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Trends. The Annan Apologia: Still Missing the Point

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Kofi Annan, the United Nations (UN) Secretary General, has been lauded in many quarters for publicly admitting at least some UN blame for atrocities in Bosnia and Rwanda. Some of the praise for taking the blame is justified. For example, it is noteworthy that Mr. Annan has reinforced the notion that the principle of sovereignty does not protect a national government from international opprobrium and even military intervention to deter or end gross violations of human rights such as genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes.

However, Mr. Annan seems to be disingenuous about the complicity of national governments constituting "the international" in not intervening. He repeatedly has cited "error, misjudgment, and an inability to recognize the scope of evil." These attributions suggest that the problem is one of cognitive ability. Yet is it not clear that the problem much more likely embraces (1) highly sophisticated cognitions about one's own national strategic interest and domestic politics, (2) desensitization to violence, (3) cowardice and corruption, and (4) lack of will?

Mr. Annan cries out against a learning disorder when actually the Issue is a defect in the human soul. (See Crossette, B. (December 31, 1999). Kofi Annan unsettles important people, as he believes the U.N. should do. *The New York Times*, p. A1; A8; Obeng, S.G. (1999). Apologies in Akan discourse. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 31, 709-734; Meyerhoff, M. (1999). Sorry in the Pacific: Defining communities, defining practices. *Language in Society*, 28, 225-238; Scobie, E.D., & Scobie, G.E.W. (1998). Damaging events: The perceived need for forgiveness. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behavior*, 28, 373-401; Zeelenberg, M., van der Pligt, J., & Manstead, A.S.R. (1998). Undoing regret on Dutch television: Apologizing for interpersonal regrets involving actions or inactions. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 24, 1113-1119). (Keywords: Blame, Genocide, Kofi Annan, United Nations, War Crimes.)