

A NEW GENERATION DRAWS THE LINE: HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTION AND THE “RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT” TODAY

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Book review: Chomsky N. A New Generation Draws the Line: Humanitarian Intervention and the “Responsibility to Protect” Today. Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2012. 176 p. The book under review examines controversial norm of “humanitarian intervention”. It clearly demonstrates that the norm was used selectively and with different arguments in various situations. Noam Chomsky has managed to present a fair and balanced account of positive and negative aspects of humanitarian interventions as well as provide thought-provoking policy recommendations for improving human rights protection.

Key words: humanitarian intervention, national interest, agenda-setting, human rights protection.

The book is an expanded edition compiled from Noam Chomsky’s articles, lectures, and the book *The New Military Humanism*. Noam Chomsky, Professor Emeritus at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), is a prolific and prodigious writer famous throughout the world for his studies of linguistics and politics.

Chomsky’s provocative book examines the nature of Humanitarian Interventionism after the Cold War. For Chomsky, “the new era” in international relations was opened by NATO’s bombing of Serbia on March 24, 1999. Tony Blair, British Prime Minister, claimed that “the new generation draws the line” fighting for “values” where “the brutal repression of whole ethnic groups will no longer be tolerated” [1, p. 1]. Fighting for human rights and “principles and values” became privilege only to be exercised by “the enlightened states” or the so-called “the international community.”

For the author, “the new era” is an unprecedented historical moment when national sovereignty was disregarded in the name of human rights and “principles and values.”

By highlighting the “leading principles” of “the new era,” Chomsky evaluates both positions: proponents and skeptics of “the new era.” This evaluation is based on such criteria as the estimate of foreign and military aid which “the international community” proposes and how they respond to atrocities in the world. His analysis is the result of his exhaustive empirical and theoretical work, and distinctive methodology. He uses a wide range of sources to research inconsistent strategies used in similar situations. For example, military aid and diplomatic support had been given to Turkey during the Kurdish resistance which entailed mass atrocities with no demands for assurances about human rights. Why was “the international community” less concerned about “protecting Kurds in Turkey” yet watchful regarding the protection of Kosovars? For Chomsky, the proponents of “the new era” do not offer credible reasons for this “inconsistency.”

One of the crucial questions posed is why “the international community” did not intervene militarily in East Timor as they had in FR Yugoslavia? Chomsky considers three officially proposed reasons for bombing FR Yugoslavia: “ensuring the stability of Eastern Europe,” “thwarting ethnic cleansing,” and “ensuring NATO’s credibility.” He argues that the third reason is most credible because from the standpoint of the global powers, only they ensure the “stability” of the region. In other words, the region can be “stable” only if it serves the global power interests. In both cases, in East Timor where NATO did not intervene, and in FR Yugoslavia, where NATO had intervened, the consequences were tragic. In two subsequent chapters, he investigates applications of “values and principles” to study both cases of East Timor and Kosovo.

In East Timor, the situation became worse after the referendum on August 30, 1999 when the majority of the population voted for independence. As a result, atrocities conducted by the Indonesian army (TNI) sharply increased. Unlike the case of Kosovo, there was no War Crimes Tribunal set up by “the international community.” Chomsky exposes the ambiguity of “the international community,” and investigates the reasons for NATO’s action/inaction in both cases. The author’s findings are valuable for every researcher to observe the connection between military, business, and geo-strategic goals. Chomsky argues that the Indonesian army was supported and trained by the US and its allies. For this reason, “the enlightened West” was blind to victims in East Timor.

In the case of Kosovo, the West needed the War Crimes Tribunal to justify 78 days of bombing Serbia. In order to validate its airstrikes against Serbia, which occurred without approval of the UN Security Council, NATO searched for Serbian war crimes immediately when they came into contact with troops in Kosovo. In contrast, the United Nations civilian police had not enough sources and support to investigate atrocities in East Timor. Chomsky states, that it was important that the records about these atrocities in East Timor “remain hidden” [1, p. 61]. Based on his research and evidence, the NATO bombing of FR Yugoslavia was followed by a substantial “escala-

tion of atrocities and ethnic cleansing.” The cause of the mass refugee crisis was the bombing, not the reverse. The author gives us a review of events leading up to the bombing, in which he concludes that there were not any substantiated reports enough to be a motive for the bombings. Furthermore, he stressed that “the international community” did not want to develop diplomatic options for solving the problem of Kosovo because NATO would lose its own role in international relations.

From Chomsky’s standpoint, the only benefit gained by bombing Serbia were those accrued by Western militaries and NATO by confirming their own “credibility” and domination in the Balkan region. He concludes that the world has only two choices regarding the use of force: either to follow the UN Charter or something better, or the great powers will do what they want guided by their interests and profits.

However, the most intriguing question posed: how can universality of human rights only be applied in cases which are useful for the interests of the “enlightened countries,” who took a responsibility to protect human rights in “the new era?” This inspirational book offers a different guise to this question and exposes the darker side of “humanitarian interventions,” which remain well-scrubbed from public surface.

Like in his other books, he demonstrates the wisdom of a philosopher and exactness of a linguist in order to reveal the truth about international relations and fuel a discussion about the uses and abuses of power inside it. The book is written in accessible and clear language and will be interesting not only to scholars, but to a general audience as well. It is an important contribution to political science, and an essential reference for policy makers. The book sparks readers to rethink different aspects of international relations with deeper understanding of the world in which we live. As Chomsky proclaimed, “it makes good sense to struggle for a better world, but not to indulge in pretense and illusion about the one in which we live today” [1, c. 141].

References

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НОВОЕ ПОКОЛЕНИЕ ПРОВОДИТ ЧЕРТУ: ГУМАНИТАРНАЯ ИНТЕРВЕНЦИЯ И «ОТВЕТСТВЕННОСТЬ ПО ЗАЩИТЕ» СЕГОДНЯ

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Рецензия на книгу: Н. Чомского «Новое поколение проводит черту: гуманитарная интервенция и «ответственность по защите» сегодня». Боулдер: Парадигм Паблишерз, 2012. 176 с.

В данной книге рассматриваются основные этапы формирования новой практики международного права, которая известна как «гуманитарная интервенция». Автор книги исследует, какая аргументация использовалась для легитимизации вмешательств и каковы были альтернативы в то время. Книга наглядно демонстрирует, что приверженцы гуманитарной интервенции по-разному реагировали на ситуации одного типа. Рецензент делает вывод о том, что автор представил сбалансированный анализ позитивных и негативных аспектов гуманитарных вмешательств, а также сформулировал продуманные рекомендации по вопросам политики в области защиты прав человека.

Ключевые слова: гуманитарное вмешательство, национальные интересы, формирование повестки дня, защита прав человека.

Список литературы

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