

Book reviews

Conflict, security and defence*

Just and unjust military intervention: European thinkers from Vitoria to Mill. Edited by Stefano Recchia and Jennifer M. Welsh. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2013. 317pp. Index. £60.00. ISBN 978 1 10704 202 5. Available as e-book.

If debates about humanitarian intervention fell into a brief lull in the years following 9/11, when scholars were seemingly more interested in discussing the limits of anticipatory defence and the status of the norm proscribing torture, they have recently returned with a bang. In the light of conflicts in Libya, Syria and elsewhere, there is once again a lively interest in the challenges attendant on saving strangers by means of military intervention. Stefano Recchia and Jennifer Welsh's *Just and unjust military intervention* is a prime addition to this literature.

This edited collection, which draws together a dozen essays from leading scholars, distinguishes itself by focusing on how issues that bear on what we today call 'humanitarian intervention' were treated in early modern European political thought. Accordingly, it offers a series of finely worked discussions on how figures such as Francisco de Vitoria, Hugo Grotius, Emmerich de Vattel and John Locke, among others, tackled the moral issues raised by the use of force to rescue oppressed peoples from the predations of their own government. Anyone familiar with the controversies pertaining to humanitarian intervention will of course recognize the significance of these figures. They are all, to a greater or lesser extent, cited as sources of authority that either lend weight to, or call into question, the general idea of waging war for humanitarian purposes. That is to say, they feature as intellectual backstops for contemporary arguments both for and against intervention. Yet, until this book, no dedicated treatment of these luminaries was available. This, then, is a vital source for specialists on humanitarian intervention who wish to dig a little deeper into the history of their field and the ideas that have inhabited it.

Not that the appeal of this book will be limited strictly to humanitarian intervention specialists. It should speak to just war theorists too, as well as to English School and normative International Relations theorists, and indeed anyone with an interest in international politics, the history of ideas and theories of world order. As such, scholars might find that this book works well as a companion piece to Beate Jahn's 2006 book, *Classical theory in International Relations* (also with Cambridge University Press).

Rather than address the (pleasingly sturdy and largely contextualist) methodological approach underpinning this collection, an overview of its contents may be helpful. There are, as already noted, twelve substantive entries in this volume; all are by eminent scholars and of the very highest standard. With the exception of David Trim's conceptual history of humanitarian intervention from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century (chapter one), all chapters are devoted to explicating the work of carefully selected early modern European political thinkers on humanitarian intervention. To give a flavour of this, William Bain furnishes a superb analysis of Vitoria, Richard Tuck covers Grotius, Hobbes and Pufendorf, Edwin van de Haar offers a lucid account of Hume and Smith; Andrew Hurrell treats Kant, and Michael Doyle holds forth with great vim on Mill. Viewed in concert, these chapters bring to light not only the historical contingency of contemporary thinking about humanitarian intervention, but also its relation to deeper traditions of western political thought.

The fact that there is no chapter devoted to the task of considering how the essays gathered here cast new light on the aforementioned deeper traditions of western political

* See also Hannes Peltonen, *International responsibility and grave humanitarian crises: collective provision for human security*; and Heather M. Roff, *Global justice, Kant and the Responsibility to Protect: a provisional duty*, both pp. 705–6.

thought—I am thinking principally of the just war tradition—is perhaps a missed opportunity. The absence of any meaningful methodological pluralism and debate is also a source of some disappointment. But these are minor quibbles that do not detract from the richness of this book. Setting a gold standard for edited collections, *Just and unjust military intervention* will surely and deservedly be seen a landmark text in its field.

Cian O’Driscoll, University of Glasgow, UK

Genocide and International Relations: changing patterns in the transitions of the late modern world. By **Martin Shaw**. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2013. 238pp. Index. Pb.: £19.99. ISBN 978 0 52112 517 8. Available as e-book.

Should one read the latest of Martin Shaw’s three books on genocide? Clearly. It is an important contribution to the existing literature with a special focus on how major shifts in the twentieth-century international system affected the nature, objectives, locations and mechanisms of genocidal violence. Though good at describing and re-analysing the existing literature on case-studies and summarizing much of the comparative literature that evolved post-1990, one wishes the author was more thorough in reading the comparative literature on civil wars, especially ethnic conflict, and familiarizing himself with genocide risk assessments and the early warning work that emerged during the late 1980s. This lack of familiarity leads to unwarranted generalizations and clear misses about what does and does not exist in what he calls the ‘narrow comparative approach’.

Shaw’s definition of genocidal action is broad: ‘armed power organizations treat civilian and social groups as enemies and aim to destroy their real or putative social power, by means of killing, violence and coercion against individuals whom they regard as members of the groups’ (p. 5). True enough—anti-population violence, genocidal violence and mass atrocities can be aspects of ethnic or civil war. Civilians do get killed during war, which of course begs the question: when do we call something a genocide, a war crime or the unintended or unfortunate by-product of other forms of conflict? Though the debate raged during the 1980s for comparative genocide scholars, especially after Holocaust scholars began to take note, we of the earlier generation thought that we dealt effectively with the issues that are raised today. One classic example is the Cambodian genocide, which in earlier work was identified as an auto-genocide. In Shaw’s and our judgement this makes little sense; why then not call it a politicide, a widely used term? Furthermore, for empiricists and others singling out some genocides as mega-genocides made little sense. Comparison is of essence to explanation. Numbers, location, length and time matter when accounting for the victims, but what matters most is to establish intent as the driver that leads to the death of any number of people belonging to some kind of group. Of course most of us agree with Shaw that states are not the only genocidaires.

One of Shaw’s recurring criticisms of comparative genocide studies is that they ignore the changing international conditions that reshaped genocidal violence, including the post-1945 wave of decolonization, international support or protection from neighbouring countries or superpower involvement. In 1987, I published a chapter on ‘The etiology of genocides’ (in I. Walliman and M. Dobkowski, eds, *Genocide and the modern age*, Greenwood), developing and enhancing the concept of upheaval, which introduced its international components, namely postwar, post-colonial, irredentist movements that lend support, and what I have called post-imperial genocides. In other works bipolarity is mentioned as having provided a modicum of stability in the core but not in the periphery, often leading to proxy wars, coups and other forms of local rebellion, possibly including genocide. Comparative