

Humanitarian Intervention: Ethical, Legal and Political Dilemmas. Edited by J. L. Holzgrefe and Robert O. Keohane. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. 350pp. £18.95/\$25, ISBN 0 521 52928 X (pb); £50/\$70, ISBN 0 521 821 98 3 (hb).

In the ten years since the Rwandan genocide, over 75 books and hundreds of articles have been written on the question of humanitarian intervention. Almost 50 books on the subject have been published since the 1999 Kosovo crisis. In light of the pages already devoted to the subject, the question does arise: do we need another book on humanitarian intervention? If there is room for one more book on our shelves, then it should be Holzgrefe and Keohane's *Humanitarian Intervention*.

Humanitarian Intervention is a comprehensive and compelling examination of the legal, ethical and political motivations and justifications for humanitarian intervention, defined by the volume as: 'the threat or use of force across state borders by a state (or group of states) aimed at preventing or ending widespread and grave violations of the fundamental

rights of individuals other than its own citizens, without the permission of the state within whose territory force is applied' (p. 11). More specifically, the book is a challenging reminder, especially for those who believe that the discussion on humanitarian intervention should be focused exclusively on its practicalities and modalities, that the fundamentals of the normative debate are far from resolved. Indeed, the greatest contribution of the volume may be its ability to demonstrate the utility of a rigorous and critical examination of the principles of humanitarian intervention detached from the passions and particularities of a specific crisis.

The work makes a significant contribution to the literature on humanitarian intervention on two levels. On one level, it provides an accessible yet robust overview of the key aspects of the ethical and legal debates on intervention. Holzgrefe's chapter introduces the reader to ethical perspectives (including utilitarianism, natural law, social contractarianism, communitarianism and legal positivism) and legal perspectives (from a classicist and realist perspective of public international law) on intervention, before presenting the many tensions between these perspectives. The chapter, coupled with Farer's consideration of the problems of application of these principles both before and after the attacks of 11 September 2001, serves as a very useful introduction to the critical tensions within the normative debate.

On another level, the collection rigorously engages with the fundamental questions surrounding the principle of humanitarian intervention, and consequently advances key aspects of the debate. Tesón's chapter examines the liberal case for humanitarian intervention, from the perspective not only of an ethical consideration of the limits of the sovereignty of the state that is the target of intervention, but also the justification of intervention to the citizens of the state that is mounting the intervention. In considering the shortcomings of current international law to provide clarity on the legality of intervention in extreme circumstances, Buchanan provides useful insight into why non-sanctioned intervention may be necessary to ensure the progressive development of international law. Illegality and the development of legal norms are also addressed by Byers and Chesterman, while emphasizing that the 'greatest threat to an international rule of law lies not in the occasional breach of that law . . . but in attempts to mould that law to accommodate the shifting practices of the powerful' (p. 203). Such political themes are then more thoroughly examined in Keohane's 'unbundling' of sovereignty and Ignatieff's consideration of the international landscape against which the principles of the volume should be considered.

The effectiveness of the collection stems not only from the strength of the individual contributions, but from the process that brought the works together and encouraged their interaction, as described by Keohane in the Introduction. The goal of the process was not consensus, but a more thorough understanding of differences. The volume contains a genuine conversation between the disciplines of ethics, law and politics, as illustrated by Franck's consideration of the tension between 'what is lawful and what is right' (p. 231) and Tesón's engagement with the legal argument for non-intervention from the perspective of an ethicist. As such, the volume demonstrates the benefit of an engaged and critical interdisciplinary debate.

Notwithstanding Stromseth's useful discussion on the importance of assessing the effectiveness of intervention when considering its justifiability, *Humanitarian Intervention* does not include a focused consideration of many of the practical and policy questions that currently preoccupy the debate, such as the formulation of mandates, mechanisms of authorization, transition to post-intervention reconstruction, and the reform of burdensome bureaucracies to make interventions more timely. But to criticize the volume

on these grounds would be to misunderstand the objective of the work, which is specifically to engage the tensions contained within the principle of humanitarian intervention itself. This is a useful exercise. As the debate on humanitarian intervention is compounded, and clouded, by the continuing consequences of the events of 11 September 2001, the need to base action on sound principles is clearer than ever.

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