

BOOK REVIEWS

The Thin Blue Line: How Humanitarianism Went to War

By Conor Foley (New York: Verso, 2008)

Humanitarian Imperialism: Using Human Rights to Sell War

By Jean Bricmont (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2007)

Conor Foley is a seasoned veteran of international human rights and humanitarian aid organizations. He has worked for Amnesty International and the United Nations and has been stationed in at least ten separate locations around the world during humanitarian crises. Over the course of his career as an aid worker, he has seen aid distributed in both natural disasters and areas of civil strife. During this same time, international humanitarian aid has developed into a billion dollar industry and become part of an increasingly complex international community of concerned people and states. Humanitarian action, that is, international humanitarian intervention and aid, has been further complicated by a variety of issues including: unilateral state intervention, differences between the theory and practice of humanitarian response, the developing system of international laws and courts, the rise of nationalist movements, the neutrality or partiality of humanitarian organizations, and humanitarian intervention versus state sovereignty. In order to understand these complex issues, Foley's book, *The Thin Blue Line*, recaps the history of past instances of humanitarian action before examining the factors and questions that surround non-governmental organizations (NGOs) actions today. In his analysis, Foley's firsthand experience and background in law grant him sound insight into both the positive and negative aspects of humanitarian aid. He concludes that though intervention and aid may be positive in garnering attention towards humanitarian crises, "in reality they are just another part of the problem" (238).

From a defeatist perspective, Foley's comment is a proper response to the dynamics of international humanitarian action. Ending the book with an off-handed denunciation of humanitarian aid, Foley neglects to offer any substantive solutions that might help end, or at least lessen, the need for aid. Instead, *The Thin Blue Line* is more of an outline of the circumstances surrounding current humanitarian action than a discussion or solution of how to fix the problem. If taken as a depiction of the former, the book does its job well and is thorough in describing the current international system of law in regard to humanitarian aid. The problem though, is a lack of study or analysis on the underlying problems that may cause humanitarian crises in the first place. Without any examination of the roots that cause the need for humanitarian aid, the reader is left with a passion for the cause but with no direction or focus for that desire. In contrast, Jean Bricmont provides the passionate with a glimpse of hope through change in his book *Humanitarian Imperialism: Using Human Rights to Sell War*.

Written largely because of the indignation he found in the Western criteria of what was considered humanitarianism and in reaction to the causes of humanitarian crises, Bricmont's book provides a critical analysis of the actions of the imperial West in

the name of humanitarianism. Instead of focusing on the work of NGOs, Bricmont analyzes the actions of states and the left that label their actions “humanitarian.” He chooses to attack the veil of ignorance that surrounds doves on both the right and the left that support Western military intervention for human rights. For Bricmont, to assume Western states are and should be the world’s judge of human rights and humanitarian crises invites a new form of neocolonial imperialism upon those deemed to be in need. By focusing on individual and political rights, the United States and other Western powers conceal the true needs of those in crisis, social equality and economic stability. Taken together, these two authors provide a more complete view of humanitarianism. While Foley grants us insight into the world of humanitarian NGOs and international law, Bricmont criticizes blind allegiance to Western aid and offers a glimpse of what can be done to address humanitarian crisis without supporting Western imperialism.

Justice in International Law

While the history of humanitarian intervention is vital to understanding the path humanitarianism has taken, the most important element is to understand current debates surrounding the role of international law, state sovereignty, and the justification for intervention. Because of this, Foley’s work partly focuses on the role and future of international law and norms, international courts, and the UN itself. International law plays an integral role in humanitarian intervention because of the possibilities that allow for the abuse of these powers. To ensure actions are not taken unilaterally, human rights champion Bernard Kouchner has outlined four principles of humanitarian intervention. The first principle is the maxim of the Red Cross, neutrality no matter the consequences. The second principle is that domestic state authority may be circumvented in order to help those in need. Kouchner’s third principle is that the UN should only authorize intervention in so far as is necessary to “protect lives” (150). Finally, Kouchner’s fourth principle of humanitarian intervention is “to help free oppressed people from their tyrants” (150). Though these principles are not set in stone, they are supported by the ambiguous language used to protect human rights in international law, humanitarian law, international human rights, the Geneva Convention, and the UN Charter.

It is important to note the possibilities that stem from these principles of intervention and the nature of the responsibility to protect doctrine. The first three principles are rather straight forward in the way they deal with intervention. They respect the need for neutrality and as they build upon one another they imply that multilateral agreements are necessary for action. The fourth and broadest principle results in both conservative and liberal implications. On the one hand, it includes the responsibility to protect doctrine which states that civilians should be shielded from harm during the atrocities of “genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity” (162). On the other hand, it also seems to support the reasoning behind the US invasion of Iraq as described above. Taken in conjunction, it must again be stressed that these international laws and norms can be very dangerous if manipulated by those with the power and agenda to act. Unilaterally or jointly, the ambiguous language of international humanitarian laws and norms provide these strong states with

the reasoning and support to justify almost any action against another state. As has been shown, the US invasion of Iraq was criticized and denounced all over the world, but that did not stop the US from engaging in action against the sovereignty of Iraq.

Though some interventions may well be supported by international laws and norms, this does not mean state actions are not subject to a system of justice. The international justice system is supported by two main courts, the ICC and the ICJ. While the ICC is used to bring individuals to justice, the ICJ settles “inter-state disputes” and only has the jurisdiction to force groups to pay reparations (188). The origin of the ICC is from the Nuremberg Trials after World War II and the Genocide Convention of 1948. These two documents stipulate that government treatment of its citizens is “not solely a prerogative of national sovereignty” and individuals can be held criminally accountable for war crimes, genocide, and crimes against humanity (174). The ICC was ratified by sixty member states of the UN and was “remarkably quickly” established in 2002 (174). The ICJ was established by the UN Charter in 1945 as a judicial regulatory body and automatically oversees all member states of the UN. Though it has seen very few court cases, its usual role is to advise or consult states or organizations in matters of dispute with other parties. Though the ICJ’s verdicts are legally binding, the advice of the court is not. Consulting this body does not necessitate legal enforcement, but the rulings of this court are extremely influential in international affairs and can provide the ICC with precedent. These courts provide the international arena with the much needed service of defining justice in the anarchy that is the international sphere.

In domestic law, a state’s court system is accepted de facto because of the location of the individual. Individuals can be subject to the jurisdiction of the state they live in or visit and to domestic laws and rules because of the satisfaction derived from living in or visiting that state. In contrast to domestic courts, international courts have no real police force to apprehend criminals so they rely on the police and military forces of member states to act on the court’s behalf to bring criminals to justice. Due to a lack of international policing and overarching international sovereignty, the international courts have their share of caveats related to their actions and jurisdiction.

The problem with any judgment by the international courts is that there is no international equivalent of a “monopoly on the legitimate use of violence,” to borrow a phrase from Max Weber, that enforces the opinion of the international court. The ICJ, though important for helping to set international precedent and influence, does not have nearly the same problems as the ICC. For the ICJ to provide legitimate rulings, all parties must agree to the jurisdiction and verdict of the court. Even if this is agreed upon though, acceptance of the stipulations of the court does not ensure a valid ruling because the opinion of the court is still subject to the veto power of the UN Security Council. This means even in the case where the ICJ rules against one of the five permanent members of the Security Council, as in the 1986 case *Nicaragua v. the United States*, council members can veto the ruling making the verdict null and void like it was done in this case (49). For the ICC, the jurisdiction of this court is actually larger than the ICJ.

In certain cases of crimes against humanity, the UN, and therefore ICCs, member states can apprehend criminals in their own country even if that person’s homeland does not recognize the jurisdiction of the court. The aptly named “Pinochet

Precedent” was set in March of 1999 when the former dictator of Chile was arrested in London for having committed the crimes of torture and genocide in his own country. Even though he granted himself immunity for his crimes and though Chile does not accept the sovereignty of the international courts, according to the British Law Lords, the crimes of torture and genocide trump any state jurisdiction and overrule any attempt to immunize oneself against these laws (21–22). In this fashion other heads of state could be held to account for their crimes against humanity. The aspect of possible extradition was not lost on Henry Kissinger who, as Christopher Hitchens noted in *The Trial of Henry Kissinger*, was extremely wary of this news when it came out in 1999.

Another important point to consider when dealing with the jurisdiction of the international courts concerns oppressed groups within a state that does not accept the jurisdiction of the Court. The court cannot take a lawsuit against the offending state nor act on behalf of the group. In this situation, the oppressed group must turn to the UN for a vote on whether the case will be heard. In order to have a case heard, the court’s jurisdiction is usually needed most in areas that have either unstable or non-democratic governments. As such, mutual acceptance of the ICC and the jurisdiction of international law are rare. Furthermore, if a state has more interest in self-determination and sovereignty than being subject to the opinions of an international body, the stipulations of the court are hard to accept.

The concept of state sovereignty and self-determination are dually important to both small states and powerful states. In every case listed above, any and all rulings are still subject to the veto power of the UN Security Council. Due to this overriding factor, any state not on the UN Security Council that is an ally of a state on the Security Council may never see a case against them taken to court because of the veto power of the Security Council. If the 279 vetoes by the UN Security Council from 1948 to 1988 are any indication, it seems the will of the permanent members is not to be subjected to UN jurisdiction or international courts in deciding cases against them. For the United States, President George W. Bush has taken an openly hostile stance towards the ICC, even going so far as to pass an act of congress authorizing military force against Holland if any US soldier was ever to be subpoenaed to The Hague for trial (174). Due to this history of vetoes and open hostility, the ICC has been content to build legitimacy and precedent by hearing and passing judgment on small trials where strong states had no vested interest.

Many of the issues concerning international justice were brought to light when the ICC decided to take an active role in investigating war crimes and crimes against humanity that were committed in Uganda during the early 21st century. This investigation was pursued regardless of which party engaged in atrocities (172). The problems involved in bringing the perpetrators of human rights atrocities to justice proved difficult because of the court’s need to determine between crimes against humanity and crimes of retaliation. The difference between these crimes is important to note. Crimes against humanity are crimes of aggression and therefore punishable by international law, whereas crimes of retaliation are in response to aggression, and to determine what was retaliation was hard to prove. Rhetorically speaking, if both sides were held accountable for their actions, to what extent are these crimes to be punished? If crimes were committed, how far up the chain of command should the punishment reach? What type of punishment should be assessed? Who is to ensure the proper

individuals are punished while preventing other criminals from running free? Who will go out and apprehend these criminals? These are just a few of the possible questions that must be answered in the future by the international courts as they try and assert their authority in the international arena.

In theory, the ICC has been a welcome addition to the arsenal against those that violate human rights, but in reality, as Foley points out, "their presence has further politicized" humanitarian efforts (173). By doing so, the courts have created an environment where humanitarian agencies have tried to distance themselves from the ICC in order to prevent any perceived bias in the eyes of those they are trying to help.

Compelled to Act

Some people will always feel compelled to act whenever there is a humanitarian crisis. This action will be undertaken whether through a donation or actually working with or for an aid agency, regardless if it actually fulfills its intended role. This raises the problem of unintended consequences. These consequences emerge when humanitarian actions are carried out without a complete understanding of the implications of these words or actions or the direst need of the people involved. For Jean Bricmont, people that follow their hearts instead of their heads are the same people that continue to support the imperial policies of the West to the detriment of economically, socially, technologically, and militarily, less powerful states and the developing world.

Bricmont derides this active "new left," which supports humanitarian intervention. This party began to appear in the "mid-1960s," and seemed to forget the socialist aspects which originally made them leftists (10). After the Cold War, the new left still supported individual rights and freedom, but disposed of the ideas of the radical overthrow of the bourgeoisie and the support of pacifism to oppose "hegemony, imperialism, and colonialism" (9). Instead, human rights became the calling card of the new left while the rise of the proletariat over the bourgeoisie and utmost respect for pacifism was usurped by the humanitarian "duty" to act (10).

The problem Bricmont perceives with any person claiming to be left while supporting interventions led by Western powers, humanitarian or otherwise, is that it supports a neocolonial Western domination over the rest of the world. This new colonialism is achieved by the West through economic and strategic hegemony that keeps raw materials and a cheap labor force easily accessible to the corporations and businesses of the West. By solely addressing human rights concerns, the West, led by the United States, keeps individual and political rights at the fore of humanitarian discussions while quietly obscuring social and economic rights. If developing countries were to acquire social equality and economic stability, developing countries would be more likely to compete intellectually, economically, and socially in the world to the supposed detriment of Western businesses and states.

The problem with this ethnocentric capitalist viewpoint is that the continued control over the developing world is now becoming increasingly problematic as the world becomes more integrated through global commerce while the West paradoxically becomes more dependent upon the non-industrialized world by monopolizing their raw materials and abundant labor force. At the same time, the power of the supposedly

dominant US military has been exposed in Iraq as a wholly inadequate force to quell domestic upheaval. Therefore, taken together, the fall of US domination and the rise in importance in the developing world has important economic and social implications if left unaddressed and unchanged. If something positive is not done soon to alleviate the world's imperialist inequalities, it will surely come back to haunt the West sooner or later.

Underlying Problems of Humanitarian Intervention

As it stands today, political and individual rights are sold to the Western public as the most important issues facing the non-industrialized world. These statements are consumed almost without question by the Western audience because of the importance the West places upon those rights. Not only does this approach assume the vaunted status of righteousness of the West's values, but it also assumes that people in these countries are incapable of helping themselves. Veiled in these conclusions is the inability to see that most of the problems of the non-Western world have come about because of the policies of the West. The colonialism of the past has helped to create the problems of today and these new problems are furthered exacerbated by current Western policies. The problem with this approach, according to Bricmont, is that the new left has forgotten their socialist roots and no longer questions the underlying problems of class, social, and economic inequality. Without any critical analysis of the world capitalist system or social classes the Western public will continue to support humanitarian intervention in developing countries without understanding the true requirements of the poor and needy. The first thing to set things right is to determine what humanitarianism primary responsibility should be.

While humanitarian aid is a noble cause, Foley concludes it ultimately ends up being part of the problem. The question remains as to what then can be done to remedy the need for aid. The proper response is to understand and help minimize the consequences of the underlying problems that surround those in need of aid. However, this does not mean that any of these issues or problems will ever be solved. To conceive of the world in such narrow terms as simple dichotomies of solved or unsolved discounts the complexities of living in the world. At best, the role of humanitarian agencies should be one of trying to stop mass atrocities from occurring or lessening the humanitarian problems of starvation and disease. By conceiving of humanitarian aid in political emancipation or more individual rights for people shrouds the true issues of human rights, the ability to survive without needless or painful death. This task is far more herculean than handing out aid to those in need and is much more political than humanitarian agencies want to tackle while trying to staying neutral. This leads to the second challenge for humanitarian agencies to combat imperialism. Humanitarian agencies should embrace their political nature and become openly political and publically denounce any state that supports or enacts imperialist policies in the world.

Effects of Anti-Imperialist Humanitarianism

In this arrangement, humanitarian agencies can better treat not just humanitarian crises, but the problematic consequences of Western imperial policies. As there tends

to be a strong correlation between positive economic stability that in turn generates positive political stability which then reduces the feelings of inequality and victimization, economic development and stability is an important factor in reducing the need for humanitarian aid. Typically, most states in need of humanitarian assistance are those in which the majority of people are living in poverty or close to poverty. Most of these countries are also located in the developing world and are usually former colonial territories or emerging states of the former Soviet Union. In all three cases, economic reform is incredibly important in these countries' ability to create positive economic environments for their people. As there is a "far greater chance of conflicts breaking out in poor countries than in rich ones," a stable economic situation will help alleviate political insecurity in most situations. It is imperative that these developing states keep their economic and political environments relatively free from corruption while trying to avoid delving into the global market too soon.

As Nobel Prize winning economist Joseph Stiglitz argues in *Globalization and its Discontents*, the Washington consensus of the IMF and World Bank end up pushing developing countries into a neoliberal *Friedmanesque* political and economic system without realizing they are simultaneously stacking the deck in favor of strong industrialized states. He contends that smaller industrializing states should look east instead of west for economic advice. It is in the east where protectionist economic tactics have produced the economically prosperous Asian Tigers. In this case, by not succumbing to the pressures of the West and risking their economic and political health, emerging states can grow independently strong politically and economically. The key to ensuring that developing states are not victimized in the world market is to encourage domestic growth while raising tariffs for foreign goods. This would help developing countries to become economically strong and viable in the world without being marginalized by powerful industrialized Western states. Though these efforts seem to help alleviate solve the problems of victimization and inequality in theory, the reality of the situation is that there is still a very strong neocolonial imperial Western tradition that must be combated if humanitarianism is to become anti-imperialist.

Conclusion

The *Thin Blue Line* is an important work for anyone that might care to enter the humanitarian field. It smartly approaches the field with a historical perspective that allows anyone to understand the difficulties and obstacles that aid personnel and agencies are confronted with at home and in the field. That said, Foley's conclusion is that even with the best of intentions, humanitarian intervention is still just part of the problem. While this statement may sound counterintuitive to some, Foley's insight makes us question the bigger underlying problems in the world. While millions will continually need aid because of inequality and the feelings of victimization, a stronger stand on these issues will help aid organizations to accept their role as political entities and help confront the real problems that cause humanitarian crises.

The Trial of Donald Rumsfeld

By Michael Ratner (New York: The New Press, 2008)

Michael Ratner's *The Trial of Donald Rumsfeld* is political propaganda disguised as disinterested legal analysis. Ratner's propagandistic objective, as he reveals in the book's opening pages, is to ignite public opinion to "force some existing court somewhere to bring high-level officials of the Bush administration, the perpetrators of torture, to justice" (8). To execute this task, he constructs a mock trial framework, purporting to put Donald Rumsfeld and others on a "trial-by-book" (3). Given Ratner's bias, though, the trial is inevitably rigged. He deprives his defendants of a true voice, allowing them to speak only through selected legal memos and public statements. Meanwhile, Ratner is free to pepper his argument with unchecked elisions, creating an inaccurate portrayal of his case's strength.

Ratner's critique of John Yoo's August 2002 "Torture Memo" starkly belies the detriments of the trial subterfuge. The flaws of Yoo's legal reasoning are well-known. His memo narrows the Torture Statute's definition of 'torture' – acts "specifically intended to inflict severe physical or mental pain or suffering" – by applying a definition of "severe pain" found in a health care statute. The memo also essentially grants the President unrestrained executive power during wartime via the Constitution's Commander-in-Chief powers, omitting any reference to the Youngstown Sheet & Tube Co. v. Sawyer case, in which the Supreme Court declared President Truman's seizure of steel mills during the Korean War unconstitutional. Ratner easily critiques both of these arguments, noting that the memo was withdrawn by the Justice Department in 2003.

Ratner fails to mention, though, that his arguments actually parrot those of the replacement memo, authored by Dan Levin, dated December 2004. The Levin memo critiques Yoo's health care statute redefinition tactic, adopting a new strategy that culls together dictionary definitions, analyses of a plethora of court cases, and interpretations of the Convention Against Torture's ratification history. The memo also delegitimizes the Commander-in-Chief argument, calling it "unnecessary," and stating, "a defendant's motive (to protect national security, for example) is not relevant to the question whether he has acted with the requisite specific intent under the [Torture] statute." Despite these critiques, however, the Levin memo concludes that despite the "various disagreements with the August 2002 Memorandum," the Justice Department does "not believe that any of their conclusions would be different under the standards set forth in this memorandum." In other words, the Levin memo replaced Yoo's flawed legal analysis with more sophisticated arguments that reached the same conclusions. Ratner fails to address Levin's new scope-narrowing rationale. Thus, the Yoo memo functions as a straw man – easy to critique, but not representative of the full scope of defenses that would be available in an actual trial.

Ratner's critique of the Bush administration's decision to deny POW status to al Qaeda and the Taliban suffers similarly. Ratner critiques memos penned in January 2002 by John Yoo and Alberto Gonzales that claim al Qaeda and the Taliban do not qualify for Geneva Convention protection. The Yoo-Gonzales memos posit that Afghanistan is a "failed state," so the Taliban does not qualify as the legitimate government and can thus be denied protection. To attack these memos, Ratner parrots arguments from a January 2002 Colin Powell memo. The Powell memo, written to

rebut the Yoo-Gonzales position, argues that “any determination that Afghanistan is a failed state would be contrary to the official U.S. government position” and that the Yoo-Gonzales option would “reverse over a century of U.S. policy and practice in supporting the Geneva Conventions and undermine the protections of the law of war for our troops...” Though Ratner adopts these arguments, he misrepresents Powell’s conclusion. Powell was not arguing that al Qaeda and the Taliban should receive POW status. He was actually arguing for a different rationale to deny them Geneva protection. The Powell option entailed denying POW status on a case-by-case basis, which would “provide the same practical flexibility in how we treat detainees, including with respect to interrogation” as the Yoo-Gonzales option. Thus, once again, the Yoo-Gonzales memos function as a straw man that allows Ratner to gloss over legal complexities.

Despite the dispute over Geneva applicability, in an actual trial, the defense would likely be more successful arguing on the basis of Geneva’s definitional ambiguities. As Ratner notes, the Supreme Court’s 2006 Hamdan v. Rumsfeld decision disputed the Bush administration rationales for Geneva denial, ruling that Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions applies to all prisoners at Guantanamo (184). Ratner refuses to acknowledge the challenge that the definitional ambiguity argument could pose in an actual court case. He chastises the Yoo memo for “declar[ing] that torture is not torture,” but ignores the more nuanced perspective of the Levin memo, which acknowledges that “a statutory definition of ‘torture’” may differ “from certain colloquial uses of the term” (12).

The paper trail linking Rumsfeld to torture is also not as firm as Ratner purports it to be. Ratner presents two memos in which Rumsfeld authorizes, among other things: stress positions for up to four hours, twenty-hour interrogations, isolation, dietary manipulation, use of dogs, adjustment of sleep schedule, forced nakedness, and psychological manipulation (71–73). Ratner then demonstrates the physical and mental pain that resulted. One detainee, Mohammed al Qahtani, dropped from 160 to 100 pounds, suffered from “memory loss, difficulty concentrating, and anxiety,” and began “talking to non-existent people, reportedly hearing voices, and crouching in a corner of the cell covered with a sheet for hours on end” (52, 59). Another detainee, Shafiq Rasul, experienced back pain, difficulty walking, and severe psychological trauma from detention conditions (44–46).

Both al Qahtani and Rasul, though, were subject to techniques that exceeded the scope of Rumsfeld’s authorizations. Qahtani was sexually molested, “forcibly given an enema,” and forced to perform dog tricks, none of which were authorized in the Rumsfeld memos (56–57). Rasul was forced to remain in stress positions for up to 13 hours, well beyond the four hours that Rumsfeld prescribed (48). One of Rumsfeld’s memos explicitly proscribes some techniques that detainees were subjected to. The memo authorizes “Dietary Manipulation” but allows “no intended deprivation of food or water; no adverse medical or cultural effect and without intent to deprive subject of food or water...” (74). It authorizes “Environmental Manipulation,” but only enough to create “moderate discomfort,” proscribing conditions that “would injure the detainee” (75). It authorizes “Sleep Adjustment” but cautions: “This technique is NOT sleep deprivation” (75). Thus Rumsfeld has a potent legal shield. The burden is on the prosecution to

demonstrate that Rumsfeld's prescribed techniques alone were enough to constitute breaches of law.

This challenge is greater with Abu Ghraib. Ratner attempts to link Rumsfeld to the Abu Ghraib abuses. However, of the Abu Ghraib atrocities Ratner describes - "piles of naked bodies, men forced to simulate sexual acts, men covered with excrement, men on the ground with their hands tied in the back while they were being beaten by guards, detainees about to be subjected to electric shocks, military dogs threatening to attack detainees" - only one of them (use of dogs) was authorized by Rumsfeld (84).

Ratner's Abu Ghraib evidence more strongly indicts military officials. Ratner cites the August 2004 Fay-Jones Report, which pinned responsibility for the Abu Ghraib abuses on Commander Ricardo Sanchez, who was in charge of Iraq's detention facilities. Ratner notes the 2003 Taguba Report, which recommended reprimanding Colonel Thomas Pappas, who took control of Abu Ghraib in late 2003 (115). And Ratner cites the Schlesinger Report, which, though it blames civilian and military leaders alike, only indicts Rumsfeld for indirect responsibility, stating: "Although specifically limited by the Secretary of Defense to Guantanamo, and requiring his personal approval (given in only two cases), the augmented techniques for Guantanamo migrated to Afghanistan and Iraq where they were neither limited nor safeguarded" (114). Thus, the evidentiary path leads most easily not directly to Rumsfeld, as Ratner hopes, but to Rumsfeld's subordinates.

It is certainly possible that Ratner could deftly refute each issue raised above. However, Ratner's failure to anticipate and controvert the full scope of defenses likely to be raised in actual trial is his book's flaw. Ratner is largely a victim of the incompetence of his prosecutorial targets. It is relatively simple to confute their flawed logic, but more difficult to engage with all the arguments that would be at their disposal in an actual judicial setting. Thus, Ratner's argument shares a characteristic of the memos he criticizes - the clumsy nature of his analytical pathway does not necessarily invalidate the conclusions at which he arrives.

Rob Grace

The Politics of Secularism in International Relations

By Elizabeth Shakman Hurd (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007)

The world was brought to a reality shock after the events of 9/11. Conflicts involving religion have returned to the forefront of international relations. Yet, policy makers, political scientists and international relations theorists have still continued to assume that religion has long been privatized in the West. Michael Barnett states that most international relations theorists "have tended to reduce the study of religion to either religious organizations, sometimes understood as moralizing interest groups or as terrorist organizations, or to generic principles that are synonymous with international

norms.” Elizabeth Hurd, on the other hand, explores and challenges those assumptions. In her book, *The Politics of Secularism in International Relations*, Hurd investigates different lived and historically shifting conceptions of the secular in different cultural contexts. Since religion is rapidly becoming an important part of contemporary international relations, Hurd’s choice of case studies, particularly studies dealing with Islam, are pertinent. After reading this book, readers will never again be able to look at secularism the same way. This is important because as Hurd postulates, theory matters, and poor concepts lead to poor policy.

Hurd’s work brings debates from sociology of religion, philosophy, and political theory into international relations with the “intention of refiguring a field that has virtually ignored questions involving how the categories of religion and politics shape international affairs.” For example, Hurd questions: how it is we might think about secularisms, in the plural, as forms of political authority in contemporary international relations? What this means for international relations theory and the resurgence of religion? And what kinds of politics follow from different forms of secular commitments, traditions, habits, and beliefs?

In her book, Hurd argues that the secularist division between religion and politics are not fixed, as commonly assumed, but are socially and historically constructed. She claims that the reason why international relations theory and its terms of practices of international politics have been unable to come to terms with secularism and religion is because they have failed to recognize that secularism and religion go together. Hurd explains that by digging into the complex negotiations that take place between secularism and religion we will better understand the empirical puzzles in international relations involving the politics of religion such as conflict between the United States and Iran, controversy over the enlargement of the European Union to include Turkey, the rise of political Islam, and global religious resurgence.

Hurd’s new approach to religion and international relations is an approach that challenges constructivist, realist, and liberal assumptions which state that religion has been excluded from politics in the West. In her provocative argument, Hurd states that there are varieties of secularisms in the plural, not secularism in the singular that defines contemporary world politics and that we should analyze and evaluate the consequences of secularism as a form of political authority in its own right. In her book, Hurd explains that there are two trajectories of secularism that have been influential in international politics: laicism (coming out of the Enlightenment critique of religion in France), and what Hurd calls Judeo-Christian secularism (emerging out of the Judeo-Christian tradition—mainly in the United States as interpreted by Alexis de Tocqueville). Laicism, explains Hurd, “refers to a separationist narrative in which religion is expelled from politics, and Judeo-Christian secularism to an accommodationist narrative in which Judeo-Christian tradition is perceived as the foundation of secular democracy.” Furthermore, Hurd remarks that “these varieties of secularism don’t map cleanly onto one country or one individual but that both appear in different modes in different times and places—they are discursive traditions, collections of practices with a history. Each defends some form of the separation of church and state, but in different ways, with different justifications and political consequences.” Thus, to understand the politics of secularism in international relations, Hurd states that we need to study varieties of

secularism in particular historical, cultural, and political contexts, rather than in the abstract (Turkish Kemalism, French laicite, American “Judeo-Christian” secularism).

Hurd examines the historical and philosophical legacy of the secularist traditions that shape American and European approaches (particularly for two critical relationships: the European Union and Turkey, and the United States and Iran) to global politics and shows why this matters for contemporary international relations. The relations between Europe and Turkey and the United States and Iran and have offered Hurd politically important ground on which she developed her riveting argument.

Hurd’s case studies clearly show how these two trajectories of secularism shape the representations of domestic politics in Turkey and Iran. In Turkey, for example, Hurd questions how the rise of the AKP, the chief Islamic party, is to be interpreted—as “political Islam,” an Islamic theocratic threat to Turkey’s secular democracy (something for the EU to avoid), or interpreted as a new emerging Islamic model of religious separation and accommodation (something for the EU to embrace)? In chapter four, Hurd explains that the AKP, in Turkey, and similar movements abroad, “endorsed alternative models of separation and accommodation between politics and religion” (81). She states that they “sought to *refashion* the secular, not to get rid of it, by endorsing various forms of nontheocratic politics. These attempts to renegotiate the secular nontheocratically, however, escape the confines of Euro-American secularist epistemology. For secularists, the only two available options are Islamic fundamentalism or a weak imitation of Western secularism. Non-Westerners must (inevitably) abandon tradition in the face of Western power and superiority” (81). Within this form of thinking, Hurd concludes that democratic alternatives to both fundamentalism and Western-driven forms of secularism either do not exist or are weak in comparison to their more rousing Western counterparts.

In chapter five, Hurd elaborates on the reasons why Europe has not yet admitted Turkey into their Union. Hurd explains that “social and religious factors have played a significant role in European opposition to Turkish accession to the European Union (EU)” (84). Hurd states that both secularists and Christian exclusivists (or traditionalists) express hesitations about Turkish membership:

Opposition to Turkish accession is coming from secular as well as religious quarters in Europe. Some nonreligious Europeans worry that bringing a large Muslim country into the EU could endanger the continent’s tradition of gender equality and tolerance of alternative lifestyles, for instance. For traditionalists, Turkish accession threatens the very idea of Europe as a Christian civilization. (84)

Ostensibly, Turkey disturbs what Europeans thought was relatively settled about themselves – how religion relates (or doesn’t relate) to European identity and institutions. The argument that developed in chapter five suggests that it is only when Europe “acknowledges the historical particularism of its own traditions of secularization, as well as the possibility of legitimate alternative to them, will Turkish integration into the EU be successful” (90). As for Turkey, Hurd concludes that this country has “turned toward a different trajectory of secularism that conforms to neither Kemalism (a Turkish

version of laicism described in chapter four) nor the two prevailing trajectories of secularism described in this book: laicism and Judeo-Christian secularism," which is also a strong factor for Turkey's delayed accession (84).

Throughout chapter six, Hurd situates secularist authority in a different historical context assessing the effects of secularist norms and practices upon American understandings of the 1978-1979 revolution in Iran and upon American relations with Iran after the revolution. In regards to Iran, due to these secularist trajectories, Hurd writes that Western scholars have represented the Iranian Revolution as simply a religious backlash against secular modernity, and portrayed Islam as a monolithic type of political Islam. In addition, Hurd writes that Judeo-Christian secularism also pre-structures American interpretation of the Iranian revolution, contributing to a sense—among American analysts and the public—that the revolution was proof of the incompatibility of Islam and modernity. In fact, in chapter four, Hurd explains that what we now call the Iranian Revolution was a coalition of various types of Islamic movements, all of which were looking for ways to liberate Iran politically and intellectually from Western dominance (65–83). In chapter six, Hurd elucidates on chapter four's premise and states that Khomeini's form of Shi'ism was only *one* type of political Shi'ism. She explains that the United States could have more actively engaged Khomeini's *Islamic* opposition, but that United States foreign policy had been predicated on the two trajectories of secularism, and so it tangled all Islamists together as hostile to the West and to secularism (102–115). The revolution, however, was seen as a threat to the United States "not only because it attacked American interests in the Middle East but also because it represented an affront to American national identity as secular and democratic. Domestic secularist authority, then, "is a productive part of the cultural and normative foundations of contemporary Iranian-American relations," claims Hurd (114). And it is this tenacious hold of particular secularist imaginaries in the United States that "helps to account for the 'sterility of understanding' of Iran experienced by Americans and identified by James Bill" (114).

Throughout chapter seven, Hurd proceeds to analyze the way Western trajectories of secularism are used to represent fundamentalism or political Islam. In her book, Hurd denies that religious fundamentalism is merely a backlash against modernization (a belief taken for granted in the policy community) and an epiphenomenal expression of material interests. It is in chapter seven that Hurd provides an exceptional discussion on "political Islam." She concisely dissects the way in which political Islam is commonly labeled—as dogmatic, fanatical, and a threat to the private sphere—as it moves inexorably toward theocracy, linked to the alleged Muslim inclination toward terrorism and totalitarianism (116–133). Hurd, on the other hand, confronts these widely held notions about political Islam, suggesting instead that it is "a modern language of politics that challenges, sometimes works outside of, and (occasionally) overturns fundamental assumptions about religion and politics that are embedded in the forms of Western secularism that emerged out of Latin Christendom" (119). Moreover, in her final chapter, Hurd writes that her "objective is neither to explain nor to predict when religious resurgence will occur or why certain forms of political religion emerge at a particular time or place" (136). Instead, in chapter eight, Hurd revisits the two trajectories of secularism that form the conceptual backbone of her book and prestructures attempts in international relations to theorize religious resurgence:

laicism and Judeo-Christian secularism (134–146). She argues that each of “these interpretive dispositions relies upon particular assumptions about the relation between religion and politics that condition their interpretations of the resurgence. Laicism, which suggests that religion will disappear as societies modernize, approaches the resurgence as a surface manifestation of deeper social, economic, and political grievances. And Judeo-Christian secularism, which operates on the assumption that only Judeo-Christianity can serve as the basis of modern secular democracy, approaches the resurgence as proof of the entrenched differences between different religions and the civilizations influenced by these religions” (136). Overall, in this chapter, Hurd examines the global resurgence of religion, and argues that what is called the religious resurgence is neither an indication of a clash between civilizations nor a backlash against modernization, but instead is a *refashioning* of the secular, a *renegotiation* of the boundaries of religion and politics (134–146).

To recapitulate, conflicts involving religion have returned to the forefront of international relations. Although there is a growing number of scholars and institutions around the world that have come to recognize organized religion as a major factor in contemporary international relations, Hurd writes that our foreign policy elites still “go for months ignoring the force of religion; then, when confronted with something inescapably religious, such as the Iranian revolution or the Taliban, they begin talking of religious zealotry and fanaticism, which suddenly explains everything. After a few days of shaking their heads over the fanatics, they revert to their usual secular analyses” (4). In agreement with Hurd’s argument, religion can not continue to be ignored if appropriate policy is to be formed. What is needed, which we do not yet have, and sorely need, Hurd postulates, is a mode of analysis that attempts to merge the spiritual and the material. Because without the ability “to recognize the moral, political, and epistemological consequences of the rigid secularist constructions of religion, practitioners in international relations will continue to struggle to respond to the power of religion in world affairs” (154). Ostensibly, religion is rapidly becoming an important part of contemporary international relations, thus, Hurd’s choice of case studies, particularly her studies dealing with Islam and key concepts—laicism and Judeo-Christian secularism—are pertinent.

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