On 25 April 2003, two rebel groups, the Sudanese Liberation Army and the Justice and Equality Movement, attacked the El Fasher airport in Darfur, Sudan, killing 75 Sudanese government troops and destroying seven government aircraft.\(^1\) In response, the Sudanese government in Khartoum began a counterinsurgency campaign to end the rebellion in western Darfur by using proxy militias with the support of government air and ground forces. Four hundred thousand people have died because of that counterinsurgency campaign, and another 1.3 million have been displaced.\(^2\) If a genocide were to occur in the United States that affected the same percentage of its population, 20 million Americans would die and 65 million others would be displaced persons.\(^3\)

The world responded to the violence in Darfur with two operations. The first, the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS), began in 2004. The African Union Mission in Sudan at first monitored the Addis Ababa Agreement of 28 May 2004, which established a temporary ceasefire between the government and the Sudan Liberation Army; however, both sides violated the cease-fire, and the AMIS remained as an observer, powerless to stop the violence.\(^4\) In 2005, AMIS received a broader mandate to protect civilians on the ground, but the African troops that made up AMIS’s peacekeeping force proved too few and unqualified to end the genocide.

The second (and current) operation to bring peace to Darfur, United Nations African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID), is under the auspices of both the UN and African Union, yet, like AMIS, it lacks the ability to stop the genocide. In July of 2007, the UN Security Council, recognizing the failure of the AMIS, passed Resolution 1769, which authorized organizing 24,000 troops for Darfur while providing a strong mandate to protect civilians there as well.\(^5\) This resolution, however, has not delivered peace to Darfur.

The main reason for UNAMID’s lack of success is that UNAMID, like AMIS, has only low-quality African troops at its disposal. The Sudanese government ensured that no first-world troops deployed to Darfur by refusing to accept Resolution 1769 unless it contained a status of forces agreement mandating that Western militaries intervene only if African troops could not.\(^6\) The Sudanese government was able to achieve this agreement because, as The New York Times’ Lydia Polgreen reported, “When previous large (peacekeeping) missions were organized in Congo, Liberia, and Sierra Leone, the central governments in those countries had collapsed or were so weak that they had little choice but to accept peacekeepers.”\(^7\)
Unfortunately, because of its oil reserves and ties to first-world countries, the Sudanese government remains relatively strong and can maintain its claims to sovereignty and dictate the nature of the peacekeeping force within its borders.\textsuperscript{8}

Without a high-quality military force partaking in operations, UNAMID cannot succeed. According to Polgreen:

Even the troops that are in place [in Darfur], the old African Union force and two new battalions [of UN forces], lack essential equipment, like sufficient armored personnel carriers and helicopters, to carry out even the most rudimentary of peacekeeping tasks.\textsuperscript{9}

Some even had to buy their own paint to turn their green helmets United Nations blue.\textsuperscript{10}

In addition, UNAMID has neither the mandate nor the forces to end the Sudanese government’s air operations against civilians. Without properly equipped and trained troops or the means to stop the air strikes against civilian targets, UNAMID will continue to fail; clearly, peacekeeping operations in Darfur must change in order to end genocide in that region.

**No-Fly Zone and Peacekeeping**

As the world’s preeminent military and economic power, the United States is the sole actor who can bring about the change in peacekeeping that Darfur needs to achieve peace. In a speech at the Naval Academy in 2007, Max Boot, a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, advocated sending Blackwater (now called “Xe”), the private military contractor, into Darfur to end the genocide for the bargain price of $40 million.\textsuperscript{11}

When combined with a no-fly zone over Darfur, putting private military contractors on the ground there is a viable option for bringing the genocide to an end quickly and cheaply. Analyses of past no-fly zones over northern and southern Iraq and of South African private military contractor actions in Angola and Sierra Leone suggest that the United States could end the genocide in Darfur by implementing such a zone over Darfur and introducing military contractors to act as a force multiplier for UNAMID.

In Operation Provide Comfort and Operations Northern Watch and Southern Watch, the United States demonstrated the important role air denial plays in disrupting state-sponsored crimes against humanity. After the first Persian Gulf War in 1991, the Iraqi government under Saddam Hussein began a campaign to control the rebellious Kurdish population in northern Iraq and the Shi’ite population in southern Iraq after Iraq’s defeat by coalition forces. The Iraqi military used helicopter gunships extensively in both regions. In northern Iraq, the gunships fired napalm and chemical weapons on civilian targets.\textsuperscript{12} The United States responded with Operation Provide Comfort in the North, which expanded into Operation Northern Watch in 1996. The U.S. launched Operation Southern Watch and in southern Iraq in 1992.

The United States and its allies used combat aircraft and patrols to achieve air superiority and end Iraq’s aerial persecution of the Kurds and Shi’ites. Operation Northern Watch maintained air superiority over Kurdish regions in northern Iraq from 1996 to 2003 using approximately 50 combat and support aircraft.\textsuperscript{13} Considering that the U.S. Air Force has over 2,000 combat aircraft at its disposal, Operation Northern Watch was a minimal commitment that produced excellent results.\textsuperscript{14}

Major Michael McKelvey states that the two no-fly zones in Iraq resulted in “the elimination of Iraqi aircraft in the two areas of operation … an end to the use of aircraft against innocent civilians, and a permissive environment for other allied military actions.”\textsuperscript{15}

These observations indicate that establishing a no-fly zone over Darfur using U.S. aircraft could easily and cost effectively end the Sudanese government’s use of aircraft against civilian targets.

The Sudanese government uses Russian-made bombers and attack helicopters to attack civilian targets in Darfur. Scott Straus, an assistant professor of political science at the University of Wisconsin, describes the integral role that aerial attacks serve: “The Sudanese Air Force has participated in attacks by bombing villages before soldiers and militias launch ground attacks. There is considerable evidence that the militia, army, and air force act in a coordinated fashion.”\textsuperscript{16}
Brian Steidle, the central figure of both the book and documentary, *The Devil Came on Horseback*, vividly describes the strikes by the Sudanese Air Force against civilian targets: “The [government of Sudan] GOS would sometimes ‘drop’ bombs by kicking them out the back end of the Antonovs.” 17

Other reports claimed the GOS would target civilians by throwing mortar rounds out of the back of aircraft as they flew over villages or packing 55-gallon drums with explosives and shrapnel and just rolling them out. It was not a very high-tech operation, but it was lethal. 18 These tactics, although rudimentary, achieved the government’s aims in Darfur, for, as Alan Kuperman writes, they “are effective at wreaking terror, compelling people to flee their villages.” 19

As previously mentioned, United Nations Mission in the Sudan has neither the capability nor the mandate to stop the Sudanese government’s use of military aircraft against civilian targets in Darfur; however, if the United States would establish a no-fly zone over Darfur, this aerial aspect of the violence in Darfur would end. 20 The pilots of the Sudanese Air Force would not fly against U.S. aircraft because, as mercenaries and former Soviet Air Force contractors, their primary motivation as pilots is to make a profit, which, of course, they cannot enjoy if they are killed. 21 The mere presence of U.S. aircraft over Darfur would deter these pilots from flying and end the air attacks against civilians. If the pilots attempted to defy the no-fly zone, U.S. fighters could easily destroy their aircraft and remain unchallenged as they did over Iraq for over a decade. 22

**Private Military Contractors as Peacekeepers**

A no-fly zone over Darfur, however, will not end the genocide by itself. No-fly zones alone cannot end ethnic cleansing, especially when ground forces conduct the majority of the atrocities. Such conflicts require peace-enforcing ground elements. McKelvey writes:

> Air power has definite limitations in the degree of control it can exert over an opponent. The lack of ground forces in support of Operation Southern Watch has severely restrained the ability to protect Shi’ites on the ground. . . . Operation Provide Comfort, on the other hand, has successfully employed both ground and air forces to stop the oppression of the Kurds in Northern Iraq. 23

This view affirms that effective ground elements remain a necessary component to any strategy to end the genocide in Darfur.

Private military contractors represent a cost-effective and capable option available to policymakers for bringing effective ground elements into Darfur to end the genocide. The case of the South African private military contractor Executive Outcomes (EO) in Angola and Sierra Leone in the 1990s offers a convincing example of how contractors can facilitate the end of African conflicts cheaply and effectively. Executive Outcomes formed in 1989 as apartheid ended in South Africa. Due to post-apartheid laws, a large supply of South African special forces soldiers became available for hire, and EO’s founders, former South African special forces soldiers themselves, took advantage of this labor market to create the company. The high-level training and experience of the EO personnel resulted in the creation of a highly effective fighting force. 24

Executive Outcomes had two highly successful interventions in Africa during the 1990s and served as a “force multiplier” and combat force that ended two conflicts that were not unlike the genocide in Darfur. In Angola, Executive Outcomes fought on behalf of the Angolan government against the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) rebels. Executive Outcomes fielded some 550 men and trained over 5,000 troops and 30 pilots. 25 In less than a year’s time, EO-trained Angolan forces brought the UNITA rebels from controlling 85 percent of the Angolan countryside in 1993 to signing the Lusaka Protocol in November 1994, ending the fighting and facilitating a new round of elections. 26

In addition to acting as a force multiplier, Executive Outcomes secured vital areas for government
and supported government units. For example, EO personnel seized a series of diamond mines and oil installations from rebel forces, helping fund the government’s war effort while reducing UNITA’s ability to maintain its rebellion. Pilots on the EO payroll provided air support to government troops and EO personnel in combat. Pilots “belonging to Ibis Air—in which EO was a significant shareholder—flew combat missions in MI-8, MI-17, and MiG 23 fighters.”

The success of Executive Outcomes as a force multiplier and combat element came at a relatively small cost compared to other humanitarian interventions. Vines states, “EO activities in Angola cost $60 million, with 20 fatalities.” This small cost resulted in a peace settlement to a conflict that, at its height, killed over 1,000 people per day.

However, the Lusaka Protocol did not last. In 1997, the civil war between UNITA and the Angolan government resumed. The Lusaka Protocol required Executive Outcomes to leave Angola, which precluded the government from being able to provide long-term security and end the conflict.

In Sierra Leone, Executive Outcomes provided similar services and similar results. The Revolutionary United Front, in a four-year campaign against the government, gained control of most of the country at the cost of 15,000 lives and the displacement of 1.5 of the country’s 4 million people. Sierra Leone hired Executive Outcomes in May 1995 as a force multiplier, a combat element, and an air support provider for Sierra Leone’s 14,000-man army.

As it had in Angola, Executive Outcomes and Sierra Leonean forces it trained achieved quick and impressive success against the Revolutionary United Front. Vines describes EO operations:

[Executive Outcomes’] military progress (in Sierra Leone) was rapid. Again, the company acted as a force multiplier providing technical services, combat forces, and limited training. By late January 1996, [Executive Outcomes] backed forces had retaken the southern coastal Rutile and Bauxite mines . . . [Executive Outcomes] claims that only two of its personnel were killed during its operations, which lasted a year and a half. As in Angola, a ceasefire followed, in November 1996.

In early 1996, 120 EO personnel supported by attack helicopters turned back a major offensive against the capital of Freetown by numerically superior Revolutionary United Front forces, proving its abilities as an effective combat force against low-quality militias more profoundly than in Angola. In addition, EO operations in Sierra Leone came at a comparatively low cost of $35 million.

These interventions in Angola and Sierra Leone provide a blueprint for how a private military contractor could deploy to Darfur and bring stability to that region. The janjaweed are “rifle-armed and camel or horse-borne Arab tribal cavalry” who receive their payment in loot; thus, they represent the low cost option for counterinsurgency. The low cost of the janjaweed means that they are low-
quality units similar to the Revolutionary United Front or UNITA. Brian Steidle stated that Sudanese forces in Darfur and the janjaweed were “not a well-structured or disciplined entity. Compared with Western [military] standards, their capabilities were poor.” A contractor such as Blackwater (Xe), DynCorp, or Sandline International could deploy to Darfur, using the Executive Outcomes blueprint, and effectively neutralize the inferior janjaweed and government units under the cover of a U.S.-enforced no-fly zone.

A contractor in Darfur could effectively act as a force multiplier for the UNAMID by using helicopters, its own personnel, and surveillance aircraft to provide security for threatened villages and internally displaced-persons camps until UN troops could effectively do it themselves. The no-fly zone over Darfur would allow contractor units to use unmanned aerial vehicles and helicopters to monitor endangered villages and camps, quickly move ground units to areas under attack by the janjaweed, and then deploy the necessary ground and air elements to defend the village or camp. This objective could require relatively few contracts because, as Executive Outcomes demonstrated outside Freetown against the Revolutionary United Front, a few highly trained and competent contractors can defeat large numbers of low-quality militia. The ability to move troops with helicopters and do reconnaissance from the air would allow them to cover large areas with few troops because, instead of having to defend every village and camp, they could monitor the movements of the janjaweed and move to only those areas they attack.

While the contractor elements provide security for the villages and camps of Darfur, their force multiplier component could train UNAMID troops so that a permanent stabilizing force could remain in Darfur as a peacekeeping force. In order to keep peace, however, peace must exist. The contractor combat elements could provide the force necessary to bring about peace, and then contractor-trained UNAMID soldiers could take over to ensure long-term stability, preventing a relapse into civil war.

Even if the combat elements could not bring the Sudanese government to sign an accord stopping the genocide, the low cost of both the no-fly zone and the contractors means that they could remain in place for many years. Based on Executive Outcomes’ costs in Angola and Sierra Leone, Boot’s figure of $40 million would probably be enough for a contractor to operate in Darfur for six months. The U.S. appropriated $192.4 million for Darfur in 2004. The UN currently has over $1.7 billion at its disposal for peacekeeping efforts in Darfur. The cost of a contractor, therefore, would represent a relatively small sum for either the United States or the UN to pay, especially when one considers the enormous potential contractors have to end the genocide in Darfur.

**Political Challenges**

Why has the United States not established a no-fly zone and introduced a contractor in Darfur? Many reasons exist. Individuals, governments, societies, the world community, and the U.S. military are only a few of the sources of inaction on Darfur, and each has a different reason for thinking that U.S. intervention is unacceptable.
Samantha Power, a leading scholar on genocide, argues that the United States hesitates to intervene to stop genocides primarily because not enough domestic political pressure exists to force elected officials and policy makers to act. However, this is not the case with Darfur. In her Pulitzer Prize-winning book, “A Problem From Hell”: America and the Age of Genocide, Power writes, “The real reason the United States did not do what it could and should have done to stop genocide was not a lack of knowledge or influence but a lack of will.”

Straus sums up Power’s argument well when he says, “For the battle (to stop genocide) to be won, argues Power, constituents, civil society, elite opinion makers within the government need to pressure representatives to create the necessary political will.”

Straus argues that a strong domestic coalition for intervention in Darfur does exist, but that other sources impede UN action. Since the genocide in Darfur began, individuals and organizations shocked by the tragedy have formed a diverse and potent interest group. Straus writes that the “coalition included evangelical Christians, African-Americans, human-rights organizations, Jewish-American groups, and government officials.” The group has broad political influence. For example, evangelical Christians remain one of the Republican Party’s most fervent and loyal constituencies, while African-Americans represent one of the most avid and loyal constituencies of the Democratic Party. Unfortunately, as Straus articulates, “the domestic pressure was not sufficient to generate a concrete policy to stop the genocide.” Straus points to the War on Terrorism as a major obstacle to U.S. intervention in Darfur. The U.S.’s troop commitments in Iraq and Afghanistan and its lack of credibility stemming from the War in Iraq made it difficult to garner the international support to intervene.

More important, a series of incidents involving contractors in Iraq make it politically and bureaucratically difficult to involve them in Darfur. On 16 September 2007, Blackwater (Xe) security personnel killed 14 Iraqi civilians without cause, creating an image of military contractors as trigger-happy, money-loving killers with no moral or ethical standards. Consequently, most Americans and U.S. congressman view private military contractors and the janjaweed as similar entities, making it unlikely that Congress would deploy combatant contractors to Darfur.

A second incident involving the loss of Blackwater personnel in late March 2006 in Fallujah, Iraq, demonstrates that, even though they are not U.S. military personnel, the deaths of contractors can have major political ramifications and evoke memories of Somalia in the 1990s. While driving through Fallujah, four Blackwater contractors were ambushed, killed, and mutilated. Their bodies were further dragged by an angry mob through the streets of the Iraqi city—a scene similar to one in Mogadishu in 1992 that precipitated the end of last major U.S. peacekeeping effort in Africa. As a direct result of these killings, U.S. Marines embarked on Operation Vigilant Resolve. Thus, U.S. policymakers had to use military force because of contractors even though a major reason for the use of contractors is to avoid committing U.S. ground forces. The Fallujah killings undermined one of the major advantages. The United States may have to withdraw military contractors due to domestic political pressure, as President Clinton did in Somalia, or use U.S. military forces to stabilize a situation where they are used.

The U.S. military also seems unlikely to support the introduction of contractors and the establishment of a no-fly zone because the Pentagon does not want to give up its monopoly on military force or make the bureaucratic planning effort necessary for a no-fly zone. A U.S. government official has indicated that contractors would likely be removed from combat roles in both Iraq and Afghanistan. The Pentagon will not support hiring military contractors to assume combat operations in Darfur.

Finally, the overwhelming importance of the War on Terrorism means that the Pentagon is unlikely to spend precious time and resources on an effort that does not pose a threat to U.S. national security.

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Power writes, “The U.S. government is likely to view genocide prevention as an undertaking it cannot afford as it sets out to better protect Americans.”

In addition, 80 percent of Sudan’s oil goes to China, and China needs that oil to support its constantly expanding economy. China’s economic involvement in Sudan makes it unlikely to support a strong peacekeeping element that could undermine the Sudanese government. China desires to maintain the status quo in Sudan so that it can continue to procure most of Sudan’s oil. China might provide large amounts of military aid to the Sudanese government to sustain Chinese oil contracts, which could further inflame the situation in Darfur. With its veto power on the Security Council, China could block any American attempts to give the no-fly zone and contractors legitimacy with a Security Council Resolution.

African nations that surround Sudan and dominate the African Union oppose a U.S. intervention in Darfur because of concerns over sovereignty. An intervention in Sudan would violate the nation’s sovereignty, and several of Sudan’s neighbors, such as Chad and Libya who do not have glowing human rights records, might worry that the U.S. could invade them next. Smaller states with important national resources might also worry that, after the Iraq invasion, similar action with Sudan could indicate a pattern of U.S. imperialism. Straus writes that there is clearly “international suspicion” that “humanitarian intervention will be a mask for material and strategic interests.”

It appears unlikely the United States or any other nation will introduce mercenaries and impose a no-fly zone over Darfur to end the genocide. Thus, Darfur is an excellent example of how the desire to do the “right thing” in international relations is less significant than a variety of important elements that remain critical to the formulation of U.S. foreign policy.

The goal of U.S. foreign policy is not always to do what is morally right. Foreign policy remains a projection of a state’s national interests. This cornerstone assumption of U.S. foreign policy will likely remain and will prevent the United States from using its economic and military power to stop genocides in the 21st century. MR

NOTES
8. China receives 80 percent of Sudan’s oil, while the United States receives support for the Sudanese government in the Global War on Terror.
9. Only 9,000 of the total 24,000 mandated by the Security Council have deployed to Darfur as of March 2008.
11. Max Boot cited a contact at Blackwater as his source for both the guaranteed success and price for such an endeavor.
19. Alan J. Kuperman is a professor at MIT and a leading expert on Genocide; Alan J. Kuperman, “The Cases of Rwanda and Sudan,” The Newsletter of Foreign Policy Research Institute 12 (2007).
20. According to Nikolos Kristof, the United States could immediately begin enforcing the no-fly zone through carrier-based aircraft; however, more long-term bases exist at Aicha, Chad, and at an already existing U.S. Air Force base in Djibouti.
23. McKelvey, 10.
27. Vines, 51.
28. Ibid. The Mi-8 and Mi-17 are Russian-made helicopters modified for combat operations, while the MiG 23 is a jet fighter-bomber aircraft.
29. Howe, 325.
30. Vines, 52.
31. Howe, 313.
32. Vines, 52; Howe, 313.
33. Vines, 53.
34. Arnold, 118.
35. Vines, 52.
37. Steidle and Wallace, 161.
38. Executive Outcomes did not have to pay for any of its weapons, ammunition, aircraft, or fuel while in either Angola or Sierra Leone, so its logistical costs were minimal. Any PMC in Darfur would have to procure this vital equipment; thus, the more expensive price tag. In addition, the need for more helicopters and unmanned aerial drones would increase the price tag.
40. Polgreen.
42. Straus, 51.
43. Ibid.
44. Ibid, 52.
45. Ibid.
48. Also known as the First Battle of Fallujah.
49. The author was informed of this conversation during his formulation of a U.S. Foreign Policy Class at the United States Naval Academy. The comment cannot be confirmed and was probably for non-attribution.
51. Steidle.
52. Although under the precepts of a Humanitarian Intervention version of Just War Theory, a legitimate argument can be made that the Sudanese government’s crimes against humanity means that Sudan has forfeited its right to sovereignty in Darfur. 53. Straus, 53.