. The entire neighborhood is threatened. Tens of thousands of refugees -- tens of thousands of refugees have fled across the Mediterranean, pumping up the power of right-wing populist parties in Europe. Look at what is happening in Europe today. Now, I want to finish with Bosnia and Kosovo -- that I haven't talked about. They teach us one lesson. If you want even a modicum of stability post-intervention, you have to keep tens of thousands of troops on the ground, spend billions of dollars to do it right. I submit to you, ladies and gentlemen, that in the body politic of the West, and certainly the United States, there isn't the political support to do it.

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Now, are the paragons of humanitarian intervention worried about this? Not at all! They have overweening confidence in their idea. That overweening confidence, ladies and gentlemen, slides sometimes into hubris, and that is yet another reason why this project, this noble project, does more harm than good. Thank you very much.

[applause]

John Donovan:

Rajan Menon. And that, again, is the resolution: Humanitarian Intervention Does More Harm Than Good. And here to make his opening statement against the resolution, Bernard Kouchner, co-founder of Doctors Without Borders and former French foreign minister.

[applause]

Bernard Kouchner:

Thank you very much. Does humanitarian intervention do more harm than good?

00:16:03

Not at all. You were talking, and this is a big mistake, about military intervention, not humanitarian. It doesn't mean anything in humanitarian intervention. Let me give you some examples. The first one. Yes, sir, you were talking about Rwanda, April '94. Sorry to say, I was there during all the genocide with my people, doctors and medical staff, and we did a lot. Compared to the genocide -- compared to, let's say, 800,000 of dead people massacred, it was nothing, but believe me, humanitarian intervention is not a problem of numbers of dead, of victims. If you can save one, and if it is your daughter or your sister or your father, this is a very important one.

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Humanitarian means human being. Human being; you have to count one after one. So, it's not a question of military intervention. You were right in some of your examples. But we were before in Kosovo; we were before the humanitarian people, working with the people, not with the government. There was no government; it was the Serbian government. So, this is easy to counterattack all your examples. Afghanistan; [unintelligible] we were since 20 years working with the people, and there is still an hospital in Kabul, bombed every day, with explosions every day in Kabul. But the French hospital is still working without the government's help at all. So, humanitarian intervention is not a military intervention. Neutrality is the rule.

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When we were working in Lebanon, we were working on Grecian [spelled phonetically] side, and on Muslims' side, and on Shi'ite's side, Sunni's side, et cetera. We -- there is no choice for a medical doctor or a humanitarian doctor. You don't have to -- the good deaths and the bad deaths; the good victim and the bad victim. Not at all. Never. So, we did. And the neutrality is absolutely necessary. And don't mix up [spelled phonetically] military -- sometimes military intervention to protect -- to protect -- some particular project is good, but usually we are not, and we are never asking about military intervention. Don't mix up. And I can give you a lot of examples. You were talking about Mali. Mali; the humanitarian French involvement -- but French doesn't matter -- international involvement was very -- I mean [spelled phonetically], it was [unintelligible].

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The people were a necessity who is calling [spelled phonetically]. In humanitarian intervention, you have to understand that somebody was calling, some victim, some group of victims, or a nation. We are not just, let's say, choosing our victims and choosing our nation. Not at all. Rohingya is a good example. We were there, not enough to alert the people, and I agree with your example. It was necessary to intervene, and I asked my government. Unfortunately, I was not in charge of the government at the beginning. And of course, it's a good example. We had to. Humanitarian intervention has to be before, close to the victims after a victim's call, but not because the government or the military people are asking us. Never! This is a neutral intervention, and this is, according to my opinion, the proudness of human beings, and the proudness of the international community.

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If we are stepping back, and if I understand your slogan, we have to stop the humanitarian intervention and development intervention, and everything, and wait for the -- so, we have to let them die. I don't accept that.

John Donovan:

Thank you, Bernard Kouchner.

[applause]

We come back to the other side now. And debating for the motion in his opening statement -- Humanitarian Intervention Does More Harm than Good -- please welcome Frank Ledwidge, senior fellow at the Royal Air Force College and former military intelligence officer. Ladies and gentlemen, Frank Ledwidge.

[applause]

Frank Ledwidge:

Ladies and gentlemen, it's simply not good enough to reframe this debate as humanitarian intervention. For those of us who have been involved in these failed efforts over the last 20 years, the predominant effort has been brutally militarily -- military and bloody. Ladies and gentlemen, let me take you down to Basra, to Iraq in 2004, [unintelligible] group meeting [spelled phonetically].

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Middle of the night. The general showed up. It was a pep talk. Things weren't going so well. And the general said, "Guys, I want you to be aware of one thing, and here's what I want you to be aware of. We are the biggest and best gang in the province, and don't you forget it." And ladies and gentlemen, that was true. There were 7-and-a-half thousand of us heavily armed, well-trained, well-equipped, and with a reasonably clear idea of our vision and our mission, which was to secure 1-and-a-half million people. We failed to do that. We ended up hunkered down in a military base, defeated, after some months. Cut now to Bosnia, the poster child for real humanitarian intervention. I was in that mission too. 60,000 of us there were, four armed divisions. We had complete military dominance across the spectrum. No one would touch us. But ladies and gentlemen, that was in a country of four million people.

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Kosovo, very similar. We had complete dominance. What I would like to hear from our opponents tonight is where we are going to get 60,000 troops to secure a relative -- even a relatively small country not so far away, let alone one of the invadables that Rajan was talking about, which are likely to be much further away. And the kind of war involved in -- let's be brutally frank about that. Non-international armed conflicts, internal strife, call it what you will -- civil wars. And they are the most brutal, complex, and difficult operations that can be conceived. You are involved, when you're in operations such as that, in a three-dimensional chess match in the dark, against multiple adversaries who tomorrow may be your allies -- others, your allies today, may be your adversaries or your enemies tomorrow.

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Against a background where, if you are not absolutely certain of where your objectives lie, ladies and gentlemen, you have no business in being in such an environment unless you're absolutely sure that you can secure yourselves and the people you are there to protect. And nowadays, the

will, the means, the material, are no longer present within our polities, within our governments. We simply do not have the resources any longer to be able to sustain this kind of complex, deeply, deeply difficult operation.

And now I turn, possibly, to the most important aspect, and one which I think most of you will be intimately familiar -- with which most of you will be intimately familiar, the politics of all this. Because, let's be frank, who is going to be doing these interventions?

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Is Britain going to do it? Britain ran out of bombs after a couple of weeks in Libya. Is France going to do it? No. In all of the missions that we have sustained over the last 15 or 20 years, the United States have borne between 60 and 90 percent of the effort. Do you detect in the United States any political will for long, bloody, indeterminate poorly planned operations at the ends of the earth? Even if you assume there is some objective to them? Now, one of the themes of this conference is an increasing sense, I think, of insecurity in Europe. This is a final question I want to put to you. Is this what our armed forces should be doing at a time when, sooner or later, they may be -- our defense forces -- required to fulfill their advertised function of defense? I'm going to leave you with a thought.

00:25:01

Just before I came here, I spoke to a friend of mine, one of my young officers in Iraq, badly injured, and I said I was coming to talk on humanitarian intervention. He said, "Well, there's a contradiction in terms for you. It's war." And he's quite right. No matter how you dress it up, when you conduct this kind of intervention you are fighting a war. And there's one thing the last 20 years have taught us. It's that you don't control war; it controls you. Ladies and gentlemen, support the motion. Thank you very much.

[applause]

John Donovan:

Thank you, Frank Ledwidge. And our final speaker in round one; she will be arguing against the motion Humanitarian Intervention Does More Harm Than Good. Kori Schake, deputy director general of the International Institute for Strategic Studies. Ladies and gentlemen, Kori Schake.

[applause]

Kori Schake:

So, Bernard and my opponents in this argument make a number of good points, but they conflate warfare and humanitarian intervention in a way that I think --

00:26:08

[applause]

Thank you for that [laughs]. In a way that I think confuses the subject some. Iraq and Afghanistan aren't humanitarian interventions. They're wars.

[applause]

Kori Schake:

We fought them for a reason, and that reason wasn't protecting the people of Iraq or Afghanistan. The reason was protecting the people of the United States and Britain and other -- and whatever you think about those wars, you should not -- and the fact that we had humanitarian components to them, as, I think, Western powers ought always to have in their warfare, that doesn't make them humanitarian interventions. Humanitarian interventions are not always conducted by the military, although very often they need a military component in order to make them successful.

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And the reason that is, is because humanitarian crises aren't natural disasters. They're not earthquakes; they're not acts of God. They're acts of political malevolence. That's why -- that's why violence is used for political purpose. That's what causes humanitarian crises. It's not a famine. It's an act of political violence by a government or another political actor. When that happens, that means a society is broken in some important way. So, I think we ought not to set the standard that humanitarian interventions very often fail to solve the underlying political problems, that they very often have unintended consequences, that they very often are complicated and get bogged down, and you lose your focus.

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The undertaking is intrinsically extraordinarily difficult. It's a society in transition, where political violence -- where violence is being used for political purposes in order to gain political outcomes. But that doesn't mean they never work. So, even if you don't buy Bernard's impassioned appeal that even one life deserves defending, there are practical, hard-edged policy reasons to engage in humanitarian interventions, and I will just offer two to you. One is that humanitarian interventions are often -- humanitarian crises are often the prelude of worst humanitarian crises, and there the example is Syria, where if we, external actors, taken action in 2012 or 2013, you would not --

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you may have seen a bad outcome, but it is unlikely to be worse than half a million dead Syrians, 11 million people refugees, the tottering of the surrounding governments of Jordan, Iraq, Turkey, and the fracturing of political dialogue in those countries as a result of the pressure that the violent collapse of Syria brought about. So --

[applause]

Kori Schake:

Thank you. So, it -- it's not true that doing nothing should leave us with a clear conscience. It's also not true that doing nothing has no strategic consequences. Russia's return to a power broker role in the Middle East, for example, is a direct consequence of us not intervening in the terrible humanitarian crisis in the Middle East.

00:30:11

[applause]

So, humanitarian interventions are seeking to address a political crisis that has resulted in violence in societies. It's difficult to get it right. We very often get it wrong. But sometimes we get it right. I would argue that Kosovo is a success story. Did it require military force? Yes, it did. But did it also prevent Slobodan Milosevic and Serbs from doing a terrible, brutal injustice to people who were ostensibly citizens of their country? Yes. That's a great outcome.

[applause]

We ought to celebrate that. And I think it is a mistake to believe you can -- that we can exist in innocence and purity in our own societies in our values.

00:31:08

And this I learned from Randy Shinavan [spelled phonetically] and the McCain campaign in 2008. You strengthen our values at their ragged edges. People don't make brave choices when they are in danger. You need to stand next to them and help them make good choices.

John Donovan:

Kori, I have to interrupt you --

Kori Schake:

Yeah.

John Donovan:

-- because your time is up, but what a nice finish that was. So [unintelligible] ladies and gentlemen, that ends Round 1.

[applause]

And we move on to Round 2. And Round 2 is where the debaters take questions from me and from you, our live audience, here in Brussels. They can also put questions to and interrupt one another, and I will be interrupting to move things along. In Round 2, we're going to explore what we just heard in the opening round. We heard from the team arguing for the motion: Frank Ledwidge and Rajan Menon. We heard an argument that -- against humanitarian intervention on the grounds that they have been divisive, that they are applied selectively around the world,

00:32:06

That they have uncontrollable consequences, and that the price to do it right is actually too high. And they say that this has been demonstrated again and again. The team arguing against the motion, Kori Schake and Bernard Kouchner, they make the point that the right metric of humanitarian intervention is one life at a time -- that there is, however, a strategic component, that there are strategic reasons for participating in humanitarian intervention, and that there are consequences for inaction as well. So, that sort of lays out where we are. But I want to jump a little bit to the news of the moment and the week that we're in. We're debating this in a week -- and in fact, on a day -- when Bernard, your organization, Doctors Without Borders, has put out a report that in the last two weeks alone, in Syria, a thousand people have been killed. There are 4,800 wounded, according to Doctors Without Borders, which we consider a credible source. Now, your opponents have told us that to intervene in Syria now, or even eight years ago, would have been a fool's errand.

00:33:08

You touched on this briefly in your opening, Kori. Would it have made a difference eight years ago, and would it be worth going in even now, into Syria, with the kind of intervention that you're talking about and supporting?

[KI]

Yes, and yes. It would have made a difference then because it would have helped adjudicate the divisive, difficult political debate internal to Syria. It would have restrained the ability of the Syrian government to use brutality as a weapon of political control. It -- the fact that we have done it poorly, in some instances, doesn't mean we haven't also done it well. Sierra Leone is a great example, where the British government engineered an intervention.

John Donovan:

Well, let me stop you there, because I would like to get you to those examples from the past.

00:34:01

I just want to stay on the Syria question for a moment and take it to your opponent, Rajan Menon. The same question: you're -- or in response to Kori Schake, having just actually made a very powerful statement -- that drew applause -- that it -- Syria was a case then, and now, for humanitarian intervention.

Rajan Menon:

Well, I sense headwinds from the audience, but I think it would have been complete madness to intervene in Syria. I hold no grief for the blood-drenched Assad regime. But here's what happened. A peaceful demonstration was set upon by a savage government. Very quickly, the operation -- the opposition was radicalized. And within a matter of months, the groups with --

Male Speaker:

Yeah.

Rajan Menon:

-- [inaudible] on the ground were either Islamists or people who wanted to create a Salafi state in Syria; Arar Al-Sham [spelled phonetically]; Jaysh Al-Islam; Jabat Al-Nusra. Now, if you send --

[applause]

-- weapons into a society where alliances are shifting, borders are shifting, corruption is existing.

00:35:01

Do you have any guarantee that the weapons are going to go to the good guys? And who are the good guys as time rolls along? Look, let's not have a competition for compassion and tragedy here. That's not what this is about, whether Frank and I care about dying people. Of course, we do. The question is, how do you make a very difficult decision that balancing --

John Donovan:

Okay --

Rajan Menon:

-- ethics and strategy?

John Donovan:

Let's let Bernard Kouchner respond to that.

Bernard Kouchner:

Yes. Another time we're talking about military intervention. You are right, the first scene of massacres was --

Frank Ledwidge:

You should be on this side.

Bernard Kouchner:

No, no, on the contrary. You should be thinking about what I'm going to say.

Frank Ledwidge:

Oh, I am.

Bernard Kouchner:

This is my idea, not a humanitarian intervention. We were in Syria. My people, the Medecins Sans Frontieres and Medecins Sans [unintelligible]. They were already there, and we take -- we took care of the wounded people.

00:36:00

Because you are starting the story with the massacre of the army, the [unintelligible] army, fighting on the crowd. But formerly we were there, and we are still there, but this is so difficult and risky. Don't ask the humanitarian people to be heroes and to want to -- to -- to sacrifice their life. Sometimes they are talking to -- about their families, thinking about their family. But we were there. Don't mix another time [spelled phonetically]. I'm not responsible --

John Donovan:

But, Bernard, let step in, because you asked me to listen to what you said, and I did, and I think you're a little off-point for the thing that's at stake here, which is the question of putting military force into the game --

Bernard Kouchner:

But we were [unintelligible] --

John Donovan:

-- in order to [unintelligible] --

Bernard Kouchner:

-- don't believe that humanitarian -- sir, please. We are not responsible of the direction of the army. We are not responsible of the setting up --

John Donovan:

No, no. But we -- I have to step in --

Bernard Kouchner:

[unintelligible] --

John Donovan:

I have to step in --

Bernard Kouchner:

[unintelligible] --

John Donovan:

The -- I don't want you to pivot away from what we're debating here. What we're debating here is --

00:37:01

Kori Schake:

Can I take a swing at it?

John Donovan:

-- whether it's justified for a nation to put military force [unintelligible] --

Bernard Kouchner:

[unintelligible] nation. We are a humanitarian people. We are not a nation.

John Donovan:

But we're asking what nations should be doing. That's the question here.

Bernard Kouchner:

But this is not, absolutely not, the problem.

John Donovan:

Okay, I don't want to be debating with you --

Bernard Kouchner:

[unintelligible] --

John Donovan:

-- about what the debate is about.

Bernard Kouchner:

-- involvement.

Kori Schake:

May I take a swing at this?

John Donovan:

Yes, please go ahead.

Bernard Kouchner:

Me too. Me too. We are talking about [unintelligible] --

John Donovan:

No, no, it's her turn.

Bernard Kouchner:

No, sir, no, sir --

John Donovan:

Kori -- Kori, please.

Bernard Kouchner:

We are talking about --

Kori Schake:

[unintelligible] --

Bernard Kouchner:

-- humanitarian involvement. She's talking also [unintelligible] --

John Donovan:

Kori, take it [unintelligible] --

Bernard Kouchner:

-- not about the nation and the army.

Kori Schake:

Okay. So, it seems to me that you are suggesting that any use of military force has to be an enormous use of military force, or that anything else would have failed. Windows of opportunity open and close with time.

John Donovan:

Good question.

Kori Schake:

And if, for example -- in the specific case of Syria, if, for example, we had taken away the government's ability to use air power, that would have leveled the playing field and possibly prevented the radicalization of -- of -- of rebels that you subsequently saw.

00:38:13

Frank Ledwidge:

Kori --

John Donovan:

Okay, Frank, I'd like you to actually answer Kori's point.

Frank Ledwidge:

Absolutely. I'm very keen to get stuck in here, because I can't let this pass. First of all, when you just take out a nation's air power, you don't do that; you make war on the state, and the Syrian air defense system is probably the strongest outside the Western world other than Russia. That would have been an extremely difficult undertaking, an act of war. And you might agree with me when I were to say -- if I were to say that perhaps Russia might have had something to say about that, given that they essentially run Syria's air defense system and much of its defenses. And also, Iran, who have-- both whose nations, whether we like it or not, have serious interests in the region. No, the "would have, could have, should have" argument doesn't work, because what, in my view, would have happened is we wouldn't have had green, white, red flags in Damascus.

00:39:01

We'd have had black flags in Damascus had we intervened with the 82nd Airborne Brigade [unintelligible] --

John Donovan:

Well, you're both talking about unknown outcomes. I mean, you're talking about what would have happened --

Frank Ledwidge:

Exactly my point, John.

John Donovan:

But you're doing the reverse. You're doing the reverse as well, though.

Frank Ledwidge:

I don't believe in "would have, could have, should have."

Kori Schake:

So, can I --

John Donovan:

Bernard, why don't you come back into this?

Bernard Kouchner:

Yes, please. But who is able to give the clearance to the humanitarian involvement? To whom do we have to address our question? Are we supposed to follow a government? We are not following a government. We are just answering to the victims' call. So, when the victims are in Syria, we tried, and sometimes we succeeded in sending, let's say -- this is -- of course, this is surgery for them, because unfortunately it was not something else. So, when it is starvation or the welcome of the refugees, also the humanitarian involvement is necessary, and we don't have to give to call for reformation [spelled phonetically].

00:40:02

So, there is a sort of vocation -- one by one -- without any [unintelligible] --

John Donovan:

But you talked in your opening, Bernard, about sometimes some operations need military protection. That's what we're talking about.

Bernard Kouchner:

Of course, yes.

John Donovan:

So, in those situations, what the -- what your opponents are saying is, "Actually, that's never going to be a good thing. That's never going to work." And that's what's at stake here.

Frank Ledwidge:
John, we're not [inaudible] going to work.

John Donovan:
Okay [unintelligible] --

Frank Ledwidge:
Generally speaking, it does more harm than good --

John Donovan:
Fair enough, because you also said the reverse.

Frank Ledwidge:
That's our piece.

John Donovan:
You said sometimes it doesn't work, but generally speaking, it does.

Bernard Kouchner:
Of course, yes.

John Donovan:
So, on hold.

Rajan Menon:
John, may I --

John Donovan:
Yes. Rajan.

Rajan Menon:
Look, I have great admiration for Mr. Kouchner. He is a towering figure on the world stage and a true humanitarian.

Frank Ledwidge:
Absolutely.

Rajan Menon:
But let me ask you this -- and this does not apply to -- there's a but coming, but not yet, yeah?

[laughter]

But let me ask you this. If there's so much compassion in the West for suffering people, why haven't we done something that's much easier than taking out the Syrian air defense system or sending arms into Syria?

00:41:02

Why is the World Food Program and the UNHCR going around with a begging bowl, because rich countries have not provided -- but they promised --

Bernard Kouchner:
But [inaudible] --

Rajan Menon:
Mr. Kouchner --

Rajan Menon:
Now, one other thing.

Bernard Kouchner:
[inaudible] -- [applause]

Rajan Menon:
One other thing. I had a very clever debating teacher. She was brilliant. And she told me, "If you don't win the argument, reframe the debate." Mr. Kouchner is talking about aid, relief, mediation --

Bernard Kouchner:
Yes.

Rajan Menon:
All this. No one disagrees with that. It's the sharp end of the stick that has made this debate so controversial. Why? Because we've seen it used, and often with cataclysmic consequences. And on the point that Iraq was not a humanitarian intervention -- when they didn't find WMD, what if the some of the humanitarian interventionists -- not Mr. Kouchner -- Tony Blair and all those say, "Well, we got rid of the dictator." You got rid of the dictator and turned the Middle East upside down. That's what you did.

Bernard Kouchner:
No, but --

John Donovan:
All right.

Bernard Kouchner:
I'm sorry --

[applause]

John Donovan:
Bernard, so finish your point. I want to move on to something else. But go ahead.

00:42:00

Bernard Kouchner:

This is a big misunderstanding -- a big misunderstanding.

Rajan Menon:

[laughs] Please enlighten me.

Bernard Kouchner:

You are not talking about humanitarian intervention. You are talking about military -- and sometimes with humanitarian, sometimes without. This is not -- this is your problem -- but this is not the problem of the people defending and offering to suffering to heal the victims.

Rajan Menon:

John --

Bernard Kouchner:

This is not the same situation.

John Donovan:

I -- so we're finding an interesting distinction, that there are military interventions with a humanitarian component and that there are humanitarian interventions with a military component. And I think that's a little bit where the dividing line is. But I want to move to another topic that your opponents brought up again. I'll bring this to you, Kori. They talked about having public support at home. So, you're an American citizen. You know the political situation there. There's a president who's arguing for an America First policy. There are national priorities -- like, the -- say, the opioid crisis, or education, or even paying for infrastructure. Today, as your opponents say, how could a president who wants to compel -- can persuade the American people to be behind a humanitarian intervention, using military force, in somebody else's country -- using their treasure and their blood?

00:43:11

Kori Schake:

So, my favorite reflection on the war weariness of the American public actually comes from the satirical newspaper the Onion, which argues that the nation's college professors are weary of the burden they're carrying of our wars, right? Because the nation's college professors aren't carrying the burdens of our wars. And in fact, the American public hasn't objected to the -- this president of the United States, with his America First doctrine, from increasing troops fighting in Afghanistan, from increasing troops fighting in Iraq --

[applause]

-- from increasing troops fighting in Syria, from increasing troops fighting in the Sahel [spelled phonetically]. Those are not all humanitarian interventions. But if the American public were so weary of the burden of war, the president would be saying some political price for that.

00:44:06

And in fact, what you see is the reverse, right?

John Donovan:
[affirmative]

Kori Schake:
Your average American --

Male Speaker:
John, John --

Kori Schake:
-- gets drawn out into the world by the expressions of our values.

John Donovan:
Let's take that point to your opponents.

Frank Ledwidge:
John --

John Donovan:
Frank first -- and then --

Frank Ledwidge:
Whether President Trump never sends another soldier abroad, the United States are in hock [spelled phonetically] for \$5.6 trillion for what's gone on over the last 16 years. That's the cost, never mind the 6,000 dead soldiers, 60,000 injured soldiers, and all the other political costs. You're in hock for that already. And I would suggest to you that there's very little appetite for another dollar being spent on that kind of intervention.

John Donovan:
I'll let Rajan go, and then you can have --

Rajan Menon:
Ladies and gentlemen, when all else fails, attack professors. [laughs] If only -- if only we had the influence that Kori thinks we have. Look, I'm not talking about university professors. Who cares about them? I'm one. I'm negligible. I spend a fair amount of time with military people.

00:45:01

You know how I started doing it? I worked for two years on the New York City suicide hotline and talked to our troops who'd come back. All we do is tie yellow ribbons around trees and wave the flags. They come back maimed, with PTSD, and I've talked to them exactly about this. So, please don't tell me that I'm sitting in an ivory tower. I have friends who have served there, and I can tell you when you leave this echo chamber called Washington D.C. and go to Missouri or Oregon or Texas, there is no stomach for this. And, ladies and gentlemen, don't take my word for it: Pew has done very good polling on this. When you tell people that the cost rises in blood and treasure, support falls off. Look it up.

John Donovan:

So, Bernard, on that point, you're -- one of your successors today, as we speak, on evidence, potential evidence that chlorine gas was used in Syria, is talking about if evidence -- if solid evidence comes of the Syrian regime now using chemical weapons, he would support intervention. Do you think the French public would be behind that?

00:46:00

Bernard Kouchner:

To answer precisely to your question, yes. But it's too late. Unfortunately, we are witness in Earth's [spelled phonetically] and not protesting at all to the fall and the death of La [spelled phonetically] Ghouta, close to Damascus.

John Donovan:

[affirmative].

Bernard Kouchner:

Are we supposed to send people? Yes, we tried, but it's impossible to pass the troops, to pass through, et cetera. But you were asking about Kurds. We didn't ask the President Hollande or the President Macron or the President Sarkozy to help the Kurdish people. We did. We are not asking any power, any elected power. We are just doing it, and in Afghanistan this is obvious. I mean, humanitarian involvement in [unintelligible] of the involvement of the American people. But nine September, yes. And the people -- the terrorist people -- you had to react, but it was absolutely without any link to the humanitarian intervention.

00:47:06

We were since 15 years in charge of some region, [unintelligible], of Afghanistan, and we are close to the people. We are not just asking about our soldiers' involvement or your soldiers' involvement or any soldiers' involvement.

John Donovan:

Okay. I want to go to some questions from the audience now. The way this will work, I'm going to be given a microphone, and I will come and hold it for you so that I can take it back when I need to.

[laughter]

John Donovan:

And I just have a couple of rules on this. I want to -- I want to ask you: Do not debate with the debaters. Get them to debate with each other. So, actually ask a question. Please make terse. I don't mind if you state a short premise, but really ask a question, and you'll know it's a question if whatever you say naturally has a question mark coming at the end of it. That means that it would work. But I'd like to come right here, actually, and if you -- if you could stand up, and we'd like you to tell us who you are for the people who will be listening. And welcome to Intelligence Squared and German Marshall Fund debate.

00:48:01

I'm going to hold it. I'm going to hold it.

[laughter]

Female Speaker:

Danielle [unintelligible]. I think I'm the only one from Syria. I'm half-Syrian and I'm half-Lebanese. And I totally agree with Kori, and I've worked very closely with the refugees. And for the two gentlemen who advocate that not to interfere, would you suggest how to end this? Let Assad kill another million, a half a million? And now half of this population is refugee, so all the population is a refugee. And I'll tell you something. From working very closely with the refugees, the reason we have ISIS is because the America didn't intervene when Hezbollah and the Shia militias and the Assad -- they went and raped 11-year-olds, and they destroyed mosques and put the banner of [unintelligible] Hussein -- this [unintelligible] --

John Donovan:

Okay, I'm going to step in to actually -- to take your comment --

[applause]

-- to the point of what we're debating. And what I want to with your question, if you're fine with that, is take it to the ISIS question, unintended consequences. They're saying the unintended consequences -- she was saying the unintended consequences go in the other direction, that ISIS is there because Syria fell apart because there was not earlier intervention. Frank?

00:49:05

Frank Ledwidge:

ISIS is there because the Iraqi government, which is -- was at the time pretty much extra-legal -- supported and sustained Shia militias who were murdering Sunnis at much the same rate that ISIS murdered Shias. And I don't think there's too much controversy about that, and that's an offshoot of the Iraq war. And by the way, I myself used to see the conditions in which we kept some of those prisoners down in [unintelligible] prison camp. That's the source of ISIS. It has

nothing to do with whether or not we did or did not intervene back in 2013.

John Donovan:

Okay, let's let Kori Schake -- would you like to respond as well? You don't have to, but I want to give the crack at it.

Kori Schake:

It certainly is true that the decisions that the United States and other intervening powers in Iraq made -- both the decision to invade Iraq and then the decision to leave Iraq in 2011 facilitated the rise of ISIS.

00:50:05

There's no question about that. But it's also a lesson about what solves these problems, right? Because the -- if you think about the Iraq case, if the United States and other countries cared about good governance, helped establish an environment where Iraqis felt secure, they were beginning to make brave political choices in the parliamentary elections in 2010, for example, all the major slates for cross-sectarian. So, you can see how this works, when it works. But you can also see how it fails with --

Frank Ledwidge:

This is Potemkin Village stuff.

Kori Schake:

-- too little local knowledge, with too much hubris, with too little commitment, with too little caring about solving the underlying political problems is how these fail.

John Donovan:

I have another question. I'll hold it.

Female Speaker:

Yes. Yeah. I got it.

John Donovan:

[unintelligible] yeah.

[NK]

My name is Natalia Kalad [spelled phonetically]. I'm coming from Belarus and dealing with Pifomenad [spelled phonetically].

00:51:02

The question is, last week, I met with Sean Westmoreland. He is former U.S. Air Force veteran and pilot of drones. And he truly believed in humanitarian intervention. But it appears that, according to the report by his bosses, that he killed 200-plus enemies. And then, U.N. reported to him that he killed 359 civilians. So, his belief in humanitarian intervention disappeared. How

would you comment? Is it worse to have those civilians' deaths that are much higher than military enemies?

John Donovan:

Okay. So, again, I'll boil that down to good example of unintended consequences. What does evidence like that do to your side?

Bernard Kouchner:

Well, I'm not in charge of the drone system, I'm sorry. And -- but --

John Donovan:

But what about the --

Bernard Kouchner:

Okay. If you ask us if we are -- the humanitarian people, let's say -- roughly, in favor of peace, yes, we are.

00:52:05

And we proved it.

John Donovan:

That wasn't what the question was, though.

Bernard Kouchner:

Not to sit --

John Donovan:

But that wasn't the question. The question was --

Bernard Kouchner:

No, but the question was the murder by drones.

John Donovan:

Is it worth --

Bernard Kouchner:

Let me tell -- I'm sorry, but --

John Donovan:

-- 300 people killed versus 200 lives?

Bernard Kouchner:

-- but I'm in charge sometimes, because they call us [inaudible] --

John Donovan:

Okay. So, let me take it to Kori, then, because it's a --

Bernard Kouchner:

No, but sorry, you cannot change my mind.

John Donovan:

I'm not trying to change your mind at all.

Bernard Kouchner:

It's not --

[speaking simultaneously]

John Donovan:

No. I mean, I'm trying to stay --

Bernard Kouchner:

-- a humanitarian intervention.

John Donovan:

-- on the point of the military action.

Bernard Kouchner:

You are misunderstanding.

Kori Schake:

So, I think that's a terrible and a tragic example --

Bernard Kouchner:

Well --

Kori Schake:

-- of where things can go wrong. But the fact that things can go wrong, and bad things happen doesn't mean they always happen. It doesn't mean good things don't -- aren't also -- it seems to me that humanitarian intervention merits --

Bernard Kouchner:

Is necessary.

Kori Schake:

-- doing -- is necessary. That's not an argument for doing it badly. It's an argument to improve your knowledge, especially your local knowledge, to prevent mistakes like that from tarnishing the good that needs to be done.

00:53:07

John Donovan:

Rajan, do you have more to add to -- I mean, that question was sort of a big softball --

[applause]

-- for your side. So, I -- if you can really add to it.

Rajan Menon:

Yeah.

John Donovan:

Otherwise, I'd like to go to some questions.

Rajan Menon:

I just want to speak to you for a second. You've spoken with great eloquence and compassion, and I respect your knowledge. You've identified the problem, but you haven't elucidated the solutions. Now, on the business of people are learning, making proper choices, democracy, corruption -- we have heard this for 15 years. There are serious problems in my country with infrastructure, poverty, income inequality. The out-year [spelled phonetically] costs of these two campaigns -- that are unwinnable, by the way -- is \$5 trillion, all right? And we want to have more of this? It's not feasible. There are many problems in the world that admit no solution. There are many more problems, ladies and gentlemen, that admit no American solution.

00:54:02

It is a tragic world. Nobody wants people to die here. That's not what we're arguing. It is, what is feasible, given the constraints, given what people are prepared to support at home, given the risks of intervention -- which are considerable and have been sanitized by the other side. That's the issue. We're not having an arms race on compassion here.

John Donovan:

Bernard, I saw you exasperated.

Bernard Kouchner:

I'm --

John Donovan:

Response? Yeah.

Bernard Kouchner:

I'm disparate [spelled phonetically], yes.

John Donovan:

Yeah. Let's take it down to this side, and I'll come down to the -- sir.

Male Speaker:

Hi. Bart Sheftik [spelled phonetically] of the European Commission's European Political Strategy Center. A quick question for both sides. For Frank and Rajan, what do you make of the relatively successful 2014 humanitarian intervention to protect the Siddis in Syria? You didn't mention this instance, but it was a relatively limited instance of the use of force that saved about 50,000 people. Do you consider that to be a mistake? The primary thrust of humanitarian intervention is that to the extent that you could do something good, as Kori pointed out, with limited resources, you should do it.

00:55:06

And for your side to win, you would have to argue that that intervention, which didn't have any sort of secondary or tertiary consequences, was actually mistaken. For Kori, if I may --

John Donovan:

No, just one question.

Rajan Menon:

Okay.

John Donovan:

Thanks. But it's a great question. [unintelligible] more evidence from the other side. Frank?

Frank Ledwidge:

Yeah, I'd like to develop that.

John Donovan:

You guys are really doing the full Bill Clinton here with the walking-around thing.

Frank Ledwidge:

[unintelligible].

John Donovan:

Okay, it's your choice.

Frank Ledwidge:

Yeah, I'd like to -- I'd like to -- I'd like to address that directly. It's not our case that humanitarian -- military -- military -- humanitarian intervention is always going to cause more harm than good. It can cause good if it's well-planned, limited in duration, and strategic in nature. Yazidis is one example. However, I'd also point out to you that four million Iraqis, Iraqi Christians, are now outside their own country. They were not protected, and very many other minorities within that country.

00:56:02

So, this was a very narrow, very limited intervention, and as a result, successful. The same applies, too, to some degree, by the way, as you said earlier, Kori, to the Sierra -- Sierra Leone

intervention in '99. Extremely limited, extremely to the point, and very, very short.

John Donovan:

But I hear Kori and Bernard arguing that if it meets those conditions you just set, then their side wins.

Frank Ledwidge:

No, [unintelligible] --

John Donovan:

Kori, you are essentially saying that, right?

[applause]

John Donovan:

So --

Frank Ledwidge:

I wonder if you could name -- Kori can name one intervention in the last 20 years which was, by the way, an off-the-books action by a British general that was not authorized by his government - - a rather brave action by General Richards. That's the only example you can point to, plus the aid drop, because that's what it was. There was very little military involvement other than that to the Yazidis a couple of years ago. And that's it.

Kori Schake:

I think the intervention in East Timor led by Australia --

Bernard Kouchner:

Yes, and in Kosovo.

Kori Schake:

-- counts as a success.

00:57:02

I think Kosovo --

Frank Ledwidge:

UN-authorized.

Kori Schake:

-- counts as a success. I think the 1991 protection of what we now come to think about as the Kurdish territory --

Frank Ledwidge:
[unintelligible].

Kori Schake:

-- of northern Iraq, which was not a narrow or limited intervention, was an enormous success.

John Donovan:

Another question here.

Female Speaker:

Hi, I'm Nancy Lindborg [spelled phonetically] with U.S. Institute of Peace. And I actually think we have three debates going on here.

John Donovan:

At least, at least.

Female Speaker:

At least. But even among the four, I think, you know, the humanitarian community has long seen that action alone by humanitarians will not get to resolution of these problems and have welcomed different approaches. I'm struck by the lack of discussion in this debate on the political dimension.

John Donovan:

Can you -- can you target it with a question then?

Female Speaker:

What -- where's the political action in this -- in the discussion of humanitarian interventions?

John Donovan:

Rajan, do you take [unintelligible] that question?

Rajan Menon:

Only if she can explain what she -- I'm not quite -- it's not your fault. I'm not understanding your question.

00:58:00

What do you mean when there's no --

Female Speaker:

We've made it very binary between humanitarian actors or military actors, but the political, diplomatic -- the ways in which you want to try to invoke the long --

Kori Schake:

Yeah --

John Donovan:

Do you mean -- do you mean aren't there other -- aren't there other methods other than military force on a spectrum? On a spectrum?

Male Speaker:

John --

Kori Schake:

These aren't natural --

John Donovan:

I don't think anybody disagrees with.

Kori Schake:

-- disasters.

Rajan Menon:

John?

Kori Schake:

They're political problems, and they of course require political solutions that -- that sometimes military force is a necessary component of. Very always [spelled phonetically] other tools are also necessary.

John Donovan:

We have a question or a follow-up on that. I'm going to hold -- I'll hold the microphone. I'll hold the microphone. I'll hold the microphone.

[laughter]

Male Speaker:

Okay, thank you very much. I'm from Morocco. I want to ask the panelists don't you think that today we have the crisis in the international bodies and instrument [spelled phonetically]? I think today we have -- of course, we have humanitarian crises, we have refugees, but today I think that the Security Council should review its tools as far as --

00:59:03

John Donovan:

Do you have a question, though? I --

Male Speaker:

[inaudible].

John Donovan:

Okay, I need something that --

Male Speaker:

Do you think we should review the tools U.N. and [unintelligible] agreements?

John Donovan:

And I want to add to that question. Would a review of the tool -- is there a way -- I think this gentleman is basically saying -- is there a way to improve the processes to turn the tide against the situation in which you're arguing? In other words, is there something to be learned from the past to apply to the future? A set of guidelines to do this right that would, you know, 30 years from now, change your mind about how things went?

Frank Ledwidge:

Well, we might consider some political solutions, as you suggested. I was talking to a NATO official a couple of months ago concerning Syria, and I asked whether or not we might consider -- and this is political; it's more financial -- what -- instead of sending our troops, American troops, British troops, European troops, to somewhere like Syria, we might consider, oh, I don't know, targeting some oligarchs in London and making sure that they have, for example, immigration problems.

01:00:01

And the senior NATO official said, "Yeah, you know what?"

Bernard Kouchner:

Please.

Frank Ledwidge:

"I put that to my chiefs, and it was rejected. This is not the kind of solution" that is -- was felt to be appropriate. Instead, we devolve immediately to military solutions."

John Donovan:

Bernard?

Bernard Kouchner:

I already told you that we are mixing up everything. But I'm going to answer, about migrants. In --

Male Speaker:

Was there a question?

Bernard Kouchner:

They are dying in the Mediterranean Sea by the thousands. Two French boats or three French boats are in charge of rescuing them themselves. We didn't ask the government. One is Mete St. Frontiere [spelled phonetically], the other is Mete St. Douvan [spelled phonetically]. This is a

humanitarian intervention and not a military intervention. And we have a lot like that. Starvation, disease, ebola. Who is the first -- at the first rank to intervene? Humanitarian people. Do you want to suppress that or not? This is not always a question of war and peace.

01:01:02

This is a question of human being and answering to suffering. That's all.

[applause]

John Donovan:

Rajan.

Rajan Menon:

If this were a debate about mediation, providing relief to refugees, and so on, there would be no debate. Frank and I agree with this. What has made the project of humanitarian intervention controversial is the military dimension. Now, I take fully -- I take fully -- now, hang on -- I take fully --

Bernard Kouchner:

Thank you.

Rajan Menon:

-- Mr. Kouchner's point that there are other forms of it. But we are talking about the most pernicious forms. Now, can I quickly respond to a point that Kori made? I'll be very fast, very fast. East Timor and Kosovo. Here's the thing. The intervention in East Timor was possible because the TNI [spelled phonetically], the Indonesian Military, agreed to stand down and not resist. Had they not, it would not have happened. In Kosovo, NATO pilots were restricted no lower than 20,000 feet, even though the Serbs scaled up with the killing.

01:02:03

This goes to my point that the capacity to really suffer and die on behalf of these missions, ladies and gentlemen, is limited. That is a political question, not just a military question.

John Donovan:

Rajan, thank you very much. That concludes Round 2 of this Intelligence Squared U.S. debate, where our resolution --

[applause]

-- is Humanitarian Intervention Does More Harm than Good. Now we move onto our third and final round. In our third and final round, the debaters make closing statements -- again, one at a time. Those will be two minutes each. Immediately after that, we're going to have you vote a second time. And I want to explain now that in our debate system, victory goes to the team whose numbers have changed the most between the first and the second vote. So, it's not the

absolute vote; it's the difference between the first and the second vote. Let's move on to Round 3, closing statements from each debater in turn. Our resolution is: Humanitarian Intervention Does More Harm than Good.

01:03:00

Leading off with his closing statement, Rajan Menon. He is professor at the City College of New York and Senior Research Scholar at Columbia University.

Rajan Menon:

Two minutes. Right, John?

John Donovan:

Two minutes.

Rajan Menon:

Ladies and gentlemen, if you were to visit my study at home, you would see bookshelves groaning with books on humanitarian intervention. And I want to tell you a personal story. I started out on this side of the debate partly from reading about the incredible work that people like Mr. Kouchner do. I had enormous sympathy for the intervention in Bosnia. I do not want people to die; that's not what this is about. It was a long, and difficult, and painful road to me -- for me to come to where I am coming. We have to, in this tragic world -- read Max Weber or Thucydides -- filter moral issues through difficult circumstances. We may have people who are being put under enormous distress and would like to do something.

01:04:02

But a president has to -- or a prime minister -- this goes to you, ma'am -- has to put an enormous amount of attention on the political realities and the military risk. You've been a very energetic crowd, and I sensed where the momentum of the crowd is. But please don't misunderstand us. We don't take any join in arguing the position. It is not the idea that humanitarian intervention is always bad -- as witness the gentleman's question on the Yazidis. I think that was a good move. I supported it. The proposition is not whether it is always bad. That's not what we're arguing here. Thank you very much.

John Donovan:

Thank you, Rajan.

[applause]

Again, the resolution: Humanitarian Intervention Does More Harm than Good. And here to make his closing statement against the motion, Bernard Kouchner, co-founder of Doctors Without Borders and former French Foreign Minister.

Bernard Kouchner:

Let me say that your sentence is not good. You have to write "Humanitarian bar [spelled phonetically] and military intervention does more harm than good."

01:10:08

It will be better, and it will be more close to, let's say, the question you're asking. This is not a humanitarian intervention but humanitarian and military under military umbrella. It will be better, because you were never talking about humanitarian; that is to say, volunteers not guided by government people close to the others. Second, of course, you go to some of the point where it was necessary to intervene, but it was impossible to have intervene everywhere, because a state and an army -- especially American army or the British army or the French army are not bad. But humanitarian people are completely a little group, a few people under their own decision, under their own charter.

01:11:06

This is not because we were asking, as I told you, the approval or the clearance from any government. So, do you want to suppress that? Certainly not. You don't want to suppress the military intervention with humanitarian, but do you want to suppress the only unique humanitarian [unintelligible]? I don't think so. Do you want to suppress the way we were thinking about Ebola [unintelligible]? No, certainly not. So, it's always the case we are, let's say, answering the maximum or the minimum what we were able to answer to human suffering. It was a progress compared to the Second World War. We did something against barbarian people, against the nature of, let's say, the oppression. Do you want to suppress that? I don't think so.

John Donovan:

Thank you, Bernard Kouchner.

[applause]

01:12:00

John Donovan:

Once again, on the resolution Humanitarian Intervention Does More Harm Than Good, and here to make his closing statement, Frank Ledwidge, senior fellow at the Royal Air Force College and former military officer.

Frank Ledwidge:

Ladies and gentlemen, in such dangerous things as war, the errors which proceed from a spirit of benevolence are the worst class. Von Clausewitz, the famous Prussian general and theorist, said that just under 200 years ago, and it holds as much today -- holds as much water today as it did then. The disasters and catastrophes, the wreckage of which we're dealing with now, over -- over the last 15 years should give anyone pause before any kind of military intervention is considered. But there are times, aren't there? And it's not our case on this side of the house that humanitarian intervention can never work, only that, generally speaking, it does more harm than

good, and one major example of that was revealed by Bernard himself in his last but one speech, and that's Libya.

01:13:02

And Bernard doesn't need reminding, and nor do you, as to why it is that all those thousands of refugees and migrants are dying in the Mediterranean. That's because of the appalling mess we've made of Libya. I include myself in that. There are times, ladies and gentlemen, when we're tempted to do great and good things. Let me give you an analogy. We can say on the top of a mountain that there are people in desperate need of help. We know we should do something. We know something must be done, but we also know that if we go on that mountain to rescue them, we don't have the kit, we don't have the oxygen we don't have the resources to help them. We should do something, but we can't. Ladies and gentlemen, I was in Beirut a couple of years ago, and I met a young lady very similar to the young Syrian woman who spoke before. And I was there, rather pompously, to find out what Britain could do to ameliorate the situation there. I'll never -- never forget her response when she found out that I'd already been involved in several of these failed interventions.

01:14:07

She said, "Haven't you done enough?" Thanks very much, ladies and gentlemen. Support the motion.

[applause]

John Donvan:

Thank you, Frank Ledwidge. And our final speaker in closing rounds, Kori Schake. She is deputy director general of the International Institute for Strategic Studies, making her closing statement against the motion. Kori Schake?

Kori Schake:

So, our opponents in this discussion are big-hearted and well-meaning and made a lot of good points. Humanitarian interventions do often fail. Too often, governments engage in the desire to do something without thinking their way through what ought to be done, how to limit it in a way consistent with their limited interests in a particular problem, or with the limited opportunities that are a particular problem offers us.

01:15:03

But to suggest that humanitarian intervention does more harm than good overlooks the numerous cases where it has done more good than harm. The Yazidi example -- intervention in the Balkans, both in Bosnia and in Kosovo -- interventions in East Timor, Sierra Leone, the French intervention now in Mali is definitely doing more good than harm. They sometimes have a military component. They very often need a military component to freeze the situation in place because there -- these crises are the result of political choices by political actors. And you're

exactly right; doing it well requires knowing a lot, coming in with a sense of humility and not trying to overwhelm local actors, but to set them up for success.

01:16:02

And I still think the best commentary on this ever was from Edmund Burke, who said the use of force alone is but temporary. It may subdue for a moment, but it does not remove the necessity of subduing again. And a society, a country is never to be governed that must perpetually be conquered. In order to do humanitarian intervention well, you have to solve the underlying political problem. You have to create the basis for a different kind of sustained political agreement going forward.

John Donovan:
Thank you, Kori Shacke.

[applause]

And that concludes our closing statements. And now it's time for you to tell us which side you feel has argued the best. I want to ask you again to go to the app and go to the section on interactivity and look for the vote. And once again, you'll be given the option to vote on exactly the same resolution: Humanitarian Intervention Does More Harm than Good. You have the choice of for, against, or undecided. And I'll repeat -- well, we'll have the results in about --

Bernard Kouchner:
[inaudible] vote?

John Donovan:
-- two-and-a-half, three minutes.

01:17:01

So, you'll know who is our winner.

Bernard Kouchner:
There is no vote.

John Donovan:
But I'll repeat: we give victory to the team whose numbers have changed the most in percentage points from the first vote to the second vote. While that's happening, something I would just like to hear from the panelists -- the competition part is over. I'd actually just like to hear a little bit of conversation, given the flow of ideas here. And by the way, on the topic of the flow of ideas, you were a terrific audience. And I want to say --

Kori Schake:
Yay!

John Donovan:

-- you really worry. And the questions really moved things forward for us in the way that we like to have happen. I know a lot of people didn't get to ask their questions, but you can storm the stage afterwards and chat with the debaters. But for everybody who got up and asked a question, they all worked today. So, thank you very much. But I want to ask the debaters -- I'll start with you, Rajan. Just to -- did you hear anything from this -- and this is the question I'm going to put to all of you. Did you hear anything from your opponent that made you think twice about your position, or more deeply, or catch you by surprise? Anything that you heard from the other side that you said, "Okay, I see what they're saying."

01:18:00

Rajan Menon:

Think about it in a different way. I think I was very moved by Mr. Kouchner's eloquent statement about how much good can be done without the military dimension. I think he's absolutely right on that. I think Kori is correct that carefully planned and executed, under certain circumstances -- those circumstances, I think, are rare -- humanitarian intervention can work. We have never argued the proposition that it cannot work. These are two formidable intellectuals. I have enjoyed debating them. Thank you both.

John Donovan:

Okay.

[applause]

Kori, how about you?

Kori Schake:

The Libya case, I think, is an incredibly strong case for the opposition's side of the argument, where we unquestionably made a terrible --

[applause]

-- situation worse by our half-hearted and incremental meddling in it. In the extreme moment -- that is, when the decision was made to do something -- I think the overwhelming sense in the west that disaster was imminent might not have been correct.

01:19:05

And I think you can make that case even more strongly than perhaps we did. But I thought you guys played a difficult hand, especially with an audience of -- like this kind, that cares about creating positive change. I think you made a difficult case extraordinarily well.

John Donovan:

Yeah. And actually, you had thought the audience -- you got some applause throughout the evening, and I wasn't sure you thought you would get that.

Rajan Menon:
That was my mother.

John Donovan:
Ah, okay.

[laughter]

[applause]

Frank?

Frank Ledwidge:
Well, Bernard was my boss in Kosovo for a year-and-a-half, and it's a great honor to face off against him. Concerning difficult arguments, yeah, Kori's final points about the list of limited interventions is very effective.

John Donovan:
[affirmative]

Frank Ledwidge:
Notwithstanding Libya and so on. And she has a reputation of being the voice of reason, and I think, really, fulfilled that reputation.

Kori Schake:
Hey, thank you.

01:20:00

[laughter]

John Donovan:
But do you -- Frank, do you -- sort of to go back to a question that came up in the debate proper, do you see a future where we can perfect -- not perfect but get better at this thing?

Frank Ledwidge:
No, I see it -- I see it honestly going downhill.

John Donovan:
You do?

Frank Ledwidge:
Yeah. I think that unipolar [spelled phonetically] moment's passed, and there's too many -- simply too many military tensions to justify it.

John Donovan:

And, Bernard, how about you? From your opponents, did you hear anything that made you think twice? You get to say no.

Bernard Kouchner:

You know, I devoted my life to humanitarian intervention. I think, according to your position, I was wrong, but I don't regret anything, because I'm talking to the victim. Second point; don't accuse the vaccination [spelled phonetically] to be responsible of epidemics and pandemics. Don't accuse the anti-[unintelligible] tuberculosis to be responsible of tuberculosis. Humanitarian intervention is not responsible.

01:21:01

It does good [unintelligible] -- let's say, provoke success sometimes, and never harm against the people. Never, never, never, never, never.

John Donovan:

Okay, thank you very much. And thanks, everybody, for all of that. I just wanted to very briefly, for those of you who might be based in New York, to let you know that our next debate, if you're interested, is going to be on the -- well, let me put it this way. I'm just going to read this card, because I was going to try to ad-lib it, but it's too much, too dense.

[laughter]

Male Speaker:

[unintelligible].

John Donovan:

[unintelligible] exceptional debaters to the stage, including integrative medicine pioneer Deepak Chopra, Overstock CEO Patrick Byrne, Mozilla chairwoman Mitchell Baker, and the Financial Times Gillian Tett. The topics we'll be taking on this spring include the future of religion, Bitcoin, and net neutrality. You can go to our site to get more information on all of our debates. We would love to see you there, and I'm betting there are people in this audience who will be on our stage as debaters someday.

01:22:02

Our website is IQ2US.org. Okay, I'm been told that I have the results in. Remember, we had you vote twice, and it's the difference between the first and the second vote that determines our winner. In the first vote on the Resolution Humanitarian Intervention Does More Harm Than Good, before the debate, in polling you here in Brussels, 30 percent of you agreed with this motion, 51 percent were against the motion, and 19 percent were undecided. In the second vote, the team arguing for the motion -- their first vote was 30 percent; their second vote was 34 percent. They gained four percentage points. That is the number to beat. The team against the motion -- they went from 51 percent; their second vote was 59 percent. They pulled up nine -- eight percentage points. That means the team arguing against the motion Humanitarian

Intervention Does More Harm Than Good is declared our winner.

01:23:01

[applause]

John Donovan:

Congratulations to them. Thank you from me, John Donovan, Intelligence Squared U.S., and German Marshall Fund. We'll see you next time. Congratulations. Congratulations. Everybody, this was such a pleasure for us. We are so grateful to the German Marshall Fund. Coffee's outside. We'll see you later.

[applause]

[end of transcript]