

Publics Around the World Say UN Has Responsibility to Protect Against Genocide

Large Numbers Open to UN Intervention in Darfur

French and Americans Ready to Contribute Troops to Darfur Peacekeeping Operation

Publics around the world say the United Nations has the responsibility to protect people from genocide and other severe human rights abuses even if this means acting against the will of their own government, according to a multinational study.

Large numbers are open to UN intervention in Darfur, where Arab militias linked to the Sudanese government are accused of massacring the civilian population. But many seem to be uninformed about the situation in Western Sudan and declined to answer.

Support for action to halt genocide is consistent with the final document endorsed by the 2005 United Nations World Summit, which recognized that the world body has a “responsibility to protect” vulnerable populations from “genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity” should national authorities fail to do so.

This is the third in a series of reports based on the findings of a larger survey, analyzing attitudes on key international issues, conducted by The Chicago Council on Global Affairs and WorldPublicOpinion.org, in cooperation with polling organizations around the world.

The study includes 18 countries—China, India, the United States, Indonesia, Russia, France, Thailand, Ukraine, Poland, Iran, Mexico, South Korea, the Philippines, Australia, Argentina, Peru, Israel and Armenia—plus the Palestinian territories. Not all questions were asked in all countries.

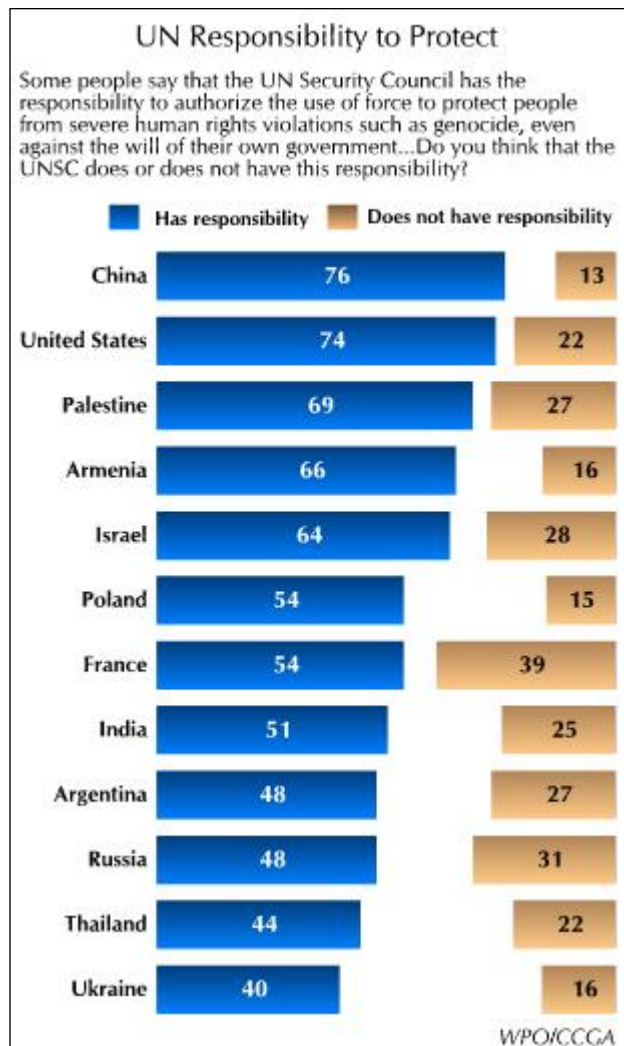
UN Security Council Action

Respondents in 12 countries were asked whether the UN Security Council has the “responsibility to authorize the use of military force to protect people from severe human rights violations, such as genocide, even against the will” of the government committing such abuses. They were reminded that some say the UN Security Council does not have such a responsibility.

Nonetheless, the most common response in all 12 countries polled—a majority in eight countries and a plurality in four—is that the UN Security Council has a responsibility to authorize the use of military force in such cases.

The Chinese public shows the highest level of support for the idea that the United Nations has a responsibility to intervene (76%), followed by the United States (74%), the Palestinian territories (69%) and Israel (64%). The lowest levels of support are in Ukraine (40%), Thailand (44%), Russia (48%), and Argentina (48%). But the proportions in these four countries that say the UN Security Council does *not* have such a responsibility ranged between only 16 to 31 percent.

There is an even stronger consensus that the UN Security Council should have the “right” to authorize the use of military force in such cases. Among the 12 countries asked this question, large majorities say the Security Council should have such a right.



The highest percentages holding this view are in France (85%), Israel (83%), the United States (83%), the Palestinian territories (78%), and South Korea (74%). The lowest levels of support—in India (63%), Thailand (62%), and Russia (64%)—are still quite high. Support is also strong in China (72%). Those who disagree range between 11 percent and 28 percent.

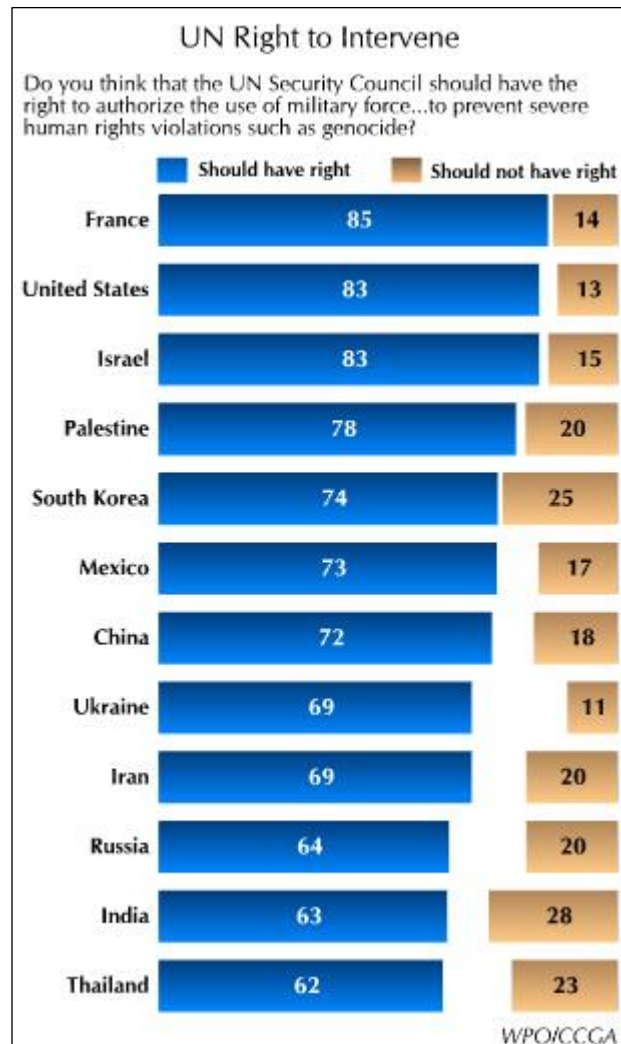
Thus, in all 15 countries asked one or both of these questions, the most common view is that the UN Security Council has the right and/or the responsibility to authorize military action to stop severe violations of human rights.

A 2005 survey of eight African countries by the international polling firm GlobeScan found similarly high levels of support for the United Nations having such authority. Majorities in seven countries and a plurality in one said the United Nations should have the right to intervene to stop human rights abuses such as genocide.

Support was strongest in Ghana (80%), Kenya (75%), Nigeria (66%), Tanzania (66%), Zimbabwe (65%), and Cameroon (64%). Angolans (55%) and South Africans (47%) showed the weakest support. Opposition to U.N. intervention was less than 20 percent in most countries, reaching its highest level in Angola (37%).

Darfur

In the 10 countries asked specifically about international intervention in Darfur, most of those who answer indicate that they are open to U.N. action to stop the killing. In all countries the most common response is that the Security Council has at least the right to authorize intervention in Darfur and many say it has the responsibility to act. In no country does more than one in five say that the Security Council does not have the right to act. However the large numbers not answering suggests many are uninformed about the conflict in Sudan.



Support for UN action is highest in France where 84 percent say the Security Council has either the “responsibility” to authorize intervention in Darfur (55%) or the “right” (29%) to do so. Close behind are the United States where 83 percent say the Security Council has either the “responsibility” (48%) or the “right” (35%) to intervene. Israelis (77%) are the next most likely to favor UN action with 46 percent saying it has the responsibility to act and 31 percent saying it has the right to do so.

Majorities in India and China also believe the United Nations has the responsibility and/or right to act. About six in ten Indians (59%) say the Security Council either can (30%) or should (29%) act to stop the violence in Darfur. About the same proportion of Chinese (58%) agree, including 38 percent who say it has the right and 20 percent who say it has the responsibility to do so.

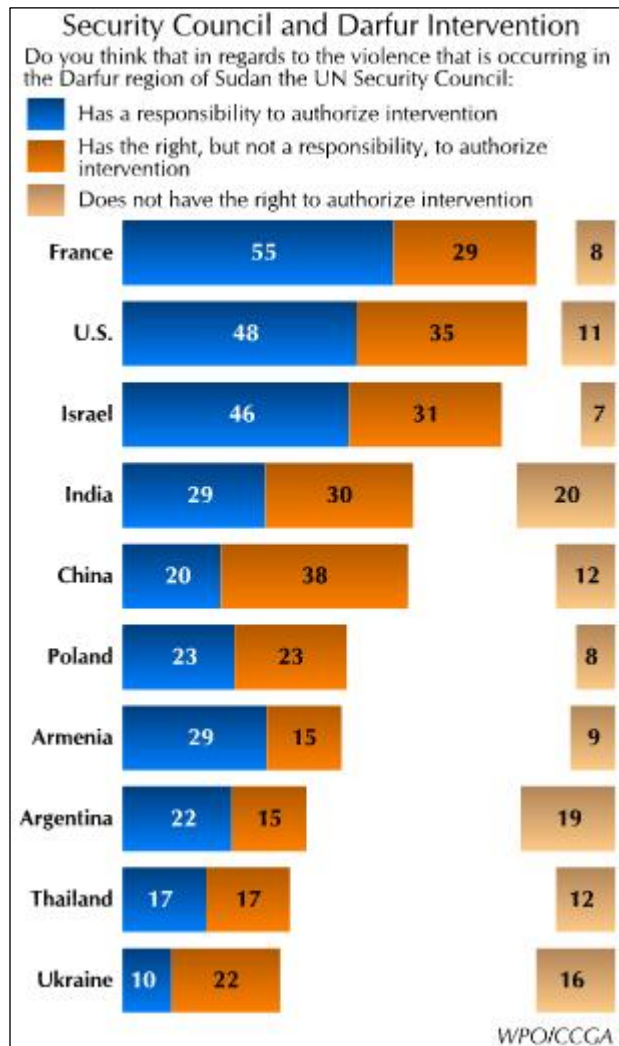
In five countries, large percentages declined to answer questions about Darfur (ranging from 43 to 54%), which suggests that many are unaware of what is happening there. But among those who did respond, the percentage saying that the United Nations has the right and/or the responsibility to act far outweighs those who say that it does not have the right:

Argentina, 37 percent to 19 percent; Armenia, 44 percent to 9 percent; Poland, 46 percent to 8 percent; Thailand, 34 percent to 12 percent; Ukraine, 32 percent to 16 percent.

Respondents in seven countries were also asked whether they thought their country should contribute troops to “an international peacekeeping force to stop the killing in Darfur.” Support for contributing troops to a peacekeeping operation in Darfur is relatively low in most countries with the exception of France and the United States, the survey shows.

A very large majority of the French (84%) support contributing troops to a peacekeeping force in Darfur. Among Americans 65 percent approve the idea and just 28 percent are opposed. Thais are divided (35% favor, 37% oppose).

The other four countries lean against participating in such a force: Armenia (27% favor, 45% oppose), Israel (39% favor, 52% oppose), Poland (28% favor, 42% oppose), and Ukraine (13% favor 56% oppose).



The 2005 GlobeScan poll of eight African nations found widespread openness to the idea of multilateral military intervention in the event of a conflict “like Darfur.” Across the eight countries, an average of just 13 percent would oppose intervention in such a case. Fifty-seven percent favored some form of intervention including 30 percent who favored UN intervention, 22 percent intervention by the African Union, and 5 percent “rich countries.”

As in other regions, awareness of the situation in Darfur was fairly low among Africans. On average across all eight countries, just 36 percent said they had heard or read a great deal or a fair amount about “the conflict in the Sudan region called Darfur.”

Genocide and Darfur: Results by Country

Americas

ARGENTINA

Graciela Romer y Asociados, December 2006

Argentines tend to believe that the UN Security Council should intervene to protect people from severe violations of human rights, though large numbers are unsure. By a margin of 48 percent to 27 percent, Argentine respondents say the United Nations Security Council has the “responsibility” to authorize the use of force to protect people from abuses such as genocide, “even against the will of their own government.” A quarter of respondents (25%) decline to answer this question, however. Asked specifically about violence in the Darfur region of Sudan, Argentines are also supportive of UN action, but many do not take a position. In response to a three-part question, 37 percent say the Security Council has either “a responsibility” to authorize intervention (22%) or “the right” to do so (15%). Only 19 percent think the council does not have such a right. But large numbers of those polled (43%) declined to answer this question.

MEXICO

Center for Economic Research and Teaching (CIDE)/Mexican Council of Foreign Relations (COMEXI), July 2006

Most Mexicans think the United Nations Security Council should have the “right to authorize the use of military force to prevent severe human rights violations, such as genocide.” Nearly three-quarters (73%) say the council should have this right while only 17 percent say it should not.

UNITED STATES

Chicago Council on Global Affairs, July 2006

Americans are among those most supportive of a strong UN role to prevent severe human rights abuses. Nearly three-quarters (74%) of Americans believe the Security Council has the “responsibility” to authorize the use of force to protect people from severe human rights violations such as genocide “even against the will of their own government.” Four out of five (83%) say the Security Council has the “right” to authorize the use of military force. Americans also support UN action in Darfur, where militias linked to the Sudanese government are accused of massacring civilians. The U.S. public is the second most likely among those polled about Darfur to believe the United Nations can and should act. Eighty-three percent say the Security Council has the responsibility to act (48%) or the right to do so (35%). Americans also say they would favor sending U.S. troops to join “an international peacekeeping force to stop the killing in Darfur” by a margin of 65 percent to 28 percent.

Asia

CHINA

Chicago Council on Global Affairs, July 2006

The Chinese public strongly backs the idea that the United Nations Security Council can and should authorize intervention to stop severe human rights violation. More than three-quarters of the Chinese polled (76%)—the highest percentage among the 12 countries asked—say the United Nations has the responsibility to protect people from abuses such as genocide even “against the will of their own government.” Only 13 percent disagree. Nearly three-quarters (72%) believe the council should have “the right to authorize the use of military force” to prevent such violations. Only 18 percent say it should not. A majority, though a smaller one, says the Security Council can and/or should authorize such action in response to a three-part question about Darfur. Fifty-eight percent of Chinese respondents say the UN has either “the right” (38%) or the “responsibility” (20%) to authorize intervention in Darfur. However this smaller majority may be the result of Chinese respondent’s lack of knowledge about the situation in Sudan—30 percent declined to answer. Only 12 percent say the council does not have this right.

INDIA

Chicago Council on Global Affairs, July 2006

A majority of Indians believe the United Nations has the responsibility to stop severe human rights violations, though the size of this majority is smaller than in most other countries, with large numbers not answering. A slight majority (51%) believes the Security Council has the “responsibility” to intervene militarily when severe human rights violations are occurring and only one in four (25%) disagree, while the same number (25%) chose not to answer. More than three out of five (63%) believe that the UN Security Council should have the right to authorize the use of military force in order to prevent such violations while 28 percent say it does not. Among the twelve publics polled on this question, only Thais showed less support than Indians for the Security Council having this right. Asked specifically about the violence in Darfur, about six in ten Indians (59%) say the Security Council has either the right (30%) or the responsibility (29%) to authorize military intervention. However, 20 percent of those polled say the council does not have such a right and 21 percent declined to answer.

SOUTH KOREA

East Asia Institute, July 2006

Most South Koreans favor the UN Security Council having the right to intervene against genocide. A large majority (74%) says the Security Council should have the right to authorize the use of military force in order to “prevent severe human rights violations such as genocide.” Only one-quarter of South Koreans (25%) believe that the Security Council should not have this right.

THAILAND

ABAC Poll Research Center, September 2006

A plurality of Thais think the UN Security Council has the responsibility to authorize the use of military force to stop genocide while a majority believes the international body should have the right to do so. These numbers are lower than in most countries. By a margin of 44 percent to 22 percent, Thais say the Security Council has the “responsibility” to authorize force in cases of severe human rights violations, though a third of respondents (33%) declined to answer this question. Sixty-two percent of Thais say the UN Security Council should be able to authorize intervention to prevent genocide, while only 23 percent say it should not (15 percent are not sure). Asked about intervention in the case of Darfur, Thais again show high levels of uncertainty. Thirty-four percent say the Security Council has either the right (17%) or the responsibility (17%) to authorize the use of force in Darfur. Only 12 percent say the UN does not have a right to do so. But more than half of those polled (54%) declined to answer the question. Thais are evenly divided about whether their troops should participate in an international peacekeeping force to stop the killings in the region. Thirty-seven percent oppose taking part in such a mission, while 35 percent are in favor. Twenty-eight percent did not answer.

Middle East

IRAN

WorldPublicOpinion.org, December 2006

Most Iranians say the UN Security Council should have the right to authorize the use of military force to prevent severe human rights violations such as genocide. Sixty-nine percent say the Security Council should have this right. Twenty percent say it should not and 12 percent did not answer.

ISRAEL

Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research, November 2006

Israelis are among those most likely to support UN action against human rights violations such as genocide. Nearly two-thirds (64%) say the UN has the responsibility to authorize military intervention to protect people “even against the will of their own government” while only 28 percent believe it does not. Eighty-three percent of Israelis say the Security Council should have the right to call for such action. Only 15 percent of Israeli respondents say the UN should not have this right. When asked specifically about Darfur, a large majority of Israelis believe the United Nations can and should act. More than three-quarters (77%) of those surveyed say that the UN has the responsibility (46%), or the right (31%) to authorize military intervention to stop the killing in this region of western Sudan. Only 7 percent believe it does not. However, a slim majority (52%) believes Israeli troops should not take part in an “international peacekeeping force to stop the killing in Darfur.” Only 39 percent say Israeli forces should take part.

PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES

Palestinian Center for Public Opinion, October 2006

Palestinians are among the publics most convinced that the United Nations has an obligation to protect people from genocide and other severe violations of human rights. Asked whether the Security Council has the responsibility to approve military action in these cases, Palestinians agree by a margin of 69 percent to 27 percent. Even larger numbers (78%) say the UN Security Council should have the right to authorize the use of military force in cases of severe human rights violations such as genocide, while just 20 percent believe it does not have this right.

Europe

ARMENIA

Armenian Center for National and International Studies, December 2006

A majority of Armenians believe the UN Security Council has the responsibility to authorize the use of military force to stop crimes such as genocide. Although Armenians tend to favor action in Darfur, large numbers are uncertain. Two-thirds of Armenians (66%) feel that the UN Security Council has the responsibility to approve military intervention to protect people from severe human rights violations “even against the will of their government.” Only 16 percent think it does not and 19 percent decline to answer. Forty-four percent of Armenians believe that the UN Security Council has either the responsibility to authorize intervention to stop the killings in Darfur (29%) or the right to do so (15%). Only 9 percent think it does not have this right. Nearly half (46%) of those polled declined to answer, however, which suggests many Armenians are uninformed about the situation in western Sudan. Armenians tend to be against sending their own troops to join an international peacekeeping force in Darfur. By a margin of 45 percent to 27 percent, Armenians oppose participating in such a mission (28 percent declined to answer).

FRANCE

Effience3, March 2007

France has the largest percentage of respondents who say the UN Security Council has a responsibility to intervene to stop the violence in Darfur and favor their country contributing troops to a peacekeeping operation there. France is the only country among 10 polled where a clear majority (55%) says the United Nations has a responsibility to authorize intervention in Darfur. Nearly a third (29%) believe the international body has the right, but not the responsibility to intervene and only 8 percent say it has no such right. A majority of French respondents also think the United Nations has this responsibility in principle (54%) though nearly two-fifths (39%) believe it does not, the highest level responding negatively to this question among the 12 countries asked. Four out of five (85%) also say the Security Council has the “right” to authorize the use of military force to prevent severe human rights violations. Large numbers of French

respondents (84%) are in favor of donating French troops to “an international peacekeeping force to stop the killing in Darfur.” This level of support is the highest among the seven countries polled. Only 14 percent of French respondents oppose contributing their country’s troops to a peacekeeping mission in western Sudan.

POLAND

CBOS, September 2006

A majority of Poles say the United Nations Security Council has the responsibility to authorize intervention to stop genocide. Fifty-four percent of Polish respondents say the UN Security Council has the responsibility to approve the use of military force to protect people from severe human rights violations “even against the will of their own government.” Only 15 percent believe the council does not have this responsibility but large numbers declined to answer (31%). Asked specifically about the Security Council’s role regarding the killings in Darfur, 46 percent say the United Nations has either the right to authorize intervention (23%) or the responsibility to do so (23%). Just 8 percent say it does not have the right. Nearly half of those asked this question, however, declined to answer (47%). Polish respondents lean against sending their own troops to take part in a peacekeeping mission to western Sudan. Forty-two percent say they would oppose Polish participation in an operation in Darfur while 28 percent say they would favor it. Again, large numbers declined to answer (31%).

RUSSIA

Levada Center, September 2006

A plurality of Russians believe the UN Security Council has the responsibility to authorize intervention to stop severe human rights abuse, placing them among the more skeptical of the publics polled. A majority believes, however, that the Security Council should have the right to do so. By a margin of 48 percent to 31 percent, Russians say the United Nations has an obligation to authorize military force to protect people from genocide even against the will of their own government, though one fifth (21%) did not answer. Nearly two-thirds of Russians (64%) say that the United Nations should have the right to authorize the use of military force in such cases, while one fifth (20%) do not (17% declined to answer).

UKRAINE

Kiev International Institute of Sociology, September 2006

A plurality of Ukrainians think the United Nations has the responsibility to prevent massive violations of human rights while a large majority believes the international body should at least have the right to do so. By a margin of 40 percent to 16 percent, Ukrainians say the UN Security Council has the responsibility to approve the use of force to stop abuses such as genocide, though large numbers (44%) did not answer. Seven in ten of those surveyed (69%) say the Security Council should have the right to prevent such violations, while only 11 percent say it should not (21 percent did not answer). In the specific case of Darfur, a third of those polled (32%) say the Security Council has

either the right (22%) or the responsibility (10%) to initiate military action, while just 16 percent say it does not. More than half of the Ukrainian respondents (52%) declined to answer this question, suggesting that many are uninformed about the conflict in western Sudan. A majority (56%) rejects the participation of Ukrainian troops as part of an international peacekeeping force to stop the killing in Darfur, with just 13 percent favoring such action and one-third (32%) declining to respond.