

Options in Brief

Option 1: Lead the World in the Fight to Stop Genocide

Genocide is unacceptable—anywhere, at any time. More than forty million individuals were killed in genocides throughout the twentieth century. Pledging “never again” and then standing by while genocide scars the face of the earth cannot be tolerated. We must align rhetoric with reality and start taking our responsibility to uphold the Genocide Convention seriously. If the world fails to act quickly, we must take it upon ourselves to prevent and stop genocide whenever and wherever it occurs. We must be willing to try perpetrators of genocide in specially created tribunals or courts. Preventing genocide must become a foreign policy priority for the United States.

Option 2: Stand with the International Community Against Genocide

The last hundred years have seen genocides in every corner of the earth. Genocide is a global concern and requires a unified global response. No single country has the necessary experience, resources, credibility, or right to set or apply standards for international behavior. We must ensure that our foreign policy does not support or perpetuate human rights violations, including acts of genocide. We need to recognize the UN as an entity with the legitimacy and experience to develop and maintain a long-term, international effort to prevent and stop genocide. We should join the International Criminal Court and support local efforts to reduce ethnic and regional tensions and prevent genocide. If we are ever to see a time when genocide is no more, we must stand together with the international community against acts of genocide whenever and wherever they surface.

Option 3: Speak Out, but Preserve State Sovereignty

Genocide is a terrible crime and we must speak out against it. But directly meddling in the internal affairs of another country—even in the face of genocide—will only set us up for disaster in the future. The principle of state sovereignty has been central to the international community for hundreds of years and it remains an integral part of the UN today. Eroding the principles of state sovereignty could significantly weaken the United Nations, leading to more harm than the crime we are trying to prevent. Failing to protect state sovereignty will also open the doors to foreign interference in the affairs of the United States. We do not want other countries telling us what to think or how to act, so we should not tell them how to act. The right of countries to govern themselves must be preserved.

Option 4: Intervene Only When U.S. Interests are Directly Threatened

Genocide is a sad reality of human nature. There have been many genocides in the past century and there will be many more to come. It is unrealistic to think that the United States can stop them all. We must be pragmatic in today's difficult world. The first priority of our foreign policy must be to make our country stronger and safer. Concern for human rights should never come before our national interests. We can speak out against genocide and encourage the UN and our allies to do the same, but unless it directly threatens our stability, our involvement should be limited to diplomatic initiatives. Risking U.S. lives and spending huge sums of money to try to prevent genocide is not sensible unless it is done to protect our economic and security interests.