

Michael Newman, *Humanitarian Intervention: Confronting the Contradictions*

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concerned that the currently prevailing opinion seems to be that humanitarian intervention represents a short-lived fad from the immediate post-Cold War era which has been rejected as either dangerous or disingenuous. He does point out caveats and cautions but is ultimately concerned that current opinion may be inclined to rule out humanitarian intervention when it can be successfully undertaken in favor of standing by as atrocities take place, unless there exists some other geopolitical justification for intervention. Certain to be thought-provoking, this book is highly recommended.

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Newman, Michael. *Humanitarian Intervention: Confronting the Contradictions*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2009.

Much has been written about the subject of humanitarian intervention in the decade that followed the 1999 Kosovo intervention; and as we move toward the 10-year anniversary of the now well-known *Responsibility to Protect* doctrine drafted by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) in 2001, one wonders whether anything new can be said about this important topic. Michael Newman's new book, *Humanitarian Intervention: Confronting the Contradictions*, attempts to make sense of the voluminous literature on humanitarian intervention by advancing a fundamentally critical examination of the various international policies on this subject by examining their impact on those states where humanitarian emergencies are most likely to occur — that is, on developing and so-called “transitional” states.

Newman's main argument is that the various military interventions in recent years have had only limited success in bringing about an enduring peace in those states that were targets of such interventions and that this is because of the overly narrow conception of “humanitarianism” under which most advocates of intervention operate. Thus, the author's main purpose is to advance a broader notion of humanitarianism that not only addresses the various acute and “conscience-shocking” crimes that we normally see as being grounds for humanitarian intervention but that also addresses the problems of global inequality and poverty. In this sense, Newman seeks to take a more macro approach to the problem of human suffering that avoids the all-too-common tendency to only address these problems *after* gross violations of human rights have manifested themselves.

Newman's method in this study is to draw on the existing literature “rather than contributing original research into specific cases of humanitarian intervention” (p. 6) and is therefore best described as a broad survey of the topic that aims to “re-think” it, rather than one that addresses specific concerns arising from its practice. The first two chapters consist of broad reviews of well-known legal and normative arguments about the topic that prevailed both during and after the Cold War. This is followed in chapter 3 by a discussion of the conditions under which humanitarian intervention is said to be permissible, wherein the author concurs with the widely held view that the criteria for intervention should be highly restrictive. Yet this is where he begins to make his own contribution to the debate — that is, by arguing for his broader notion of humanitarianism that includes the structural causes of the human suffering at issue. Chapters 4 and 5 seek to flesh out this broader notion of humanitarianism by examining, respectively, the effects that neoliberal economic institutions and the trend toward political democratization have had on human welfare in the states of the global South and the shortcomings of the international governmental regimes that are established after the combat phases of humanitarian interventions have ended. According to Newman, these shortcomings reinforce the need to adopt a wider notion of humanitarianism, which the author subsequently does in his final chapter by endorsing the ideas of human security and the famous “responsibility to protect” doctrine. In sum, Newman argues that this broader notion of humanitarianism can provide a basis for human protection by not only providing legitimacy for using military force in truly emergency situations of human suffering but also by addressing issues of poverty and inequality, which are the root cause of the emergency situations that humanitarian intervention typically seeks to remedy.

Newman's book is mainly a discussion of topics that have already been the subject of much scholarly inquiry and is therefore not a groundbreaking work in the same vein as, for instance, Nicholas Wheeler's *Saving Strangers* (2000). It nevertheless makes a welcome contribution to the debate by incorporating insights from other areas of humanitarian studies into the discourse on humanitarian intervention that seek to get at the root causes of human suffering, rather than just addressing emergency situations, by which time the international community has

already failed the vulnerable populations with whom it is concerned. Furthermore, this book is a highly accessible treatment of a very complex and oftentimes perplexing topic and, if nothing else, helps the reader make sense of it with an eye toward addressing the structural causes of human suffering, rather than dealing with human suffering after it has manifested itself. I would recommend this book to anyone interested in human rights and humanitarian affairs — both the specialist and non-specialist alike — and would consider it appropriate for classroom use in both graduate and advanced undergraduate university courses.

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Howell, William G., and Jon C. Pevehouse. *While Dangers Gather: Congressional Checks on Presidential War Powers*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007.

The conventional wisdom concerning domestic politics and the US presidential use of force abroad is that presidents are largely autonomous in such decisions. William Howell and Jon Pevehouse offer a convincing array of evidence that appears to shatter this image of a largely unconstrained president. They seek to address whether Congress influences presidential decisions to use force and, if so, how.

The authors make extensive use of research on presidential-congressional relations to inform the ways that Congress may constrain the presidential use of force. They contend that Congress is capable of imposing costs on the president in pursuit of military operations abroad. For example, Congress may work to dismantle the president's venture by refusing to appropriate funds or require burdensome obligations as a condition for funding. Congressional criticism of the president's venture may undermine the credibility of the president's resolve, emboldening foreign adversaries to resist US action and increasing the likelihood of a costly war. Congressional criticism may also serve as the catalyst for turning public opinion against a military operation. Because the president's partisan or ideological foes in Congress have political incentives to thwart presidential initiatives, Congress can be expected to impose such costs primarily when large and cohesive majorities oppose the president.

Looking to the data, the argument withstands a variety of tests. Employing large data sets covering the post-war period, Howell and Pevehouse present fairly persuasive statistical evidence. They show that US uses of force are more frequent when the president enjoys partisan support in Congress. They find that the probability of deployments among opportunities to use force increases with the president's partisan support in Congress. The authors also provide in-depth examinations of six cases, identifying when and how Congress influences presidential decisions over military operations. Finally, the authors carefully examine the role of congressional criticism of presidential proposals to use force. These analyses suggest that the media provides an outlet for congressional opposition and that such opposition shapes public support for military operations, which, in turn, influences presidential decision to use force.

While this book is clearly state-of-the-art, it insufficiently addresses a glaring possibility. Howell and Pevehouse thoroughly examine the strategic relationship between the president and Congress but fail to seriously consider the strategic relationship between the US and potential targets of presidential action. A strategic process may be responsible for the findings the authors attribute to shared partisanship. In spite of the excellent examples the authors provide, partisan debates tend to focus on social and economic issues. Such a focus suggests that divided government may forestall the president's pursuit of his domestic agenda but not necessarily his foreign policy agenda. Thus, presidents facing partisan opposition may have no other choice than to focus on foreign policy in order to produce a record of policy success. If presidential threats are regarded as highly credible when Congress is expected to oppose the president's domestic policy agenda, potential targets of the US should avoid behavior that may lead to the US use of force. Such a process should produce findings that indicate fewer uses of force when the president faces higher levels of congressional opposition.

The authors miss an opportunity to evaluate this possible strategic account. In chapter 4, Howell and Pevehouse examine opportunities to use force as the unit of analysis but fail to examine the influence of congressional support on the frequency of opportunities. Their effort to assess strategic interaction is limited to Heckman analyses in which the first-stage equation analyzes the probability that a state is involved in an opportunity on any given day between 1945 and 2000. The choice of units in the first-stage equation may bias the test against