

Heraclidis, Alexis; Dialla, Ada: *Humanitarian Intervention in the Long Nineteenth Century. Setting the Precedent*. Manchester: Manchester University Press 2015. ISBN: 978-0-7190-8990-9; 231 S.

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The issue of humanitarian intervention – the use of force to prevent and to end gross violations of humanitarian norms – is usually associated with the last decade of the twentieth century and described as a recent phenomenon emerging mainly after the end of the Cold War. However, over the last few years an intriguing discussion about the historical origins and the emergence of the concept has evolved. Recent studies provide first significant steps towards a genuine history of humanitarian intervention and convincingly sketch the genealogy of the concept's long history, reaching back to the 18th and 19th centuries. With very few exceptions, most of these books focus on the European interventions to protect Christian minorities in the Ottoman Empire during the long 19th century and present these case studies as pivotal for the evolution of the concept.¹ In their new book „Humanitarian intervention in the long nineteenth century. Setting the precedent“, published in Manchester University Press's new series on „Humanitarianism“, Alexis Heraclides, Professor of International Relations at the Panteion University in Athens, and Ada Dialla, Assistant Professor of European History at the Athens School of Fine Arts, largely follow this track. Their choice of case studies also include the already well-studied interventions of the Great Powers in the Greek war of independence (1821–32), in Lebanon and Syria (1860–61) as well as the so-called „Bulgarian atrocities“ during the Balkan crisis of 1875–78. Only the very brief chapter on the US intervention in the Cuban war of independence in 1898 adds an additional case not related to the Ottoman Empire.

Heraclides and Dialla present their volume as the result of a joint venture of a political scientist and a historian, thus combining the methodological approaches of both dis-

ciplines. Each author has contributed individual chapters, while five of the eleven chapters were written together. In their words, the book „is an attempt at a comprehensive presentation of humanitarian intervention in theory and practice“ (p. x). Comparing their study with the existing literature, they claim that their work is much broader and „cover[s] not only the Ottoman Empire but also include[s] specific chapters on political theory and the thinking behind international law“ (p. x). Accordingly, they divide the book into two principal sections of equal length, calling Part I „Theory“ and Part II „Practice“. After a rather short introduction and a brief presentation of recent debates on the issue of intervention on humanitarian grounds, the authors begin by exploring the theoretical foundation of the concept (pp. 9–97). By discussing the doctrine of just war and the work of significant European thinkers such as Francisco de Vitoria and Hugo Grotius, the authors trace the origins of the concept to early modern times, unfortunately without acknowledging the most recent scholarship on this issue, such as the fascinating edited volume „Just and Unjust Military Intervention“ by Stefano Recchia and Jennifer Welsh.²

After discussing how the nineteenth-century dichotomy between civilization and barbarity bore upon the relationship of the European Great Powers to the Ottoman Empire, Heraclides and Dialla focus on international law and the theory of humanitarian intervention as discussed by legal scholars in the period of one hundred years. They identify „no less than 100 publicists who had addressed the question from the 1830s

¹ Gray Bass, *Freedom's Battle: The Origins of Humanitarian Intervention*, New York 2008; Brendan Simms / David J. B. Trim (eds.), *Humanitarian Intervention. A History*, Cambridge 2011; Davide Rodogno, *Against Massacre. Humanitarian Interventions in the Ottoman Empire, 1815–1914*, Princeton 2012. While these studies mainly focus on the interventions in the Ottoman Empire, the very recent volume Fabian Klose (ed.), *The Emergence of Humanitarian Intervention. Ideas and Practice from the Nineteenth Century to the Present*, Cambridge 2016, argues that the concept of humanitarian intervention grew directly out of the campaign against the slave trade at the beginning of the 19th century.

² Stefano Recchia / Jennifer M. Welsh (eds.), *Just and Unjust Military Intervention. European Thinkers from Vitoria to Mill*, Cambridge 2013.

up to the 1930s, mainly with the historical examples of the nineteenth century in mind" (p. 59). Subsequently both authors describe the position of advocates and opponents of the emerging concept, thus documenting precisely the statistical balance between both camps for each decade. However, at this point one fundamental structural problem of the whole volume becomes more than obvious: strictly dividing the book into two discrete parts – one on theory and one on practice – precludes any interaction between them. Theorists of humanitarian intervention and their ideas are not placed in the historical context of various interventionist practices. One can convincingly argue that it was indeed the practice of intervention that initiated various theoretical debates and significantly shaped legal discourses. Thus, the practice and theory of humanitarian intervention cannot be analysed as two completely separate fields, but only in their complex entanglement and mutual dependency.

It is only in Part II (pp. 99–222) that Heraclides and Dialla finally deal, over the course of five chapters, with the selected case studies: the interventions of the Great Powers in the Greek war of independence (1821–32) as well as in Lebanon and Syria (1860–61), the so-called „Bulgarian atrocities“ during the Balkan crisis of 1875–78 and the US intervention in the Cuban war of independence in 1898. According to the authors, „the presentation of the four cases studies will for the most part be traditional, with emphasis on diplomatic history and the views of key individuals“ (p. 103). The chapters are written in a descriptive rather than analytical manner, although chapter nine (pp. 169–196) offers some interesting new insights on the Russian perspective on the Balkan crisis. However, by this point readers may be wondering why these already well-studied cases are examined again and described in complete isolation from each other instead of investigating their interrelatedness, specifically the impact of earlier interventions on later ones. Additionally, one might ask why the book in no way addresses the issue of humanitarian intervention in the context of the abolitionist campaign against the slave trade, as very recent scholarship has persuasively ar-

gued. From a historian's perspective, it is also troubling to read a book on the history of humanitarian intervention in the long 19th century that is based mainly on secondary literature and barely refers to any archival material. Furthermore, it is altogether puzzling that a book published in a new series on key debates and new approaches on „humanitarianism“ – in fact a term hardly used or discussed at all by the authors throughout the entire volume – does not address the recent historiography on the emergence of humanitarian norms, the issue of „humanity“ in international law, and the related academic debates, which continue to be very lively indeed. Regrettably, the book neither discusses the entangled history of emerging humanitarianism and interventionism nor does it relate both historiographies to each other.

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