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# Book Reviews

## Unilateralism 'Lite'

*Just Intervention* edited by Anthony F. Lang Jr. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2003. Pp.231. £16.95 (pbk). ISBN: 0-878-40341-8.

*In the Shadow of Just Wars: Violence, Politics and Humanitarian Action* edited by Fabrice Weissman (translated by Vincent Homolka, Roger Leverdier and Fiona Terry; English text edited by Fiona Terry). London: Hurst and Co in association with Médecins Sans Frontières, 2004. Pp.288. £45 (hbk). ISBN: 1-850-65736-X.

*Humanitarian Intervention and International Relations* edited by Jennifer M. Welsh. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004. Pp.239. £47 (hbk). ISBN: 0-199-26721-9.

Humanitarian intervention is over. The conventional wisdom increasingly seems to be that the diplomatic controversy and UN fracas over the legality of the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq has gravely destabilized what had hitherto been a newly settled consensus on the use of force in international relations—namely, the 'right of humanitarian intervention'. Simon Clark, an ex-special advisor to British foreign secretary Robin Cook during NATO's bombardment of Yugoslavia in 1999, argues that the invasion of Iraq has shattered what he terms the 'liberal intervention consensus'—the idea that military intervention in defence of human rights was a legitimate enterprise.<sup>1</sup> Discussing the ongoing conflict in Sudan's Darfur province, another commentator recently inveighed against the dangers of 'post-Iraq isolationism' and what he termed the erosion of the 'third pillar' of Tony Blair's 'world view'—humanitarian intervention.<sup>2</sup> What, then, do these three edited volumes on humanitarian intervention and humanitarianism have to offer us in this period of so-called post-Iraq isolationism?

First, the questions central to scholars and students of humanitarian intervention (namely, the political and legal issues surrounding the use of force, the role of human rights and humanitarianism in post-cold war international relations) are also central to the war on terror. Indeed, one of the key questions confronting researchers grappling with these issues is the question of the continuity and discontinuity that links these two periods of 'liberal interventionism'. How much has changed in international relations since the launch of the war on terror? Have human rights and humanitarianism been deprioritized since the invasion of Afghanistan? How has the war on terror impacted on the rules governing the use of force? To what extent did the so-called right of humanitarian intervention set the terrain for the current disorder in the rules governing the use of force in international relations?

Written prior to the US-led war on Iraq, although published afterwards, these three volumes provide a sense of how the relevant issues surrounding

humanitarianism and the use of force had crystallized after Kosovo and Afghanistan but before the crisis over the invasion of Iraq. Interestingly, many of the chapters here anticipate some of the key issues that emerged in relation to Iraq. For example, in her introduction, Jennifer Welsh notes that questions of political accountability and self-determination (the questions that consistently undermined the legitimacy and legality of humanitarian intervention) become even more central in the post-intervention scenario, when the question of *de facto* trusteeship arises. Consequently, she argues that 'decisions about whether to intervene in humanitarian crises will need to incorporate solutions to these new challenges' (p.7). Similarly, in the Lang collection, Terry Nardin constructs a moral spectrum linking state building and intervention: 'the injunction to save my neighbour, if my neighbour is a community, might entail continued involvement. Armed intervention to halt a massacre is likely to be only the first of many measures needed to restore order to a chaotic society and prevent subsequent massacres.' (p.23)

In the Welsh volume, Simon Chesterman anticipates the crucial role that Security Council authorization played in the run-up to the invasion of Iraq. Chesterman argues that humanitarian interventions across the 1990s have gradually led to the depreciation of Security Council authorization, demoting it to a formal procedure rather than a substantive impediment on the use of force, as originally conceived. With so much debate over the last few years regarding the supposed impotence of the UN Security Council, Chesterman reminds us that this occurs in a context of enhanced activism, rather than passivity:

Indeed, it is ironic that states began to claim the need to act when the Security Council faltered in precisely the same decade that the Council's activities expanded so greatly. At a time when there was a far stronger argument that paralysis of the UN system demanded self-help [i.e., the cold war], the International Court of Justice considered and rejected arguments that 'present defects in international organisation could justify an independent right of intervention.' (Welsh, p.169)

Similarly, the major focus of the Weissman volume is on the extent to which humanitarian organizations and the humanitarian project have been compromised, and their neutrality undermined – either by buttressing particular regimes though the provision of aid or by providing vital legitimacy and support to Western war efforts.

While there is wide variety of opinion across the Lang and Welsh collections, the consensus across the two books is decisively in favour of intervention, albeit with varying degrees of enthusiasm, ranging from robust defence of a right of intervention (e.g. Mayall, Nardin, Wheeler), to sceptical but more or less grudging acceptance (e.g. Chesterman). Yet despite the diversity of theoretical approach between the two volumes, there is a striking similarity in the line of attack advanced by the most ardent advocates of humanitarian intervention. This is illustrated by taking one example from each of the collections, each based on a very different framework: a constructivist defence of humanitarian intervention by Nicholas Wheeler, in Welsh; and a natural law defence by Terry Nardin, in

Lang. Despite their theoretical differences, both of the intellectual schemas coalesce in their critique of the barriers to the use of force enshrined in international law. The hostility to non-intervention norms – embedded in the formal legal and normative framework of post-1945 international relations and codified in the UN Charter – necessitates the development of new conceptual apparatuses that shift the terrain of debate away from international law.

Wheeler seeks to embed the notion of ‘sovereignty as responsibility’ (popularized in the 2001 International Commission for Intervention and State Sovereignty report *The Responsibility to Protect*)<sup>3</sup> as part of the international normative structure, through the use of a constructive framework. In so doing, Wheeler seeks to neutralize the counter-claims, of what he dubs ‘materialist’ or ‘neo-Marxist’ arguments, that humanitarian ideals have merely provided an ideological veneer for the exercise of power. Wheeler contends that this ‘materialist’ claim does not allow one to distinguish between power based on relations of domination and power based on ‘shared norms’ (p.39). Examining the UN Security Council debates of 26 March 1999, when the Council voted down (by 12 votes to three) a draft Russian resolution demanding a halt to NATO’s bombardment of Yugoslavia, Wheeler points out that there is little evidence to show non-Western states being dragged into compliance. Wheeler notes that ‘materialists could reply that power does not have to be used to be effective but in the absence of any empirical evidence to support this claim, it remains a hypothesis that needs more rigorous testing. One important piece of evidence that refutes the materialist position is that had Western power been as omnipotent as they suggest, would Yemen and Zimbabwe have voted against Resolution 688 [5 April 1991]?’ (p.39)

Methodologically speaking, Wheeler’s rhetorical question is dubious, deploying as it does a blithe empiricism. Votes cast *both for and against* what he designates as ‘sovereignty as responsibility’ resolutions are taken as evidence that ‘sovereignty as responsibility’ exists. Moreover, the idea that we should take at face value the *official* minutes of Council meetings, and assume that they exhaust the entirety of international politicking and negotiations, is a rather naive understanding of diplomacy. The notorious words thrown by the US representative at the representative of Yemen in 1990 (‘That was the most expensive no vote you ever cast’), after Yemen voted against resolution 678, are certainly not in the official minutes of the meeting.<sup>4</sup> Wheeler’s rather cavalier attitude to the Council minutes reflects the limitations of the constructivist notion of ‘norms’ that he advances. Reflecting on E.H. Carr’s writings, Wheeler muses that ‘although the strongest states are in a position to substitute brute power for legitimacy, what is surprising is how rarely this happens’ (p.32). But when Carr argues that ‘supposedly absolute and universal principles . . . [are] but . . . the unconscious reflections of . . . national interest at a particular time’ (in Welsh, p.31), Carr is making the point that ‘brute power’ and legitimacy are more often coterminous than antagonistic facets of the exercise of power.

But constructivist understandings tend to overlook this. Briefly, as state-level constructivism holds that the interests and identities of states are shaped through an external process of inter-subjective engagement with other states, this allows analysts to elide questions of domination and power. If it can be claimed that a

state's 'identity' has been transformed through international engagement (in this case, developing countries' identities changing to accept the norm of 'sovereignty as responsibility'), this automatically makes questions of hegemony in the Council redundant. If it can be argued that state identities change, lingering traces of domination become invisible, and brute power and legitimacy are crudely juxtaposed as two entirely different practices of power. In this way, the constructivist focus on the discovery of sociologically derived norms allows analysts to sidestep the issues of reciprocity, universal consent and state practice, which have hitherto constituted the criteria for deciding what makes an international legal norm a norm. A constructivist account of international society allows Wheeler to avoid the problem encountered by the 'counter-restrictionist' international lawyers who, in defending a right of intervention, end on the legally problematic ground of privileging custom over treaty—'a move which legal opinion opposes', as Welsh points out, 'since it seems to suggest that certain types of practice count more than others—that is, the actions of Western states versus the stated opposition from [non-Western states]' (p.55).

Nardin's theoretical apparatus is different. Instead of outflanking international law via constructivism, he decides to burrow under it: he turns to pre-modern notions of natural law. Nardin argues 'that the moral principles underlying humanitarian intervention do not need to be rethought "in the post cold war world" or "after Kosovo". These principles have been known for centuries, if not millennia ... ethics of humanitarian intervention [are] rooted in a widely shared and rationally defensively conception of human dignity' (p.25). Here, Nardin has done nothing less than revive natural law, in contradistinction to international law, as a justification for the use of force.

Traditional natural law derived a set of universally enforceable precepts by reference to the reason imparted to individuals by God (thereby making natural law part of the sphere of morality and not formal *ius gentium*). Nardin argues that, as with natural law, it is possible to speak of a 'common morality' binding on all human beings. This 'common morality' allows access to universal claims via the process of rational reflection ('critical morality') on the norms that structures one's own particular social milieu (the universal claims in this case being human rights). Yet, in counter-posing international law to this 'common morality', Nardin makes no effort to show how 'human rights' – a corpus of hortatory, mostly post-1945 international pacts signed by states – so naturally align themselves, or evolve into this 'common morality', binding on all individuals.

But what Nardin terms 'positive international law' is not merely 'what states do', as the prefix 'positive' highlights. Crucially, international law also presupposes distinctly modern conceptions of politics, autonomy and representation. This is illustrated by Nicholas Onuf, in the chapter following Nardin's. Onuf points out that the doctrine of natural rights that gradually replaced that of natural law posited the individual as being logically prior to society. Whereas natural law treated a multiplicity of agents (guilds, corporate bodies, states and so on) as being morally equivalent, for the natural rights theorist, such as Hobbes, a corporate being was only such to the extent that a 'natural person'

empowered the ‘corporate being’ as their representative agent. In other words, the decline of natural law in favour of natural rights mirrored the decline of one form of sovereignty and the rise of another. Absolutist notions of dynastic sovereignty, with their corollary of pastoral, rather than representative, power, gave way to doctrines of popular sovereignty. Yet, in less than 20 pages, Nardin despatches all the progressive gains of ‘positive liberal international law’. Autonomy, self-determination and anti-imperialism dissolve in the matrix of a primordial ‘common morality’.

Chapters by both Welsh and Chesterman (the latter in both the Lang and the Welsh volumes) provide some corrective to the strongly pro-interventionist line taken by Nardin and Wheeler. Both Chesterman and Welsh question the extent to which a doctrine of humanitarian intervention has managed to sink its roots into international society, focusing instead on its relative weakness – a key retrospective issue in light of the alleged ‘post-Iraq isolationism’ touched upon at the beginning of this review. In her chapter in her volume, Welsh engages in some useful thicket-clearing, arguing that ‘the philosophy underlining objections to humanitarian intervention is essentially a philosophy of limits’; such as the limited international consensus underpinning intervention and the limits to which states can claim to act in the name of the ‘international community’ (p.53). Both Welsh and Chesterman question the extent to which humanitarian intervention represents an established norm in international society.

Unfortunately, in this regard, Chesterman’s impressively rigorous and precise legal examination of the relevant documentation is also his weakness. Splicing up the nuances and exposing the inconsistencies in the haphazard evolution of the idea limits Chesterman’s ability to distinguish the wood from the trees. Chesterman would tend to fall into Wheeler’s ‘realist’ category: he attributes the inconsistency of humanitarian intervention to the fact that it is little more than a new patina for the exercise of power – in other words, states only intervene when the costs are relatively small, calling into question the depth of their ethical commitment to human rights: ‘Can ethical demands trump . . . legal structures? The answer, however unsatisfactory, will be that the question is so unlikely to arise in practice as to be of questionable value in answering theory’ (in Lang, p.47).

But it is relatively simple to expose hypocrisy and inconsistency in intervention. Welsh goes some way beyond this in showing that humanitarianism has a greater depth than merely being the exercise of power under a new ideological veneer. Refreshingly, in addition to the usual suspects trotted out to account for the rise of humanitarianism (e.g. the ‘CNN effect’), Welsh also includes one factor usually left out of such discussion, namely the search by Western governments for new forms of political legitimacy and ‘moral authority’ to replace the ideologically driven agenda of the cold war (p.2). Welsh argues that understanding the ‘political motivations’ behind humanitarian intervention is an important objective of her book. But unfortunately ‘politics’ here is only explored in the *realpolitik* sense (the difficulties of mobilizing regional actors, implications for the neutrality of humanitarian organizations and so on). The origins and implications



of the attempt to use human rights to found a new legitimacy for post-cold war politics is an avenue left largely unexplored.

This limits the chapters in the Welsh collection from understanding the contradictions and inner dynamics of human rights-based foreign policy. Welsh argues that humanitarian intervention remains 'a controversial norm largely because of continued opposition from certain members of international society, and concerns about its potentially negative consequences' (p.2). This account of the fragility of the 'right of intervention' is essentially 'exogenous', external – i.e. the progress of humanitarian foreign policy has been impeded by the concerted opposition of the developing world. This is the context in which Welsh frames the current focus of the international spotlight on state building, stabilization and post-conflict reconstruction, suggesting that the promulgation of the idea of a 'responsibility to protect' has sought to transcend the legally incoherent and politically suspect question of a 'right to intervention'. It does this by rehabilitating a role for the state in the defence of human rights. In this context, the doctrine of 'sovereignty as responsibility' is seen not only as legitimizing intervention, but also providing a framework for re-accommodating the role of the state in the protection of human rights.

But, persuasive as Welsh's thinking is, it is unlikely that this compromise engineered by the ICISS offers a viable way of overcoming the problems posed by humanitarian intervention. This is partly because the nature of the problem identified by Welsh is mischaracterized. The focus on exogenous limits to humanitarian intervention overplays the role of the developing world in international affairs and underestimates the extent to which developing countries have been weakened by the end of a bipolar world order. However vociferous and eloquent their opposition to the 'right of intervention' has been, either in the hallowed chambers of the UN or in the dense arguments of annexes to *Responsibility to Protect*, it does not in any way mean that there exists any practical Third World ability to resist the era of the 'new interventionism'. The US delegate's remarks to the Yemeni representative mentioned above make this reasonably clear. The failure of human rights to realize something like the 'collective will' of the society of states can be analysed more fruitfully by concentrating on the internal anatomy of humanitarianism, rather than exogenous opposition from the developing world. Welsh's focus on exogenous factors misses the fissiparous nature of humanitarian intervention itself.

It can be argued that the doctrine of humanitarian intervention has an inbuilt tendency to fragment international politics and encourage unilateralism among the great powers – and it is for this reason that it has failed to consolidate itself. An inbuilt tendency to fragmentation and unilateralism also has obvious implications for the controversy over the invasion of Iraq. As Nicholas Wheeler has convincingly argued elsewhere, to be internally consistent humanitarian intervention demands the elevation of the conscience-driven politics of the moral emergency over obedience to the letter of international law, or for that matter the pain-staking process of forging diplomatic consensus.<sup>5</sup> In other words, the inconsistency of humanitarian intervention is not simply down to being a veneer for *realpolitik*, as Chesterman implies. Rather, the 'inconsistency' stems

from humanitarian intervention being at its core a unilateralist vision of international relations. The moral imperative of action, and the concomitant reliance on the subjective assessment of a moral emergency, of necessity pushes against the formal framework of international law, which is grounded on consensus and the accommodation of competing interests. In this sense, we can now see more clearly the organic link between the ‘war on terror’ and humanitarian intervention. Retrospectively, we can see the failure of NATO powers to secure Security Council authorization for the bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999 as a dress-rehearsal for the failure of the US-led ‘coalition of the willing’ to secure Council authorization for the invasion of Iraq. To paraphrase Michael Ignatieff, NATO’s bombardment of Yugoslavia was ‘unilateralism-lite’.<sup>6</sup>

This still leaves us to answer the question of the extent to which the ICISS has helped to shift the terrain of the debate to less conceptually and politically thorny issues. Welsh, for example, takes the Bush administration’s embrace of post-conflict reconstruction in its war effort as indicative of the acceptance of an ‘enlarged sense of duty’, that aligns itself with the thrust of ICISS, by focusing on the victims rather than the interveners: ‘Perhaps, by taking on the viewpoint of the victim, those with the power and capability to intervene can finally balance the desire to resist evil against the dangers of succumbing to righteousness’ (p.183). An analysis that focused more on the internal make up of humanitarian-based foreign policy would give us reason to believe otherwise. It is, indeed, precisely the victim-centred nature of human rights as a mode of political legitimation that makes humanitarian intervention so unilateralist and destabilizing. Critical in this elevation of victim-centred foreign policy and use-of-force is the question of agency, ‘because’, as Mohammed Ayoob has argued, ‘those who define human rights and decree that they have been violated also decide when and where intervention to protect such rights should and must take place’.<sup>7</sup> As the content of human rights is established independently of the capacity of the subjects of those rights, this contradiction is resolved by yoking in the agency of external power. In David Chandler’s words, ‘because the human subject is defined as being without autonomy, some external source has, of necessity, to be looked to’.<sup>8</sup> Thus the inner logic of human rights tends to prise apart the subject and agent of rights. In the context of global politics this opens up a rift into which power inexorably creeps.

The similarities between the war on terror and humanitarian intervention can also be fruitfully explored through the trope of humanitarianism that is common to both and well-covered in the Weissman collection. Since Afghanistan, more attention than ever has fixed on questions of the neutrality of humanitarian organizations in the war efforts of Western states. For Weissman and his contributors, the topic is especially close to home, after Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) withdrew from Afghanistan in July 2004. MSF managed to work in Afghanistan during the Soviet occupation, under the chaos of mujahedin civil war, and then under the Taliban regime; only under the US occupation have MSF activities suffered sufficient setbacks to prompt their withdrawal. The reliance of the US–UK war effort on humanitarianism is explored in chapters on Afghanistan and Iraq, citing UK Prime Minister Tony Blair’s call for the formation of a ‘military humanitarian coalition’ and the US Secretary of State’s view of humanitarian NGOs as

a ‘force multiplier’ while ‘some American special forces operated in civilian clothes, and introduced themselves as “humanitarian volunteers”’ (p.82).

Thus, despite not pursuing any systematic or in-depth analysis of the normative or conceptual issues surrounding the use of force, the Weissman volume nonetheless provides many useful insights to buttress analysis of the continuities between humanitarian intervention and the war on terror. It is unfortunate, however that the scholarly value of many of the chapters in Weissman is undermined by having no footnotes but only bibliographic references (the exceptions are the chapter on Iraq, by Rony Brauman and Pierre Salignon, and a chapter on North Korea by Fiona Terry). Some of the chapters, in particular the introductory essay by Jean-Hervé Bradol, MSF president, can be rambling, sanctimonious and even vituperative in sleights against other aid organizations while occasionally brazen in MSF’s own self-promotion (p.22). Despite this, the Weissman volume provides plenty of valuable insight into the ‘sociology’ and ideology of humanitarianism itself.

Contributors to the Weissman collection are principally concerned with insulating humanitarianism from being tainted not only by the war efforts of Western states but also by any perceived ‘alliance’ with political authorities. However, at the same time, humanitarian activity is seen as fundamentally political in a more profound, subversive sense:

Opposed to power but not actively engaged in its conquest – since it rejects the [state-based political] logic that divides humanity into those who may live and those who must die – humanitarian action is necessarily subversive . . . In other words, the first condition for the success of humanitarian action is refusal to collaborate in this fatal selection process. (p.9)

This leads Bradol and other contributors into contradictory positions – on the one hand denouncing the readiness of governments to use military solutions, and then denouncing their failure to expedite the military solution when it is launched (p.17).

MSF’s rallying cry for the extrication of humanitarianism from the war against terror raises the question of what drives Western war efforts to assimilate humanitarianism to their stated war aims and strategies in the first place. It is difficult to resist the conclusion, gestured towards by Chesterman, that the drive to assimilate humanitarianism reflects the political fragility of the US war effort as a whole: ‘the shakier the coalition [in Afghanistan], the more humanitarian efforts came to prominence throughout the invasion – the failure to capture Bin Laden resulting in renewed emphasis on stabilisation and reconstruction, destroying Taliban oppression’ (Welsh, p.163). This is even more intriguing when one considers that the invasion of Afghanistan was legally sanctioned on the grounds of self-defence – making the use of humanitarianism particularly incongruous in what would seem to be a clear-cut endeavour, whose legality at least was unproblematic.

It is unfortunate that these three books do not investigate further into the ideological appeal of humanitarianism for intervening states. Despite this drawback, and despite being focused largely on the pre-Iraq period, these three volumes

nonetheless provide us with a broad swathe of important material to examine the backdrop to current issues, and how the current period of interventionism evolved out of humanitarian intervention. These books go a good deal of the way to helping us fix on what constitutes continuity between the period of humanitarian intervention and the war on terror. In short, all three volumes provide a useful corrective to the dangers of 'presentism' in analysing the politics of the use of force in contemporary international relations.

## NOTES

1. Simon Clark, 'Iraq has Wrecked our Case for Humanitarian Wars', *Guardian* [London], 12 Aug. 2003.
2. Brian Brivati, 'We Must Not Give Up On Intervention', *Guardian*, 25 May 2005.
3. They were reported by *New York Times* journalist Thomas L. Friedman, 'How US Won Support to Use Mideast Forces', *New York Times*, 2 Dec. 1990.
4. International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS), *Responsibility to Protect* Ottawa: International Development Research Centre, December 2001.
5. Nicholas Wheeler, 'Decision Making Rules and Procedures for Humanitarian Intervention', *The International Journal of Human Rights*, Vol.6, No.1, 2002, pp.127-138.
6. Michael Ignatieff, *Empire Lite: Nation-Building in Bosnia, Kosovo and Afghanistan* London: Vintage, 2003.
7. Mohammed Ayoob, 'Humanitarian Intervention and State Sovereignty', *The International Journal of Human Rights*, Vol.6, No.1, 2002, p.81.
8. David Chandler, *From Kosovo to Kabul: Human Rights and International Intervention* London: Pluto Press, 2002, p.109.

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### Promoting Democracy

*Beyond Free and Fair: Monitoring Elections and Building Democracy* by Eric C. Bjornlund, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004. Pp.xxiii + 386 - appendix + bib + index. £39.50 (hbk). ISBN: 0-8018-8048-3.

*The UN Role in Promoting Democracy: Between Ideals and Reality* edited by Edward Newman and Roland Rich. New York: United Nations University Press, 2004. Pp.ix + 360 + appendix + index. \$33 (pbk). ISBN: 92-808-1104-5.

The study of societies after conflict has become a central concern for experts on international organizations, democratization and democracy assistance, military intervention, development policy, economic transformation and post-conflict reconciliation. Work in this area has developed a dialogue between political science sub-disciplines, such as comparative politics, international relations and political theory, as basic concepts like the state or the social contract are revisited in the context of war-torn societies. Cases like Bosnia-Herzegovina, Rwanda, Guatemala or Cambodia provide a new challenge, not to say battleground, for debates between supporters of rational choice, institutionalism, system theory

or culturalist approaches. This cross-disciplinarity is evident in the two books under review. Although Eric C. Bjornlund's study of election monitoring does not concentrate solely on post-conflict society, as the Newman and Rich collection does, it is nevertheless highly relevant for analysts and practitioners in this field.

The starting point of Bjornlund's comprehensive study is that despite extensive scholarship on democracy and democratization, techniques and practices for assisting or promoting democracy have remained understudied. He focuses on election monitoring, providing an overview of the historical development of these practices, current issues and problems, and makes insightful judgements and recommendations. Election observation, he defines as the purposeful gathering of information about an electoral process by responsible organizations committed to neutrality and to the democratic process. Observation is limited to recording and reporting. Election monitoring, however, implies the possibility of modest interventions in order to correct imperfections or to recommend certain steps. While observation concentrates on the days immediately surrounding election day, monitoring entails more long-term activity.

The first half of the book deals largely with international election monitoring, while the second discusses election monitoring by domestic actors based on experience from Panama (1989), Nicaragua (1989/90), Zambia (1991), Guyana (1992), Cambodia (1991–2002), Zimbabwe (2000 and 2002), the Philippines (1984–1986), Indonesia (1999) and Macedonia (2002). Bjornlund argues that a consensus exists regarding what constitutes democratic elections: balloting and counting conducted fairly; political parties compete free of intimidation with reasonably equitable access to media; elections administered impartially and related disputes are resolved in a just manner. According to the author, the phrase 'free and fair elections' became the 'rhetorical touchstone for most assessments' (p.96). However, it can be extremely difficult to assess whether an election meets the standard of 'free and fair', a concept which, Bjornlund argues, 'has tended to obscure rather than clarify'. Rather than some clear line or absolute standard, he concludes that elections in reality are judged along a continuum of freedom and fairness (pp.95–97).

The criteria used by different organizations or academics to measure elections establish abstract benchmarks that are rarely fully met in concrete election situations. They tend to describe the ideal rather than the necessary minimum and hence do not help to determine whether the test of democratic elections has been passed or not. They do not weight criteria and provide no help regarding what to do when the criteria are only partly fulfilled. Consequently, in the search for an alternative measurement, some monitoring missions have considered whether the election reflects the democratic will of a people or have asked whether a transitional election means a step forward toward democracy. Bjornlund argues that these alternative approaches are no less subjective than the test of being 'free and fair'.

International standards for elections are universal, but at the same time they have to be judged in their local context. Some argue in favour of lowering the bar for countries in transition, others prefer to establish even tougher criteria

since authoritarian governments cannot be trusted. Bjornlund rejects both approaches and argues that international standards for democratic elections should be universally applicable. Frequently, international organizations debate whether adequate preconditions exist for observation or monitoring to take place in a certain country and whether or not they should send observers or monitors. Bjornlund accepts the dilemma, arguing: 'If they decide to do so, they can deter intimidation, support prodemocracy forces, and offer an honest assessment. But, even if they try to do otherwise, they also run a real risk of providing undeserved legitimisation' (p.127).

A following chapter outlines a general consensus on a code of conduct for election observers: they have to comply with all national laws and regulations; remain neutral regarding the electoral outcome; and avoid interfering in the process. He stresses that they do not have a mandate to correct mistakes or resolve local disputes and should not engage in election assistance. Practitioners and experts agree that election monitoring is not just about the conduct of balloting and counting but also should take into account the legal and institutional framework and the broader political context. Monitoring has to consider the entire process of elections that begins when an election is called and ends when a new government is constituted in accordance with the election results. Furthermore, monitors should assess the process throughout the country and not only in some urban areas. Observers and monitors must be able to distinguish between irregularities and systematic manipulation. Rather than use the same reporting forms or checklists from one election to the next, Bjornlund argues that observation forms should start with applicable rules from the election law and regulations. At the same time, they should take into account what problems occurred in the past and the concerns of the parties.

As mentioned above, the study not only deals with international election monitoring but also highlights the benefits of domestic election monitoring: 'Domestic organizations can organize more meaningful monitoring because they are present and involved in the process from the beginning to end, can mobilize larger numbers, speak local languages, and naturally have a deeper knowledge of their own society's political culture and context' (p.242). In addition, they deter more blatant forms of intimidation. By standing in solidarity with local observers, international observers can help legitimize domestic efforts and can discourage intimidation. Bjornlund argues that international observers often fail to give voice to national groups' assessments: 'Although the international community increasingly recognizes how domestic monitoring can deter fraud, improve confidence, and increase transparency, it has yet to appreciate fully how such monitoring can also spur democracy through energizing civic organizations and drawing people more broadly into public affairs' (p.255).

Summarizing the findings of his conceptual and case study analysis, Bjornlund concludes that 'election monitoring and other international assistance to elections can make a modest but nevertheless meaningful contribution to democratic transitions' (p.12). It increases transparency, deters fraud and helps reduce irregularities. In uncertain circumstances it can further public confidence in the integrity of elections. Bjornlund's positive view of election monitoring tends to underestimate the inherent limits of these practices in detecting manipulations. Nevertheless, his

book presents a very useful and accessible contribution of great relevance for both practitioners and academic observers of election monitoring.

The second book under review is the product of a joint project undertaken by the United Nations University and the Centre for Democratic Institutions at the Australian National University. Unfortunately, the introductory chapter by the editors does little justice to the collection, offering few indications of the contents of the volume and not going much beyond simplistic homilies. Things improve thereafter.

The first part of the book includes five articles addressing 'thematic perspectives'. In a positive overview, Tom J. Farer argues that UN democracy promotion after the cold war builds on precedents established by efforts to further democracy in South Africa and Rhodesia. Roland Rich examines UN Security Council resolutions related to democratization and recommends a number of criteria to craft a workable mandate (p.80). Drawing on the cases of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Eastern Slavonia and East Timor, Simon Chesterman discusses democratization through benevolent autocracy and argues that though local ownership may be the end goal of transitional administration rather than the means, it is vital that mechanisms are in place to hold the international presence accountable. Benjamin Reilly points to a dilemma in timing post-conflict elections. Early elections may be perceived as necessary in order to jump-start and legitimise the new political order and to establish the parliaments and governments, yet early elections are troubled by more extreme reactions by the voters and can undermine more aggregative and programmatic parties. Elections are particularly dangerous when the armed forces of the former warring parties have not yet been demobilised. Reilly strongly argues for power-sharing provisions and preferential voting. Laurence Whitehead examines the international factor in democratization. In his view, theories of democratization are largely built on comparisons of Greece, Portugal and Spain with Latin American cases. Democratization was conceived as primarily internally driven regime change in a pre-existing national polity and with a relatively short time-span for transition. He argues that even in these cases, that today may be considered exceptional, international processes were central, for example, in the military defeats of Portugal in external wars.

The second part of the book concentrates on perspectives from within the UN. Robin Ludwig describes the guidelines for UN electoral assistance, distinguishing six types: technical assistance; support for domestic observers; coordination and support of international observers; organization of elections; verification; and supervision of the electoral process. Ludwig emphasizes that a more realistic view of the role of elections to democracy-building has emerged: 'The emphasis has shifted from elections as a political quick-fix to recognition that democratic development takes time' (p.180). Richard Ponzio gives an overview of the UN Development Programme role in democracy assistance. After presenting several lessons learned, he concludes: 'Domestic leadership with a strong political support base is crucial if technical assistance in the area of democracy promotion is to be leveraged and the desired results realized – a purely technical approach to democracy assistance will fail unless political obstacles are confronted' (p.226).

The third part of the volume consists of case studies on Namibia, Cambodia, Kosovo, East Timor, and Afghanistan. The case studies by Henning Melber on Namibia and Ylber Hysa on Kosovo both focus on the post-conflict peacebuilding in general rather than specifically on the role of the UN in promoting democracy. Amin Saikal examines the role of the United Nations in Afghanistan starting in the 1980s and covering development until 2004. Tanja Hohe's article on East Timor stands out due to its critical culturalist approach. She argues that the UN efforts in state-building ignored local realities and were implemented without specialized local knowledge. Western-style institutions and state systems were simply imposed on the existing indigenous structure, with no consideration regarding their fittingness. She emphasizes that a technical implantation of democratic political institutions cannot succeed.

The highlight of the third section is the case study by Sorpong Peou on Cambodia. Cambodia's domestic power structure is regarded as an independent variable, democratic culture as the dependent, and UN and other international assistance as an intervening variable. Laos and Vietnam, where communist parties rule with a monopoly of political power, serve as a control group. The author finds it difficult to assess the UN influence since there were 29 bilateral donors. Despite the UN's efforts, Cambodia does not qualify as a liberal and embedded democracy. Peou concludes: 'The best that can be said for the UN role in democratizing Cambodia ... is that it has been positive but modest' (p.258).

Because the contributors to this collection did not share a common analytical framework or core questions, the case studies lost a great deal of their potential comparative value. Each chapter is entirely self-contained with no relation to any other chapter or to the large whole. This may be the reason that the editors do not provide conclusions in a closing chapter and only make some simple remarks in their introduction. Nevertheless, the study contains some good articles. The aim of this study was 'to explore and to question the modalities, effectiveness, and controversies of the UN's work in promoting and assisting democracy' (p.4). Did the authors reach this goal? The answer is in the subtitle: between ideals and reality.

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### Peacebuilding

*International Governance of War-Torn Territories: Rule and Reconstruction* by Richard Caplan. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005. Pp.291. £53 (hbk). ISBN: 0-199-26345-0.

Throughout the 1990s a number of humanitarian interventions have been initiated to stop violent conflicts around the world. As the interventions have ended, international society has been faced with the task of post-conflict peacebuilding. At its most extreme this has taken the form of international governance,



of trusteeship-like operations. It is these which are the focus of Richard Caplan's latest book, an elaboration of his 2002 Adelphi paper. The book has an explorative design and presents the reader with a large amount of information on international administrations. Descriptive research is the foundation of analytical research and an extensive collection of factors and circumstances relevant to international administrations is presented here, providing valuable insights for both scholars and practitioners. The large amount of information occasionally comes across as a bit unstructured but overall it is well-presented and informative.

The four cases of Eastern Slavonia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo and East Timor are used to exemplify and clarify arguments throughout the book. These cases all meet the criteria of international administration as the UN and other multilateral organizations have assumed responsibility of the administration of these territories to an extent unparalleled in recent history. There are, however, significant differences as well. When comparing the cases it seems a bit odd that Caplan never mentions the fact that the administration in Bosnia-Herzegovina has been conducted in an incremental fashion with the originally mandated powers being far less than the powers eventually assumed by the international administration. This is in contrast to the operations in Eastern Slavonia, Kosovo and East Timor, where the international administration from day one possessed all necessary powers. One might assume that this could make a difference in the final success of the administration but this subject is not discussed. The examples are very illustrative and useful although a short introduction to each of the four main cases could have been helpful.

The book is divided into two parts. In the case studies in Part I Caplan points out positive and negative empirical experiences, and in Part II he looks in detail at a range of critical issues that have been thrown up by these international administrations. His analysis, of operational planning, the exercise of authority and exit strategies, is valuable because these issues are some of the most contested. Caplan's strong analysis highlights clearly the points of controversy with regard to international administrations.

The book does not have a specific thesis or main argument, but three points stand out. First, that international governance involves a distinct set of practices, clearly differentiated from those deployed in complex peacekeeping and post-conflict peacebuilding; the vital difference being that international administration is a political project and therefore the result of the operation depends on the success or failure of political developments in the affected territory. Second, that the administrative missions undertaken have had positive consequences, improving the lives of the population in the territories governed as well as enhancing international peace and stability. However, the third point is that the successes have had more to do with contextual factors than operational impacts. Factors such as clarity and type and structure of international administrations have effects on outcomes, but facts on the ground out of the control of the international administrators – such as the disposition of the local population, the cooperation of regional powers and the attitude, position and respectability of the former warring parties – have had a decisive influence on the outcome of operations.

The conclusion, that factors outside the operations have such an impact on whether they achieve their aims, begs the obvious question of whether international administrations should be established at all, controversial and expensive as they are. International administrations are exceptional undertakings, they are controversial and there is a deep suspicion about this type of operation in many countries. However, when faced with a society in humanitarian crisis following a violent conflict, international society cannot sit passively by. As Caplan puts it, 'international administration is the Rolls Royce of conflict-management' (p.256). Despite the difficulties and challenges involved in this extensive international involvement, the message from Caplan is clear: if international society intends to live up to its responsibility to protect innocent human beings from the scourge of war, employing international administrations is currently the best option we have.

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### The UN and Contemporary Challenges

*Terrorism and the UN: Before and After September 11* edited by Jane Boulden and Thomas Weiss. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004. Pp.256. £18.95 (pbk). ISBN: 0-253-21662-1.

*The UN: Confronting the Challenges of a Global Society* edited by Jean Krasno. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2004. Pp.441. £19.50 (pbk). ISBN: 1-588-26280-4.

These two volumes span the development and evolution of the UN as a primary actor in terms of peace and conflict, and now in terms of responses to terrorism, focusing on the importance of its capacity to respond to the root causes of violence. In both volumes it is clear that this is where the strength of the UN has traditionally lain, rather than in the more visible and controversial area of Security Council responses to war and violence, and its enforcement capacity. For the most part, they paint a picture of international politics in which the UN is integral, and both are generally supportive of the multilateralist project and build an explicit case against a more unilateral system of international relations.

Jean Krasno's volume follows the well-charted path of many previous studies on the UN and its functions and capacities. These are updated, and are well presented in a readable and comprehensive study which, as outlined above, can be read as a call for a better appreciation of the invaluable place the UN system has in international relations as the only organization capable of 'confronting the challenges of a global society'.

The first three chapters provide an overview of the early development of the UN and the key areas in which it has made a contribution. In the first chapter, Krasno argues that the frequent (and fashionable) questioning of the relevance of the UN system betrays the general ignorance of its extensive reach and importance (p.13). She acknowledges that there may be overlap and duplication in this

system, but that given the scale of the task it faces, this is inevitable. In the second, she outlines the dynamics underlying the founding of the organization and argues that as a world forum it is irreplaceable. This sentiment is reflected and endorsed by Joe Sills in chapter 3, which does much to dispel the myth of the inefficacy of the UN. He outlines the development of global norms spanning the environment, habitats, children, development, and terrorism, among others.

Charles Norchi in chapter 4 details the role of the UN in developing human rights regimes, also highlighting the fact that the UN has been integral to making this emerging set of norms a concrete part of the international system. Chapter 5 provides an outline of the role of the UN in the area of democratization. Robin Ludwig makes clear the enormous scale of this role, particularly in the provision of technical assistance, underlining once more the scope of the UN's integration into the construction of a liberal peace which benefits all. Jacques Fomerand focuses on the UN Development Project and other related bodies, outlining the massive scope and scale of the UN's development role. As with previous chapters, he emphasizes the normative role of the UN as the central body engaged in coordinating the many actors involved in these issues. A similar pattern is followed in Derek Boothby's chapter on disarmament, in which the strong claim is made that the UN's normative role far outweighs its practical achievements in the area, though what has been achieved is far from insignificant. This is also a common theme in Krasno's review of peacekeeping in chapter 8, which charts its progress from experimental approach to core UN activity.

Geoffrey Laurenti focuses on the financing of the UN, arguing that it is debates in this area which give a real indicator of member states' divergent interests. This has made UN activities which are dependent on assessed contributions and voluntary assessments hostage to competing interests and demands, undermining the UN's work in many areas. The battle lines are drawn between unilateralism and multilateralism; between the legal obligation for states to pay their dues and states' desire to use their contributions for political purposes. In chapter 10, Jochen Prantl and Krasno show how informal groupings of member states have influenced UN decision making, in particular in helping overcome obstacles and lobbying, as with the Friends of Rapid Reaction group. In chapter 11, Edward Luck examines the fraught issue of UN reform, which has been held up for decades and now is crucial if the UN is to have an institutional, rather than ad hoc, future. Yet, as this chapter shows, the problem of deciding what can and needs to be reformed is compounded by the issue of implementation. This chapter, more than any, underlines the tenuous nature of the UN system, despite the vital and often unnoticed work of its many components.

For an edited volume, this is a very coherent study, helped by the fact that Krasno contributes to or writes several of the chapters.

In *Terrorism and the UN* further evidence is provided of the tension between the extraordinary capacity and engagement of the UN, its attempts to innovate, and its financing difficulties. In the context of the subject area, this study is understandably less coherent in the views it presents on the viability of the UN system. Generally, however, this volume emphasizes the global reach of the UN,

especially in the context of transnational problems such as terrorism. For the most part, the message of this volume is again one of multilateralism in an era where the sole superpower is often accused of unilateralism, and the study is underpinned by the assumption that a global society is plausible and desired by most. There is, however, some disagreement in this study over the effectiveness of multilateral strategies in the context of the global war on terror.

This is a timely study and no doubt presages a flood of publications examining the relationship between the UN and anti-terrorism responses. What seems to emerge is the fact that the UN is already heavily engaged in responses to terrorism through the many agencies and actors dealing with the root causes of conflict, though it is less involved in questions related to counter-terrorism and will be so until the General Assembly and the Security Council agree on a definition of terrorism and what strategies should be applied. What is very clear, however, is that the UN has been proactive as terrorism has moved up the security agenda, culminating in Security Council Resolution 1373 (2001) in the wake of 9/11. This did not go so far as to define terrorism, however, or to legitimize a much-needed debate on root causes of the attack. What is more, this study makes it clear that the phenomenon of terrorism actually endorses the state as the international ordering mechanism for the UN, rather than undermining it (p.15). In chapter 2, Neil Macfarlane argues that 9/11 reversed the growing focus on individual over state rights, leading to a return to a geo-strategic mode of thought which, he argues, is ill-suited to contemporary needs.

Nico Schrivjer argues in chapter 3 that the UN Charter was not designed to respond to situations such as the 9/11 attacks, while in chapter 4 Edward Luck suggests that even the US has, in fact, pursued a multilateral approach to terrorism. In chapter 5, Karin Von Hippel argues that the EU provides an advanced model for understanding how cooperation enables effective responses to terrorism to be formulated. Thierry Tardy then examines inter-institutional cooperation in this context and regards it as lacking in key areas. Chantal de Jonge Oudraat examines the role of the Security Council in chapter 7 and argues that it is mainly dependent upon the role of the US. M. J. Peterson in chapter 8 examines the role played by the General Assembly, highlighting the impediment caused by disagreement over what constitutes terrorism. In the following chapter, Monica Serrano turns to the issues surrounding the political economy of terrorism, suggesting that terrorist funding could be best addressed by international cooperation to block donations and transfers. Rama Mani, in the final chapter, considers the implications of terrorism for conflict prevention and the redress of the root causes of violence, which she argues has returned to the international agenda because of the war on terror. In particular, she argues that such strategies must address the social and economic inequalities exacerbated by aspects of globalization.

Part of the problem with much of the literature on the UN is that those who make the effort to write about it are generally rather uncritical about its implications as a multilateral project for global order. They generally tend to be supporters of the global, cosmopolitan project, though critical of its technical shortcomings. This is exactly the case with these two volumes. It would

perhaps be useful to rehearse and respond to the broader critical positions that are generally taken about the UN (for example, by the isolationist or neo-imperialist right in the US or by those in the developing or Islamic world who argue it is biased and Western-centric). UN literature needs to engage much more broadly with these types of critiques in order to build the UN's legitimacy and consensus, rather than assume that the multilateral project is universally accepted. Having said this, both volumes build a good case for the UN's importance, despite the fact that they are speaking mainly to and for the already converted. *Terrorism and the UN* underlines the lesson that the UN is generally less effective in dealing with security issues. Rather than concluding that the UN should not be engaged, this would seem to suggest that better strategies be developed while continuing its more successful initiatives which seek to address the root causes of violence.

Both volumes are understandably highly critical of the instrumentalist logic of mainstream security debates, and tend towards a universal normative view in which such views are considered negatively. Again, this type of stance is common to the literatures on international organization, yet in the context of Boulden and Weiss's study one might have expected a greater attempt to engage with advocates of a more unilateralist approach to dealing with terrorism. However, both volumes clearly illustrate that despite contestation over its security role, the UN remains *the* vital actor in the international sphere today. Whether dealing with peacebuilding or with terrorism, the UN has been crucial to upholding the rights of individuals and the cause of multilateralism over both the prerogatives of states and unilateralism. What is more, both volumes concur that even though the impression of unilateralism is often given, most if not all actors have tended, and continue, to work closely with the UN system in confronting key international issues.

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