

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Humanitarian intervention is not working. From Somalia to Bosnia to Rwanda to Kosovo to East Timor, the attempt by states to address complex humanitarian emergencies by means of military force has not been successful. The trauma of these failures has been further compounded by the often genuine moral urge that accompanies the decision to intervene. While it is probably impossible to act in a purely altruistic manner, many interventions have been undertaken by states with very limited national interests in the regions at stake. A genuine dilemma thus arises—why are actions based on morality producing such immoral results? Why does political conflict seem to consistently interfere in attempts to provide aid, end ethnic conflict, or restore democracy?

This book is an attempt to answer this question. My answer begins with a deductive interpretation of military intervention which is then explored through three case studies: the American and British intervention in Bolshevik Russia in 1918; the British, French, and Israeli intervention in Egypt in 1956; and the American and United Nations intervention in Somalia in 1992–3. These three interventions are rarely categorized together. Their goals range from humanitarian to geostrategic, and the states involved range from great to medium powers. But they share one key feature: they all failed in their professed goals, with the troops in each case being ignominiously recalled. My explanation of these failures does not fall into the typical “lessons of intervention” category, however. *In essence, these interventions, along with many others, fail because of a conflict between political agents who embody and enact divergent normative visions of international and domestic order.* In other words, the failure of intervention results not from an amoral or immoral power politics, but from an excess of normative politics.

What exactly is a normative conflict? These three interventions produced conflict on numerous levels. The failure of the British and American

intervention resulted from conflicts between the two allies, conflicts between the White forces and the allies, conflicts within the democratic systems of both Great Britain and the United States, conflicts between allied soldiers and the political leaderships, and conflicts between the intervening soldiers and the Russian peoples. The failure of the British and French intervention resulted from conflicts between the British and French and the Israelis, conflicts between the three intervenors and the Americans, conflicts between the intervenors and the government of Egypt, and conflicts between soldiers and Egyptian citizens. The failure of the American and United Nations troops in Somalia resulted from the conflicts between the United States forces and the United Nations (UN), conflicts between aid workers and soldiers, and conflicts between the Somali leaders and American forces. In all three cases, the conflicts that caused these interventions to fail did not exist in any one place; they were both domestic and international.

These conflicts have been explained by an inequality in power in the international system, by an inadequate attention to alliance politics, or by a failure to understand the politics of the target state. One explanation that has not been offered, however, focuses on norms, or rules and ideas about how the world should function. Admittedly, when viewed in hindsight, the motivations for the Russian and Egyptian interventions hardly seem concerned with normative issues. And there is no shortage of attempts to argue that the intervention in Somalia had no normative grounding but was simply an imperial adventure to secure access to oil in the Persian Gulf. Nevertheless, in reading the documents from each intervention, one is struck by the continued reference to moral norms as the justification for action. Woodrow Wilson believed that the norms of the American political system, liberal democracy and capitalism, were preferable to the norms embodied in communism. Anthony Eden and Guy Mollet believed that the norm of colonialism retained some moral purpose, especially when compared to the “radical” policies of Gamal abd al-Nasser. And George Bush believed that feeding Somalis and protecting them from warlords was a norm worthy of the United States.

But how can norms cause conflict? They cause conflict because in the competitive world of international politics, agents—primarily states—employ their histories and ideals in order to secure for themselves a prominent position in the international system. This form of conflict, one that results from the way states narrate themselves, is the primary reason for the failure of intervention. For, as I will demonstrate later in this chapter, narration is an important part of the ways in which states act. It is the link between a state’s history, its ideals, and its actions that leads to the failure of intervention.

As the last case study will demonstrate, however, states are not the only agents in world politics. The UN, while formally composed of its member states, has become an agent in its own right. Moreover, it also narrates its agency, as the proliferation of publications both by and about the organization reveal. The fact that many of the arguments I use to explain state agency can also apply to the UN makes this analysis relevant not only to the “Westphalian system” of sovereign states but to whatever political agents will emerge in the next global order. In a point I return to in the conclusion, changing the type of agent will not necessarily eliminate the conflicts I am identifying. Instead, we need to reconsider the concept of agency itself in order to ameliorate these conflicts, a task I undertake in a cursory way in the conclusion. Nevertheless, as a realist, I also believe that these normative conflicts will continue because they grow out of the very nature of politics itself.

THE CONCEPT OF INTERVENTION

Intervention is a commonly practiced, but also badly defined, international action. One leading publicist of international law has argued that almost any action a state undertakes to influence another state could be considered intervention (Henkin 1993, 869). Borrowing from the standard international law definition, intervention can be defined as a violation of the sovereignty of one state by another (Oppenheim 1948, 272–87). In this book, I focus more particularly on military intervention. For the purposes of this book, military intervention is defined in the following manner:

Military intervention is the use of armed troops to effect a change in the political system of a sovereign state without prior permission and without declaring war.

The term “armed troops” distinguishes this action from the use of air power alone to force change in a political system, or what some have called coercive diplomacy (see George 1991). The lack of a declaration of war also distinguishes intervention from war. This definition does not cover all cases. I have chosen it, however, because it seems to conform to the types of military action undertaken by great powers in the twentieth century that will become more common in the twenty-first century. Military intervention as defined here also seems to raise a great deal of political controversy in democratic societies such as the United States, a further reason for my definition.

In other words, I have presented a definition of intervention designed not to test the entire world of possible interventions. Rather, I have chosen this definition to explore a particularly troublesome, but also important

and ubiquitous type of political action. This approach may not please positivist-empiricist political scientists, in that it does not seek to capture the "reality" of intervention. But, as this book will make clear, intervention does not conform to a single reality but instead is the subject of highly contested interpretations. If this contestation is the case, then it seems more fruitful to explain the reasons for my definition than suppose it conforms to an observable reality. Moreover, this approach does not detract from whatever truth may arise from my analysis. Truth cannot be confined to the positivist-empiricist approach. Rather, I would argue that the truths to be found in this book include greater understandings of politics and ethics, understandings that can help guide United States foreign policy and international politics into the twenty-first century.

Others have grappled with intervention, resulting in a rapidly proliferating body of work. Some respond to current United States dilemmas of humanitarian intervention (Damrosch 1991; Harriss 1995; Hehir 1995; Smith 1997; Weiss and Minear 1993; Weiss 1999). Other works address non-United States interventions, such as the French literature on *le droit d'ingérence* (Salamé 1996; Landrin 1998; Zorgbibe 1994). There also exists a more theoretical body of work on intervention (Bull 1984; Debrix 1999; Feste 1991; Finnemore 1996; Forbes and Hoffman 1993; Lyons and Mastanduno 1995; Teson 1989; Vincent 1979; Weber 1995; Wheeler 2000).

To review the entire body of works on military intervention is beyond the means of this book, and probably beyond the attention of the reader. These works have created the background to this study and will be quoted and addressed when necessary. But because this book is using intervention to explore deeper questions of ethics and politics, this chapter will provide an explanation of some basic concepts. In order to understand my thesis that the failure of intervention results from the conflicts between political agents engendered by their pursuit of normative goals, both "normative goals" and "political agents" require further explanation.

ETHICS, NORMS, AND INTERVENTIONS

This book does not argue that all interventions are motivated by morally good aims. Rather it seeks to locate in an intervention its normative components. As recently defined by Peter Katzenstein, norms:

describe the collective expectations for the proper behavior of actors of a given identity. In some situations, norms operate like rules that define the identity of an actor, thus having "constitutive effects" that specify what actions will cause relevant others

to recognize a particular identity. In other situations norms operate as standards that specify the proper enactment of an already defined identity. In such instances norms have “regulative” effects that specify standards of proper behavior. Norms thus either define (or constitute) identities or prescribe (or regulate) behavior, or they do both. (Katzenstein 1996, 5)

As Katzenstein notes, norms both constitute identities and regulate behavior. The practice of intervention demonstrates both of these aspects of norms, as the historical chapters will demonstrate. Briefly, an intervention constitutes a state’s identity in that the reasons for intervening are often closely linked with the state’s history and values. Especially because interventions seek to create political order in a society, the order to be created is often modeled on the intervening state’s conceptions of politics. Interventions also display the regulative power of norms. In an intervention, states seek to justify their actions according to some larger norm of behavior shared in the international system. Whether that norm is creating democracy, guiding young nations to political maturity, or saving lives, an intervention will be justified according to certain standards of behavior.

Three different bodies of literature address the normative elements of international politics. The first can be called “positivist constructivists.” These approaches have sought to demonstrate the importance of ideas or norms in international politics, usually contesting the neorealist/neoliberal premise that ideas do not play the same role as power and wealth in explaining international politics (Adler and Barnett 1998; Barnett 1998; Bierstecker and Weber 1996; Finnemore 1996; Goldstein and Keohane 1989; Katzenstein 1996). Instead, these constructivists believe that norms and ideas not only help explain the outcomes of international interactions, they even help explain the very identities of those engaged in such interactions. The second group of writers who have addressed the question of norms can be called “legal constructivists.” The two leading theorists here are Friedrich Kratochwil (1989) and Nicholas Onuf (1989, 1998). Their arguments develop the idea that norms construct the world around us by creating the rules that make social and political interaction possible. Following philosophers of language such as Ludwig Wittgenstein and John Searle, Onuf and Kratochwil have demonstrated that norms are not simply entities that prompt actions (as is the case with positivist constructivists), but are the sinews that hold together the social and political body. These writers have focused on international law as the place where such rules are most apparent, but their works are not limited to law alone. The last group of writers can be called ethicists. These writers address questions of international politics through the lenses of well-known

moral and ethical traditions of thought. This group of theorists remains more on the margins because of their often explicit rejection of either positivist or legal modes of analysis, the two most common in the study of world politics. Journals such as *Ethics and International Affairs* and *Millennium* have given a voice to some of these works, albeit from very different angles. Theorists such as Charles Beitz (1979, 1985), Chris Brown (1992), David Campbell (1993), Stanley Hoffman (1981), Andrew Linklater (1990), Terry Nardin (1983, 1992, 1996), Joel Rosenthal (1991, 1995), Michael Walzer (1992), and Daniel Warner (1991) have addressed questions of ethics from a variety of perspectives.

This book builds upon all three of these modes of writing about norms. The positivist constructivists have provided the discipline with a way to think about norms as constituting both behavior and identities. I am hesitant, however, to fully embrace the positivist tenor of some of these works that seek to “trace” the role of norms in specific decisions or foreign policies. As the remainder of this chapter will demonstrate, I see norms not as a factor along with wealth and power, but as the very basis of how we think and act politically. The legal constructivists have also been influential in the ideas developed here, mainly in their focus on language and the way in which it structures our political universe. And, the ethicists have brought to bear the great moral traditions of philosophy on pressing questions of global politics. Both the legal and ethical traditions, however, tend to focus on how norms can lead to greater forms of cooperation and peaceful coexistence. This book seeks to demonstrate how norms also create conflict. In fact, this differentiation from the legal constructivists’ focus on positive modes of cooperation has led me to a greater awareness of the insights of realist theory. While all these works have been instrumental in defining the issues and clarifying concepts, they often fall victim to the problem raised by E. H. Carr in his prescient work on realism, that is, international politics founded solely on a utopian morality will ultimately lead to conflict and chaos. Only an international political system that is founded on both power and morality can successfully provide peace and justice in the international system (Carr 1939). This book demonstrates the truth of Carr’s insight. Indeed it conforms to the more general realist argument that morality without an understanding of politics will lead to conflict. Reinhold Niebuhr argued that international politics cannot conform to the same moral rules as personal conduct because political leaders cannot act without considering the consequences (Niebuhr 1932). George Kennan castigated American diplomacy for its excess focus on idealistic and moralistic conduct of foreign affairs (Kennan 1950). And Hans J. Morgenthau sought to infuse his political realism with an awareness of both power and morality (Morgenthau 1986; Russell 1990).

Recent work in international relations theory has continued this trend of finding in realism a normative element. Arguing that realists are not advocates of amoral *realpolitik*, theorists such as Alastair Murray (1997) and Roger Spegele (1996) have found in the realist approach a normatively based guide to both understanding and acting in the international realm. While this book copies neither one of these two theorists, it is written in the spirit of both; that is, it seeks to find a middle ground between the excessive moralism of an idealistic approach and the amoral cynicism of a power politics approach. This book follows in the path of these realists who understood that international politics is about both politics and ethics. They also understood, and I hope this book will demonstrate, that ethics when unconstrained in the international arena will lead to the exact opposite of what such norms demand.

I present in this book three norms that motivate military intervention: liberalism, colonialism, and humanitarianism. The three terms are not always considered as “norms” because of their negative valences, especially colonialism. Nevertheless, they are norms because they justify and explain political action in moral terms. They regulate behavior and constitute identities.

Liberalism means an attempt to create a political system in the target state organized around the concepts of democracy, rule of law, and protection of individual rights. In an intervention, though, liberalism also has an international aspect; that is, a liberal intervention does not only reform the target society, it also turns the state into a member of a liberal world order and seeks to promote principles of self-determination and respect for international law. Both the domestic and international variants of liberalism are evident in all three interventions, but they are particularly apparent in the American interventions in Russia and Somalia.

Colonialism revolves around a feeling of responsibility. As with the liberal norm, the colonial has two manifestations, a domestic and an international. Domestically, it reflects a belief that the target state exhibits a certain “barbarism” that makes it incapable of ruling itself. This requires an intervening power that does not necessarily teach liberal values but basic administrative skills. Internationally, the colonial meaning of intervention manifests itself in the belief that the intervening power has a responsibility to protect other areas from the possible rapacious attitudes of the target state. Thus the intervention is intended not only to protect the people from themselves, but also to protect other vulnerable populations from the control of the “barbaric” target state. While there are elements of colonialism in all three interventions, it is most apparent in the British intervention in Russia and Egypt, the French intervention in Egypt, and the UN intervention in Somalia.

Finally, the humanitarian norm is the easiest to understand. It is the attempt to provide physical aid to individuals and communities that have been deprived of such goods either because of a natural or human made disaster. This norm played a role in all three interventions, but, obviously, it was most apparent in the United States and UN intervention in Somalia.

THE POLITICS OF AGENCY

Understanding the role of norms in an intervention can only take us so far. A more comprehensive understanding requires a focus on politics. Politics can be defined in a diverse number of ways including the distribution of goods and values, the competition for influence or power, or the pursuit of public policies. But any definition of politics requires a political agent. What are political agents? In international relations theory, agency has recently found a place through the works of sociologically inclined theorists such as Alexander Wendt (1987, 1992, 1994, 1998). But these works, due to their sociological basis, have not addressed the political nature of agency. While the remainder of this section will explore the concept of political agency in more detail, briefly it can be defined as the status of individuals in a public space that gives them the ability to engage each other. That status is partly legal, partly moral, and partly ontological—all of which add up to it being fundamentally political. The engagements that define political agency can be both conflictual and cooperative, but they are always competitive. While political theorists who have explored this concept traditionally focused on the individual person in a political community, this book will shift that focus to the nation states, international organizations, and other political agents who compete at the global level.

The outcome of these engagements is the creation and destruction of other agents, of the rules and institutions that shape these engagements, and of the public space itself. In other words, the process of agents interacting with each other creates the structures upon which later engagements depend. Even in competitions that seem to have no structure, such as war, there exists institutions that structure competition; rules and laws of war, which differentiate between civilians and soldiers make even violent competitions possible. The competitions of politics tend to both create and destroy the space of politics, the institutions necessary to continue the contest. But the institutions themselves are necessary. Furthermore, the institutions are both physical spaces, such as parliaments and international organizations, and ideas, such as international law and political ideologies. The space of politics is created not only by the walls of a building but by the decisions of men and women.

The remainder of this chapter explores the concept of political agency especially as it pertains to international politics. As anyone familiar with the work of Hannah Arendt will recognize, these formulations of political agency are borrowed from her. Using Arendt, this chapter explores the distinctive nature of political agency. Because Arendt's work was not written with state agency in mind, I then turn to the work of Hans Morgenthau to link her works with international politics. The concluding chapter uses these two theorists to more fully explore the questions and dilemmas raised in the narrative sections of the book.

Hannah Arendt's work has generated both acclaim and hostility. Her book *Eichman in Jerusalem* (1964) based on her attendance at the trial of the Nazi bureaucrat Adolph Eichman made her a number of enemies in the American and international Jewish community, in that she challenged conventional notions of guilt and responsibility for the Holocaust, resulting in her famous argument that Eichman's trial demonstrates the "banality of evil." One of her articles on segregation in the American south, in which she argued that the use of federal troops may not have been justified to fix what she called an essentially "social" as opposed to a "political" question, also raised a storm of controversy in the intellectual community (Arendt 1959).¹ While some feminist thinkers have appropriated her work, it has also been criticized for her separation of the political and the social (Rich 1979; Honig 1995). These divergent interpretations of her work have made Arendt both a highly controversial but also intellectually stimulating figure.

But her work has not only created controversy. Her book *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1968) linked questions of anti-Semitism, nationalism, and totalitarian politics in a critical essay that continues to challenge to this day. In *Between Past and Future* (1968) and *The Human Condition* (1958) she utilized Greek and Roman political philosophy to interpret social and political action in the modern world. As a German immigrant to the United States, she sought to understand a country that she considered to be unique in the history of the world; her book *On Revolution* (1963) compared the American and French revolutions and argued that the former helped create a stable governance system while the later did not. But she also did not hesitate to criticize the American system, especially in her reflections on violence and politics (1972). Her relationships with German political philosophers such as Martin Heidegger and Karl Jaspers generated some of her most important insights into the relationships between history, politics, and ethics (1968; also Kohler and Suner, 1992, Young-Bruhl 1982). Her corpus of works has generated a large body of literature, which seeks to follow her advice to "think what we are doing" (Arendt 1958, 5).²

The work on which I draw to develop a theory of agency is Arendt's *The Human Condition*. Like many of her works, this book uses ancient notions of politics to confront current politics. The focus of the work is the *via activa*, or that aspect of human life concerned with doing rather than thinking.³ She divides human action into three realms: labor, work, and action. Labor is that which we do to stay alive, the daily activities that provide food, clothes, and shelter. Work is that which results in goods that outlive us, that is, creations of buildings, art, and crafts that are not consumed but remain after individual human lives pass away. Because labor creates goods that we consume, it is only through work that the material objectivity of human existence is created.

The final category is action. Action is the most important realm in terms of politics, for action is that human activity in which human persons reveal themselves in moments of interactions with others. It is the way in which we assert who we are, in which we create ourselves by presenting ourselves in public. Politics, on the constructed stage of a parliament or town meeting, provides the paradigmatic instance of moments in which the human person can be revealed. Arendt develops this concept of action in an engagement with Greek and Roman philosophers who sought to define the realm of the political. That realm, combining a Homeric agonal spirit with an Aristotelian notion of speech as the quintessentially human characteristic, results in a public space that allows for competition and conflict.

According to Arendt, the public realm is the place where persons distinguish themselves, the arena in which "everybody had to constantly distinguish himself from all others, to show through unique deeds or achievements that he was best of all" (1958, 41). Indeed, it is this ability to act publicly that defines the human person:

A life without speech and without action, on the other hand—and this is the only way of life that in earnest has renounced all appearance and all vanity in the biblical sense of the word—is literally dead to the world; it has ceased to be a human life because it is no longer lived among men. . . . With word and deed we insert ourselves into the human world and this insertion is like a second birth, in which we confirm and take upon ourselves the naked fact of our original physical appearance. (1958, 176)

Public political action puts us into the world and reveals the "who" of our existence in a way that no other practice can.

Furthermore, since Arendt believes that political action is a public presentation of the self, there must be a community to whom this presentation is made. She notes that action occurs within a "web of human relationships," a place composed both of other people acting and speaking

and of the “common world” that surrounds and anchors human interaction: “. . . most words and deeds are about some worldly objective reality in addition to being a disclosure of the acting and speaking self” (1958, 182).⁴ Politics thus requires a public realm, one composed of fellow humans with an agreed upon equality, not one of merit but one of agency.

Political action is not like labor, something to be consumed and instantly removed from existence. It is closer to work in that it creates permanent spaces that will outlive individual human lives. But while work creates physical structures, action creates the institutions, structures, and spaces that guide political action such as constitutions, treaties, philosophies, or histories. The Greek *polis* provides a model. Viewing the lawmaker not as a political actor, but as a maker or founder, the Greeks envisioned the task of the founder as central to their political life:

In their opinion, the lawmaker was like the builder of the city wall, someone who had to do and finish his work before political activity could begin. . . . To them, the laws, like the wall around the city, were not results of action but products of making. Before men could act, a definite space had to be secured and a structure built where all subsequent actions could take place, the space being the public realm of the *polis* and its structure the law. (1958, 194)

This passage seems to indicate that, for Arendt, politics exists in a space between the physical place of the city and the ideational space of the law. Yet she goes on to argue that the Greek *polis* was not simply the physical space of politics:

The *polis*, properly speaking, is not the city-state in its physical location; it is the organization of the people as it arises out of acting and speaking together, and its true space lies between people living together for this purpose, no matter where they happen to be. “Wherever you go, you will be a *polis*”: these famous words became not merely the watchword of Greek colonization, they expressed the conviction that action and speech create a space between the participants which can find its proper location almost any time and anywhere. (1958, 198).

The space of politics, then, is not only a physical space, but more importantly an arena where talking and acting together create a realm for appearance. It is in this common space that the public presentation of the self occurs.

Arendt moves from conceiving of political action as occurring within a web of human relations to action within a *polis*, a *polis* that has the same

intangible quality as the web, yet simultaneously has a more concrete meaning. But Arendt's understanding of political action does not simply rest within this web of meaning. In presenting her idea of political action she stresses its unpredictability, and its similarity to a miracle—something one cannot expect and cannot contain. Action tends to go beyond the boundaries within which we attempt to contain it:

Action, moreover, no matter what its specific content, always establishes relationships and therefore has an inherent tendency to force open all limitations and cut across all boundaries. Limitations and boundaries exist within human affairs, but they never offer a framework that can reliably withstand the onslaught with which each new generation must assert itself. (1958, 190–1)

Political action has a tendency to go beyond the borders we impose on it, precisely because of its unpredictability. While the *polis* is an attempt to create a physical space for political action, that action simultaneously forces itself beyond those boundaries.

Ultimately, action does not just create spaces and institutions for politics, it creates the agents themselves. It is here that Arendt's work moves to the ontological realm. For in her argument, humans exist as fragmented, alienated, and acquisitive entities until they engage in political action. Once they appear on the public stage, either through words or deeds, human agents become a definitive "who" as opposed to a "what." But how does action reveal the essence of the agent?

For Arendt, action reveals being through narration. Only when stories are told about the great actions that persons engage in can these actions contribute to the revealing of who they are. According to Paul Ricouer, "The political enterprise, in [Arendt's] sense, is the highest attempt to 'immortalize' ourselves" (Ricouer 1990, 151). In acting and narrating, persons are revealed. Selya Benhabib finds in Arendt's work two modes of political agency, what she calls the agonal and the narrative:

[W]hereas action in the agonal model is described through terms such as "revelation of who one is" and "the making manifest of what is interior," action in the narrative model is characterized through the "telling of a story" and "the weaving of a web of narratives." Whereas in the first model action appears to make manifest or to reveal an antecedent essence, the "who one is," action in the second model suggests that "the who one is" emerges in the process of doing the deed and telling the story. Whereas action in the first model is a process of discovery, action in the

second model is a process of invention. In contemporary terms, we may say that the first model of action is essentialist while the second is constructivist. (Benhabib 1996, 125–6)

Benhabib uncovers in Arendt an alternative to the agonal politics of the Greeks. Instead of securely constructed individuals contesting each other in a competitive atmosphere, we find in Benhabib's reading of Arendt a theory of political agency that relies on the history of an event. The meaning we give to a political action comes not just from the intention of the agent, but from the interpretation of that agent and his action. As Arendt herself says:

Although everybody started his life by inserting himself into the human world through action and speech, nobody is the author or producer of his own life story. In other words, the stories, the results of speech and action reveal an agent, but this agent is not an author or producer. Somebody began it and is its subject in the twofold sense of the word, namely, its actor and sufferer, but nobody is its author. (Arendt 1958, 184)

The narrative model of action forces us to reconsider political history as well:

The meaning of a committed act is revealed only when the action itself has come to an end and become a story susceptible to narration. Insofar as any "mastering" of the past is possible, it consists in relating what has happened; but such narration, too, which shapes history, solves no problems and assuages no suffering; it does not master anything once and for all. (Arendt 1968, 21)

For Arendt, action does not exist just in the moment of doing; it is as much, or rather more, in the narration of the event. In one of her essays, Arendt provides us with a powerful critique of history, arguing that modern history has become a means of limiting political freedom and action by adopting a deterministic outlook (Arendt 1968). Political action requires not only a historical actor, but also a historian and an audience (Hansen 1993, 18). For only in the telling of the event does it acquire meaning, the meaning that makes such events politically relevant.

Benhabib's exploration of Arendt's thought not only links it to narration, it also demonstrates how political agency can lead to the creation of an associational political space. But the public good is not usually associated with state agency or foreign policy. In fact, the more agonal contest between states at the international level does not give much hope for a dialogue that might lead to public policies that are good for the whole. Does

this lack of a public good mean that Arendt's theory of political agency is ultimately one that will simply reinforce and reinscribe the power politics of the international system?

Perhaps. But I prefer to look to an alternative reading of Arendt, one that accepts the lack of an explicit articulation of a public good but can still lead to a democratic engagement. In her attempts to find a place for Arendt in feminist political theory, Bonnie Honig articulates this aspect of Arendt's work most clearly. Honig argues that Arendt "theorizes a democratic politics built not on already existing identities or shared experiences but on contingent sites of principled coalescence and shared practices of citizenship" (Honig 1995, 3). In other words, Arendt does not assume that political actors assert their identities in certainty and confidence. Instead, only when they act do they take on an identity, and not an identity that is fixed but one that is fluid and changing with each political engagement.

When they act, Arendt's actors are reborn. . . . Their momentary engagement in action in the public realm engenders identities that are lodged forever in the stories told of their heroic performances by the spectators who witness them. Prior to or apart from action, this self has no identity; it is fragmented, discontinuous, indistinct, and most certainly uninteresting. (Honig 1995b, 140)

Honig's formulation thus moves Arendt's argument from an ontological to a normative one. For she presents an Arendt who is not simply identifying a politics of contest and competition, but a politics that, when it does not rest on stable identities, can lead to a more democratic engagement of agents. Not every theorist follows Honig here; Benhabib argues that Arendt theorizes an "agonal" politics as opposed to a more associative one (Benhabib 1996).

Honig's move is the key to understanding the politics of international agency and the reasons for the failure of military intervention. For when states, who are the primary political agents of the international system, engage each other with settled notions of what they are—either as guardians of an ideology, standard bearers of an ethnicity, or saviors of the world—they will engage in an agonal politics that leads to the reaffirmation of anti-democratic international structures. But, if they engage each other cognizant of their unstable and constantly shifting identities, if they see the politics of military intervention as a means not just to solve a problem but as a moment in which they create themselves and those with whom they interact, if they treat their identities not with certainty but with flexibility, perhaps the conflicts generated by a mili-

tary intervention will lead not to hostility but to new forms of global governance. Articulating a political agency for the state which is open, contestable, and, ultimately, more democratic, is one of the tasks to which this book is dedicated.

THE POLITICS OF STATE AGENCY

Before exploring how this understanding of political agency can make the global system more democratic, it is important to step back and ask a more fundamental question: Can the nation state exist qua political agent in the way of Arendtian individuals? Can the theories and ideas that she explores in relation to the human person interacting within a political community have any relevance for the interactions of nation states?⁵ Action, understood in the Arendtian sense, constitutes the bulk of what we call international politics. States contest each other in a continuum ranging from war to diplomacy. They present themselves and engage in contests. These contests can lead to more permanent political institutions. International organizations, treaties, regional organizations, and international public law are some of the lasting contributions that the actions of states have left behind. A quote from Arendt, in which states are replaced for persons, captures this element of international politics:

the public realm itself, the *polis* [international system], was permeated by a fiercely agonal spirit, where everybody [state] had constantly to distinguish himself [itself] from all others, to show through unique deeds or achievements that he [it] was the best of all (*eien aristeuein*). The public realm, in other words, was reserved for individuality; it was the only place where men [states] could show who they really and inexchangeably were. (Arendt 1958, 41)

But is there room for the kind of democratic agency that Benhabib or Honig draws from Arendt? Can we find in state agency the means by which to reconceive global politics while admitting that states will remain predominant actors? This section will suggest how such a move is possible (although rare) in international politics by drawing on an unexpected source: the political realism of Hans Morgenthau. At the end of this chapter, I compare this theory of state agency to realism and neorealism, which I argue are distinct from the theory articulated here. Nevertheless, it is in Morgenthau's writing on diplomacy and the national purpose (not national interest) that we see how state agency can arise from narration and can possibly lead to a more democratic engagement.

Although rarely considered in tandem, these two theorists dealt with a number of overlapping themes: nationalism, imperialism, American exceptionalism, the relation of history and politics, and the relation of politics and ethics. Moreover, as two German Jewish immigrants to the United States, their political concerns about the role of the United States, Israel, and Germany in the global political system inspired them in ways that demonstrated their ability to apply theoretical insights to political practices.⁶ They also knew each other personally and sustained a mutually supportive friendship (Young-Bruehl 1982). But they also differ from each other in important ways. Morgenthau's more Hegelian conception of the state⁷ stands in stark contrast to Arendt's emphasis on republicanism and citizenship. And Morgenthau's understanding of power (Morgenthau 1986) contrasts sharply with Arendt's (1972). My reading of these two theorists together here should not be seen as an attempt to force them into the same framework. Rather, I see in the combination of their ideas on political agency a valuable means by which to challenge conventional notions of politics in International Relations.

Morgenthau's work provides important insights into two basic aspects of state agency, representation and the national purpose. I have thus far implicitly assumed that state agency is unproblematic. In fact, this assumption is common in both the discipline of international relations and in popular descriptions of world politics. International law has traditionally been structured around a mode of discourse in which states are the agents of world politics, even when the concerns of states may override those of individual persons (Henkin 1993; Corbett 1951). According to this understanding, political action on the world stage takes place among states, not persons. The underlying assumption here is that the state, a legal institution, somehow represents the community. The fact that the discipline is called *international* relations further reveals that states are generally assumed to represent nations. But what does this representation mean? And how does it operate when states act?

In answering these questions, the most logical step is to look to the formal representatives of the community. Moreover, since Arendt's theory addresses persons it makes sense to begin with them. These representatives not only represent the interests of the citizens of a state, they also represent the state to the representatives, and thus citizens, of other states. The concept of the representative in international relations is an issue to which Morgenthau devoted his attention.⁸ Morgenthau's theory of international relations demands that there be political representatives, diplomats, who can bring all the resources of the nation-state to play on the world stage (Lang 2000). In *Politics Among Nations*, Morgenthau lists various aspects that compose the political power of the nation-state: geography, industrial

capacity, population, and natural resources. But while these elements make up the power of the state, it is the diplomat who enacts them:

Of all the factors that make for the power of a nation, the most important, however usable, is the quality of diplomacy. All the other factors that determine national power are, as it were, the raw material out of which the power of the nation is fashioned. The quality of a nation's diplomacy combines those different factors into an integrated whole, gives them direction and weight, and awakens their slumbering potentialities by giving them the breath of actual power. . . . It is the art of bringing the different elements of the national power to bear with maximum effect upon those points in the international situation that concerns the national interest most directly. (Morgenthau 1986, 158–9)

The representative or diplomat embodies the state in moments of agency. Even more importantly, Morgenthau's conception of state agency implies that only in those moments of diplomatic (or military) action does the state really come into existence. Otherwise it only exists in potential; the representative must actualize the power of the state.⁹

Thus we see in Morgenthau's idea of state agency a means by which the state may present itself to the world. In those moments when the diplomat or soldier presents the various elements of national power, it is, in fact, the state that is being presented. But is the state constituted solely by these potential elements? Does the state as an agent only exist as an element of power that is wielded as a club against other states similarly presenting themselves? Here Morgenthau's conception of the national *purpose* helps us understand state agency. The national purpose is, more so than the national interest or the factors of power, that which gives agency to the state in the Arendtian sense of the term. And, more importantly for my argument, the national purpose gives to state agency an essentially normative character.

Like many of the classical realists, Morgenthau was sensitive to history, and in an important, and often neglected, work, *The Purpose of American Politics* (1960), he explores the idea of the national purpose as providing the historically grounded meaning without which a state cannot conduct its foreign policy. Focusing on the historical record of the United States, Morgenthau argues that the ideas of freedom and equality became the central political ideas that motivated political action both within the United States and toward other countries. The national purpose is a complex philosophical concept that enables meaningful political action. It derives from the historical record of the nation-state, allowing it to express deep ideological commitments.

In order to comprehend the reality of the national purpose, it is not necessary to listen to the ideologies of nationalism. It is only necessary to consult the evidence of history as our minds reflect it. We know that a real nation worthy of our remembrances has contributed to the affairs of men more than the successful defense and promotion of its national interest. . . . In order to be worthy of our lasting sympathy a nation must pursue its interests for the sake of a transcendent purpose that gives meaning to the day-by-day operations of its foreign policy. (Morgenthau 1960, 8)

The national purpose gives meaning to political action. It is this national purpose that analysts must comprehend if they are to truly comprehend foreign policy decisions and actions.¹⁰

Combining our understanding of the way the diplomat represents the state with our understanding of the national purpose produces a theory of state agency. The diplomat does not just combine the elements of national power in his presentation of the state; more importantly, he represents the national purpose, the historical record of the state, a historical record that embodies the political and ethical ideals of the community. Moreover, and more specifically in relation to the topic of this book, a military intervention is a moment in a nation's history when the national purpose becomes both extremely important and also highly contested. It becomes important because the intervening state attempts to accomplish its reforms and provide colonial guidance through its own national values and historical traditions. As we examine the discourse of an intervention, not just the public discourse but the private memos and reflections of those deciding that action and those effecting it, we see that the justifications and explanations rely heavily on the moral values leaders think their state is to embody, moral values that derive from the political history of the state. Furthermore, while this may occur in war and other international actions, it is particularly relevant in an intervention precisely because there is an attempt to create a functioning political system where all they see is anarchy and chaos. Thus the model of their own society and political system plays the role not only of justifying their action to their own constituents, but it also becomes the model upon which this new system is created. Morgenthau's national purpose, then, provides us with a useful tool to understand the political and ethical aspects of intervention.¹¹

The combination of Morgenthau and Arendt concerning the question of intervention produces some hitherto unexplored understandings. The self that is presented in international politics is the state. The state is embodied and represented in the diplomat/soldier. The diplomat/soldier does not just embody the physical elements of power, but the moral and

historical as well. In sum, the self that is presented and revealed in international politics is an historical and ethical community that strives to express this history and ethic in its relations with others. Through their interpretations and ideas, states create the spaces of politics within which they act. More importantly for a theory of agency that relies on narration, states are the final interpreters of international political action. The space of politics in which states interact with each other, perhaps constituted by accretions of historical interaction and basic legal principles, is in the end the province of the states themselves. Thus the ways in which states choose to interpret their actions will be the most decisive in the creation of politics. The language game of international politics is constituted and controlled by state interpretations.¹²

State agency depends on the ability of representatives to embody the national purpose of their communities. That national purpose represents the narrative quality of political agency that Arendt has identified. Do other agents exist in the international system with a similar form of agency, one linked with narration? Other agents certainly exist, if by agency we mean the ability to engage other agents in the public sphere. But how many exist with formal representatives and with the ability to narrate for themselves a history that gives them a normative purpose? Does, for example, an international organization like the United Nations have this capacity?

The UN is, of course, reducible to its member states. Especially in that part of the organization which can be said to “intervene,” that is, the Security Council, the agency of its member states predominates. The Security Council, however, is not the only organ of the UN involved in an intervention. The Secretary General’s Office also plays a key role in both the decisions to intervene and the implementation of these decisions. Unlike a state, the Secretary General is not an executive agent capable of acting on his or her own. Rather, the Secretary General is quintessentially a representative, both of the institution and of the member states. He or she must, in other words, act as a representative of the institution and, in doing so, embody its normative purpose by means of narration. In Chapter 5, I demonstrate how the UN as an institution has narrated itself a form of agency in its writings on different interventions, both successes and failures.

While *The Human Condition* presents an Arendt who finds in agonal competition a means of sustaining democratic politics, and while my reading of her alongside of Morgenthau has led to a framework in which she might seem to advocate a realist world of power politics, Arendt’s work in a wider sense does not conform so easily with this image. In particular there exists a tension in my reading of Arendt and Morgenthau as supportive of a similar theory of state agency. Arendt’s critiques of imperialism and

totalitarianism make her an unlikely ally of a theory that interprets world politics as a competitive process in which the most powerful dominate (Arendt 1968). One might interpret this tension as a conflict between the general approaches of Morgenthau and Arendt, with Morgenthau envisioning the nation-state as the highest form of politics and Arendt seeing political action on a more local scale as the highest fulfillment of politics (Arendt 1963).

But in fact, both Morgenthau and Arendt were ambivalent about the nation-state. Morgenthau, while arguing that international politics is about nations and not persons, also expressed concern about the dangers of nationalism and sought, through diplomacy, to moderate some of the excesses of competitive nationalities. And Arendt, while seeking to construct a common world in which ideology and nationality were not the determining aspects of political life, also argued that a theory of human rights that is not tied to particular national communities risks the creation of stateless persons, that is, refugees, who are more easily excluded from the human world and thus more easily persecuted (Arendt 1968, 300–2).¹³

Thus there is not just a tension between Morgenthau and Arendt, but a tension within the works of both concerning states, nations, and political agency. The theory of agency developed here provides a starting point from which to examine the historical instances of intervention in the next three chapters. But those historical chapters also reveal the tensions between state agents and individuals that interventions create. Moreover, it is this same conflict between the person and the state that, I believe, created strains within the works of Morgenthau and Arendt. In other words, the next three chapters, while beginning with a framework that assumes state agents act in a competitive atmosphere, will simultaneously extract a set of problematic elements from that framework. In the concluding chapter, I return to those tensions, summarizing them from the historical chapters. I then return to Morgenthau and Arendt and use the ambiguities in their works to develop a critique of intervention and, in the process, state agency. Thus Morgenthau and Arendt provide both a framework for analysis and also a means by which to critique this framework.

REALISM, CONSTRUCTIVISM, AND STATE AGENCY

Thus far, I have proposed a theory of state agency that draws primarily on political philosophy. Using the work of Arendt and Morgenthau, I have demonstrated how political agency can be understood on the international level. And while I have used Morgenthau to transfer Arendt's arguments