

Book review: The International History Review

Talentino, Andrea Kathryn. *Military Intervention after the Cold War: The Evolution of Theory and Practice*. Athens: Centre for International Studies, Ohio University, 2005. Pp. xvi, 364. \$26.00 (US), paper.

Talentino has produced an excellent book for work with both graduate and post-graduate students. What is excellent about the book is its genuine pursuit of a question about how to understand military intervention since the end of the Cold War. Where most other works in this area just tell a story about the changing nature of intervention or engage in normative analysis or critique of these changes, Talentino sees a problem to be negotiated and explained. In charting the shifting nature, and increasing regularity, of multilateral military intervention under expanded remits of humanitarianism, democracy-promotion, conflict-resolution and addressing state-failure, Tarantino poses the searching questions: 'How did this evolution come about? Why do states act where their interests seem limited at best? Why did intervention become more complex and protracted? More important, why are states staying and committed to intervention even though no such operation has yet resulted in a clear success?' (p.3)

Talentino tries her best to get to grips with what, from a realist framework of power and interests, seems to be a highly irrational shift away from interest-based instrumentality in the international sphere. The bulk of the book is composed of case-studies of multilateral military interventions – in Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, Sierra Leone, and Kosovo – to chart and explain the seemingly ad hoc yet inexorable shift away from the realist framework. However, the questions are so sharply posed that the answer she comes up with is inevitably a disappointing one.

With more than a nod to constructivist approaches, she suggests that globalization has undermined the bounded nature of international society and enabled the spread of new ideas about the nature of the international order. The analysis is peppered with suggestions that 'globalisation has had a direct impact on the course of intervention by shaping important ideas like conflict resolution and human rights and giving them greater relevance' (p.34). She concludes: 'The key point for this study centers on the ideas that globalization generated. Intervention changed because new ideas swept the world, and those ideas came from the connections that globalization created.' (p.39)

In the end we are left with the impression that to understand the irrational nature of military intervention – the fact that states commit resources well beyond the bounds of realist views of rational interests, yet not enough, or timely enough, resources to ensure an effective outcome – we need to understand a mixture of motivations (p.307). These are the realist motivations of interests and the non-realist motivations of values and norms of the new globalized international order. The rational explanation for less than rational policy-practice then lies in the problems of developing and implementing norm-based policy in a world where states still operate on a mixed basis of motivations.

This is a plausible analysis, but not one which is convincingly drawn from the case-material. In the case-study approach to military interventions - which tends to see them as isolated events and where the focus is on the conflict area, with regard to the origins of the conflict and the impact of external intervention - there is little possibility of going beyond the book's starting assumptions of a mixture of realist interest and disinterested norms and values. Rather, the theoretical assumptions (with

the suitable balance between interests and values) are read back from the empirical findings. It is only the ruthlessness with which Tarentino returns again and again to her central question which makes her conclusions appear forced.

The book pushes to the limits the counter positioning of interests and values - given a territorialized form in the distinction between globalized ideas of legitimacy and traditional state-based approaches. Surely there is something else going on in the rejection of the Cold War discourse of national interests and even of the rationalist, instrumentalist approach to foreign policy-making? Perhaps it is the failures of post-Cold War international interventions, the 'wars of choice', which drive the discourses which seek to evade political responsibility for the projection of military power internationally – the discourses of other-regarding ethics, multilateralism and international law, or even Rumsfeld's rejection of traditional 'metrics' of success in the war on terror? Tarentino hints at this in her discussion of the fall-out from Iraq, where she suggests that the US attempt to act unilaterally for traditional security interests has resulted in the strengthening of new globalized norms which reject interests for shared values (p.286). It seems that the immanent normative order may be parasitical on the death of *realpolitik* rather than a force in its own right.

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