



Interventions: A Life in War and Peace

Kofi Annan , Nader Mousavizadeh

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Interventions: A Life in War and Peace is the story of Annan's remarkable time at the center of the world stage. After forty years of service at the United Nations, Annan shares here his unique experiences during the terrorist attacks of September 11; the American invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan; the war between Israel, Hezbollah, and Lebanon; the brutal conflicts of Somalia, Rwanda, and Bosnia; and the geopolitical transformations following the end of the Cold War. With eloquence and unprecedented candor, *Interventions* finally reveals Annan's unique role and unparalleled perspective on decades of global politics.

Interventions: A Life in War and Peace Details

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From Reader Review Interventions: A Life in War and Peace for online ebook

Nana Fredua-Agyeman says

Interventions - A Life in War and Peace (Allen Lane, 2012; 383) is Kofi Annan's memoir focusing on an aspect of his work at the United Nations. As the title sounds, the book sought to provide some sort of explanation and reasons behind how 'interventions' became a UN policy. Like all memoirs, the book sought to provide certain reasons for which certain actions were taken. Regardless of the fact that most memoirs - including this one - are a way of putting the author in some good standing and explain away, with hindsight, the importance of the author's actions taken some time ago and as in the case of George Bush's Decision Points remove an indelible stigma that has become associated with them; regardless, there is still something to learn. If one reads between the lines, one is likely to grasp the author's intentions lurking behind.

In the case of Kofi Annan, there are several areas in the book which one could easily argue with. It also shows who the string-pullers are. For instance, the US influence on the UN was palpable and though Annan mentioned one or two instances where he put up some form of struggle, which he liked to describe as independent thinking, it was clear that the US did whatever they wanted - with or without UN sanctions, including their invasion of Iraq. Yet, the fact that US and UK controls the UN is common knowledge. The real shame comes when Annan, describing the bad governance in Africa wrote

continue here <http://freduagyeman.blogspot.com/2013...>

Henni says

Facinerende.... både manden og historien.

Kofi Annan fortæller om sine mange år i FN's tjeneste men med primær vægt på de 9 som generalsekretær. Man kan ikke undgå at fyldes med beundring for hans konstante stræben for fred, retfærdighed og menneskerettigheder, selvom det har sat ham i forhandlinger med nogle af de værste krigsforbryderer, har han altid insisteret på diplomati og forhandling så længe den vej var bare den mindste smule farbar. Samtidig har han bevaret håbet for verden, selvom han gang på gang har set forhandlinger brudt sammen og volden bryde ud eller stormagter nægte at stille fredsbevarende tropper til rådighed for at opdæmme for vold, ikke så underligt at han nævner Mandela som et forbillede, der er meget at den samme ånd i Annan.

Sven-eric Söder says

Kofi Annan is without any doubt one of the most successful SG of the UN - although he served in an utmost difficult time. He covers all international hot spots during his time in office. It's not least interesting to read his evaluation on what happened prior to the Iraqi war. "Interventions" is an important piece of current international relations.

Ian Robertson says

There is likely no better author to recap the past 50 years of global politics, conflict and development than former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan. Born into a politically aware and connected family, and working his way up through the United Nations organisation to become its first internally recruited leader, Annan has a rich story to tell. He recalls the players and episodes with clarity and unvarnished commentary, and is always diplomatic and principled in his criticism. For example, former British Prime Minister Tony Blair comes off poorly in the section on Iraq (Annan makes no secret of his dislike of this war), but extremely well in a later recounting of the difficulties in Sierra Leone; and Bill Clinton's actions in Somalia are pilloried, but in East Timor praised. Annan judges actions rather than personalities, which will appeal to readers around the globe, regardless of their nationality or political stripe. For those of us used to receiving some or all of our news from US sources, the non-partisan perspective is refreshingly and emphatically global and non-American.

The book starts with Annan recounting his personal role in the Israeli conflict, the Balkans, and Afghanistan, and his opinions on the position of major players such as George W. Bush, Blair, and Condoleezza Rice, before moving into the more traditional recounting of his family history. We witness how Annan developed his opinions over time, how those opinions showed up later in the policies of the UN, and in turn how those policies impacted the global theatre. Sadly, some opinions and policies came about belatedly: the experiences of Rwanda and Bosnia proved the need for force and not just peacekeeping. In looking back, Annan states “there were times when force was not only necessary but legitimate”.

Without being critical of current leadership (though he has no trouble criticizing his predecessor Boutros Boutros-Ghali's management style), Annan looks to the future and prescribes some changes for the UN, including the need for a substantially revamped Security Council, whose model is based on a post WWII geopolitical situation that bears little resemblance to today's. He notes too how - with the development of today's communication technology - the rise in the power of the individual has lead to political upheaval such as the Arab Spring, but also to challenges in the way the UN deals with the upheaval. The “emerging global convention of a ‘Duty to Protect’”, played out in Libya's change of government, proved to be understood quite differently by China and Russia than it was by the US and its NATO allies.

For Annan, all the world's a stage, and while the major players have their exits and entrances, there are many, many character actors in the narrative, often with substantial impact on events or policies. Canada's Romeo Dallaire and Lloyd Axworthy are notable for their roles in Rwanda and the ‘Duty to Protect’ doctrines, respectively; Australian Richard Butler for his disastrous tenure during the Iraq ‘Weapons of Mass Destruction’ inspections; and Bill and Melinda Gates for their philanthropic foundation. (U2's Bono is unmentioned except for a quote on the dust jacket).

Annan does not confine himself to global hotspots or conflicts, and in addressing the problems of Africa gracefully brushes aside Dambisa Moyo's bestselling argument (*Dead Aid*) against “colonialist” aid to Africa, stating plainly that the issue is not the aid itself, but rather the leadership and institutions in the receiving countries. With today's accountability for results, he says, the traditional blame of colonialism is outdated.

A wide-ranging, intimate, and timely retrospective that will be enjoyed by all with an interest in global politics and development.

Igor Trabuco says

It is not easy being the leader. Great book of memories!!

Michelle says

'Mugabe at first only shifted uncomfortably in his seat. "Mr. Secretary-General, you shouldn't be talking about condoms." "Why not?" I asked. "I have even raised it with the Pope."

I began reading *Interventions* the day it was announced that Kofi Annan had passed away. *Interventions* is a personal account of his service at the United Nations. Annan wanted to put the individual at the centre in a world built around states, and recounts some of the most challenging situations he was put in as secretary-general of the UN, in many ways the world's hardest job. *Interventions* is a fascinating inside view of what goes on behind the scenes in a changing global arena. The fact that Annan is so candid and critical in his analysis and freely acknowledges and examines the successes and failures of the UN, failures that Annan was very much personally involved in, makes this book a great read. Annan was deeply influenced by Ghanaian independence and grew up believing change is possible. He did not shy away from actively shaping the global agenda, and heavily pushed humanitarian intervention, the MDGs and major UN reform. I read a general book on the UN earlier this year, however *Interventions* offers an unparalleled insight into some of the major crises from the mid nineties to the early twenty-first century. Kofi Annan was a human rights defender and skillful negotiator - this world could do with a lot more people like him.

Ben Truong says

Interventions: A Life in War and Peace is a memoir co-written by former Secretary-General of the United Nations and 2001 Nobel Peace Prize winner, Kofi Annan and his former adviser and speechwriter Nader Mousavizadeh. This book focuses on the workings of the United Nations Secretariat and the conditions under which the Secretary General has to take decisions. It is mainly set in the Post-Cold War era when Annan served as the Deputy Secretary General and then as the Secretary General of the United Nations.

Kofi Atta Annan was a Ghanaian diplomat who served as the seventh Secretary-General of the United Nations from 1997 January to 2006 December. Kofi Annan and the United Nations were the co-recipients of the 2001 Nobel Peace Prize. He was the founder and chairperson of the Kofi Annan Foundation, as well as chairperson of The Elders, an international organization founded by Nelson Mandela.

Kofi Annan died earlier this month (18 August 2018) and to my everlasting shame, I did not really know much about him until after his death. I have heard of him in passing over the years, but nothing substantial. Therefore, I thought that it would be appropriate to read his autobiography right now, after hearing so many amazing things about him when he died.

Interventions: A Life in War and Peace recounts the role of the United Nations – Kofi Annan in particular in some of the major conflicts during his tenure. During the Rwandan Civil War, the United Nations passed a resolution and dispatch over five thousand troops to the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda. It also deals with Kofi Annan's efforts as the Secretary-General to focus the efforts of the United Nations and its members on the bigger picture of providing health, education, clean water, and good governance to

everyone. He also set up the International Criminal Court and established tribunals to prosecute serious crimes committed during the Yugoslav Wars, and so much more.

The autobiography is written extremely well. I found that Kofi Annan to be a down to earth person who is compassionate and loves his job. Kofi Annan was quite the diplomat and negotiator, who faced the horrors that the world had thrown at him. The writing was rather organized, unaggressive, lucid, sagacious, and elegant, which gives an illuminating read. In the end, I was glad that I was compelled to read this biography.

All in all, *Interventions: A Life in War and Peace* is a well-written autobiography and a wonderful representation of a wonderful person who had done amazing things with his life and perhaps a new hero in my life.

Mori N says

When you look back at his arguments regarding the mistakes of the UN, you come to realize that this is only a attempt to justify all the unforgiving failures, holding other factors responsible for it.

It's a book worth reading, not because of his arguments, but of the clear image it gives of the UN's preventable failures, and to, hopefully, learn from past mistakes.

Elza says

Maybe 3,5

This book is part of my 2016 reading challenge

This is Kofi Annan's memoir, focusing on an aspect of his work as the Secretary-General of the United Nations, UN.

It is amazing to read how diplomacy and peacekeeping actually plays out in the field. The book is full of interesting facts and insight of the UN and its politics. It is well written, sometimes a bit difficult to follow because I'm not familiar with all the conflicts in the world.

However, I missed the heart. Annan explains and gives a vivid picture of different interventions he has done over the years, but mostly left out his own feelings and thoughts. It felt more like a report of what happened than a memoir.

He writes a lot about UN's failure and is openly discussing them, which was both interesting and admirable. However, sometimes it felt like he was trying to justify the failures more than explaining them.

This book is worth reading! It is interesting and it gives you an insight in the UN.

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Tim says

An enjoyable and easy-to-read overview of Mr. Annan's time as Secretary-General of the UN. Offers a good perspective on the evolution of academic logic legitimizing intervention and peacekeeping.

Guchu says

4.5 stars, ish

I think the best political memoirs are just honest to god works of history, through unique vantage points. This was that, a journey through the worst conflicts of modern times vide the lens of a man who sure would know what the hell (often literal) was going on.

The honesty was also refreshing;

"...we had a responsibility to manage it responsibly and scrupulously. In this we failed, through weak and porous procurement practises, incomplete auditing systems and overall management for which I as secretary general was ultimately responsible"

That was Annan re Oil for Food Programme. How can you not trust a guy like that to tell you about the non rehabilitable mess that was the Bush administration?

I liked it a lot. Read it if you can.

Ian Smith says

My guess is this one of those weighty coffee table books with a buying to reading ratio of about 5:1. In this regard, it shares some noble company with other autobiographies of the great and good. Which is a profound shame. For about half way though this book, suspicion that this is yet another attempt to (re)write history lest future historians take a less positive view of this multilateral era, gives way to a growing admiration of a man who faces an impossible task. For the exercise of leadership requires followership, and the position of Secretary-General is more secretary than general; more servant than master. So it with increasing respect that I read of his attempts to steer a course through the messy politics of what many regard as the anachronism of the UN Security Council.

I am also exercised by the political imperative to engage with leaders who seem set on destruction of their own people, and/or rape their countries in the odious pursuit of personal wealth. Yet he demonstrates that to engage is not to condone. And his honest admission that UN diplomacy is rarely successful yet rarely wasted provides a reality check for those who seek a more ideologically pure role for the UN.

These are lessons that become clearer towards the end of 'Interventions', and I confess that I only truly began to appreciate this book - and this man - when I reached chapters 7 and 8, addressing wars and conflict in the Middle East and Iraq.

As with many books which attempt to provide a brief summary of events, the narrative becomes somewhat simplistic at times; on numerous occasions he uses the phrase, "I decided...", which surely belies the complex process of consultation required, and perhaps plays down the contribution of many who surely provided advice and ideas.

But this is a sobering and important read. And a fascinating insight into the world of the UN in the 21st century.

Marianne says

This is a bold, insightful and highly personal recounting of the last half century of global politics from a career contributor to the United Nations. He is thorough in his narrative, sparing no deserved plaudits nor criticisms. It is refreshing to hear someone of his stature shed light on the reprehensible failings of such major world players as the United States and Israel. His insights on the trials of developing Africa and the potential roles for the United Nations are without equal. A work worth reading.

Trish says

It is difficult to imagine someone admitting to being in the leadership of an organization that allowed, with or without intervention, the major atrocities of the last decade of the 20th century. I may be a person who would have gone home spent and embittered with the taste of iron on my tongue. But Kofi Annan did not walk away, nor did he turn his eyes from the terrible events his leadership at the helm of the United Nations was unable to prevent.

Kofi Annan did not shrink from the responsibilities of his office as Secretary General of the United Nations. He does not apologize now for having watched over some of the most horrendous events in the history of that body. He does try to explain how it happened that the world stood by while Rwanda ran with blood.

Kofi Annan became head of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in the U.N. in March of 1993 and received the rank of under-secretary-general. The Battle of Mogadishu, also known to Americans as "Black Hawk Down," took place on October 3rd and 4th, 1993.

It was in the immediate aftermath of that devastating event that Force Commander Romeo Dallaire, stationed in Kigali in early 1994, sent an urgent request to raid the arms cache of the ruling Hutu political party, having received intelligence that the group was considering exterminating Tutsis, and including killing Belgian U.N. peacekeepers in an effort to force a pull out. No government was willing to sacrifice domestic troops to "messy entanglements in a civil war." So Dallaire was ordered to stand down.

Kofi Annan became the seventh Secretary-General of the United Nations January 1, 1997 and left that role December 31, 2006. After his election to Secretary-General in 1997, Annan began to institute a new overarching policy: The responsibility to protect and intervention as a duty of care. The NATO bombing of Serbian troops in Kosovo in 1999 began without Security Council agreement. "There are times when the use of force may be legitimate in the pursuit of peace."

This personal history is readable. There are times in our lives when we follow world events with half an eye.

With the disintegration of newspaper coverage in recent years and the change in news delivery to online blurbs, radio, or TV newscasters, all using the same quotes from leaders and spinning them as they will, it is difficult to get a real grasp of how diplomacy works, or if it does at all.

Annan won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2001, and what a bitter irony it must have seemed to him then. At his acceptance speech in December 2001, he observed that the world had entered the third millennium “through a gate of fire.” But what I was able to understand from this book is why Annan won the Peace Prize in the first place. He outlines the changes he had proposed to the goals of the U.N. and was able to usher in those changes to a great extent, despite using an imperfect and frustrating organization with competing interests among the players. As the Nobel committee commented at the time: the U.N. redefined sovereignty as a responsibility as much as a right and that sovereignty cannot be a shield behind which member states conceal their violations.

One comes to admire Annan’s strength of purpose and purity of intent throughout his years as Secretary General, and we begin to perceive the outline of U.S. interests in dominating the stage. “One of the great ironies of [the 2003-04 U.N. reform] was the manner in which the United States—which had done more than any other country to establish the U.N.—found itself in the position of being the main obstacle to reforming it.” Annan has nothing good to say about how Israel’s leaders continually shirked their moral and political duty to deal with their occupation of disputed territory, and is equally forthright about Arab states in the region: “decades of misrule heaped on centuries of decline.”

But he tells of his successes, too: putting the individual, rather than states, at the center of the U.N. focus, developing the Millennium Development Goals, bringing to justice noted war criminals, working with businesses and governments to deal with HIV/Aids, averting escalations of aggressions in the Middle East. After leaving office, and using the skills and knowledge he learned there, Annan helped to create a leadership-sharing government in Kenya at the time of the disputed election in 2008. It may be the accomplishment he is most proud of:

My role in mediating the violent 2008 Kenyan political crisis, backed by a remarkable international and African support network, was one for which, in some ways, I had spent my entire decade-long tenure as secretary-general preparing. It was perhaps the hardest, most intensive, and enduring of all my interventions in the affairs of another country, and a deal that required me to draw on every aspect of my experience of diplomacy and energy for peacemaking—this time at the heart of my own continent.”

At the end of the book, Annan discusses the decisions which brought war to Iraq. As a diplomat, Annan felt the decision to go to war was a failure on the part of the U.S. leadership which brought only shame, death, and destruction in its wake. He addresses the Oil-for-Food Programme which became a painful reminder that greed and self-interest often parades as generosity when countries seek their own interests at the expense of another.

What *we* should give him credit for is that, despite the outrageous challenges an international body faces in light of bruising collisions between member states, such a man would spend his time struggling for gains that make a difference to the poorest and most disenfranchised among us.

Angi says

Amazing to read how diplomacy and peace keeping actually plays out in the field...from the man who would know.
