

Title: The Influence of Political Activism on U.S. Foreign Policy Towards Genocide

Key Words: political activism, foreign policy, genocide, human rights

This project will seek to determine the influence grassroots political activism has on U.S. foreign policy in places where genocide or massive human rights violations are occurring. As many as 41 episodes of genocide have been perpetrated since 1955, often with minimal U.S. reaction (Harff 2005). In *A Problem From Hell: America and the Age of Genocide*, Samantha Power argues that the U.S. does not intervene to stop genocide due to a lack of constituent pressure on the government. Domestic organizations, including the Genocide Intervention Network, have undertaken a strategy of cultivating an anti-genocide constituency in order to affect policy change with respect to genocide. As part of my doctoral work, I wish to determine if the strategy of creating this constituency is sufficient to change U.S. foreign policy.

American politics literature speaks to but does not answer this question. Some scholars arguing that public opinion substantially influences U.S. foreign policy, particularly with respect to ethnic lobbies (Mertus 2004; Newsom 1996). Other studies claim that public opinion has little substantive affect on foreign policy, especially concerning human rights (Jacobs and Page 2005; McCormick 2006). With the recent surge in human rights activism, an empirical evaluation of its affects on U.S. foreign policy in places experiencing one-sided violence¹ would have policy value in addition to academic interest. Organizations coordinating grassroots advocacy efforts could better direct their resources if they understand the influence activists have on policy. As international human rights discourse continues to grow, this study will also help determine how citizens can substantively contribute to making human rights a formative part of foreign policy.

Political activism has the potential to affect the greatest policy change in cases where the U.S. has no national interest in a rights-violating state. I hypothesize that in these cases, a moderate level of activism which publicly calls attention to mass violations of human rights forces the president and Congress to act against those violations in order to maintain U.S. identity as a human rights protector. This will primarily be a domestic action, such as a public condemnation of the violations. International policies such as economic sanctions or military intervention to end genocide require more political capital to pursue and thus I argue will not be implemented on the basis of grassroots publicity campaigns alone. There are several reasons why genocide activism may not offset the issue of political capital: the genocide lobby may not be large or loud enough, genocide activists may not contribute sufficient funds to political parties or campaigns, or politicians may believe that citizens do not vote according to this issue.

In order to test these hypotheses, I will conduct a large-n study of the relationship between grassroots advocacy movements and U.S. foreign policy, and three paired case studies which will use process tracing to explain this relationship. My large-n sample will include all countries² that have experienced one-sided violence since 1989.³ I will examine the data in two

¹ Intentional attacks on a civilian population by a government actor.

² 49 states have sponsored one-sided violence. I will increase my number of observations by separating cases of violence by the same state against different civilian populations.

³ My study will include the period from 1989-2009, as data is available for this period and it reflects the period when when a rise in grassroots human rights advocacy took place.

phases: the first will look at the affect of the level of grassroots advocacy — a measure I will develop from various criteria related to the movement's size, strength and visibility — on U.S. intervention, defined as any U.S. diplomatic, economic or military action. My controls will include the target state being in the realm of U.S. national interest, the presence of an alliance between the target state and a permanent member of the UN Security Council, and the political party makeup of the legislative and executive branches. The second phase will take the cases where advocacy and U.S. intervention occurred simultaneously and examine the degree to which U.S. policies coincided with the advocated policies. This quantitative component will determine whether a significant correlation exists between the level of advocacy and U.S. foreign policy.

I will use the findings of the first component to guide my case selection for the second in order to best analyze if causation exists when advocacy and intervention are correlated, and if one of the above hypotheses is responsible for cases lacking correlation. Cases will be paired according to similarities in features of the conflict and the scope of the advocacy movement, where the two cases differed in the intervention results. In order to conduct these case studies, I will partner with various grassroots advocacy organizations, using my existing relationship with Darfur activists as a starting point. My research goals will be disseminating specific recommendations to these partner organizations, as well as the publication of two articles in peer-reviewed journals, and potentially a dissertation proposal building on the project results.

My mathematical background, as well as my training in a rigorous, inter-disciplinary doctoral program at Notre Dame will enable me to use advanced quantitative methodologies if necessary, and ensure a rigorous scientific approach to my project's qualitative aspects. Additionally, my advocacy work consolidating an anti-genocide constituency make me uniquely suited to address the nuances of this project. Receiving this grant would allow me the time and resources I need to fully focus on this project.

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