

The Endtimes of Human Rights, Stephen Hopgood (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2013), 255 pp., \$27.95 cloth.

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In this scathing indictment of the human rights movement, Stephen Hopgood contends that it has sold out its moral clarity for an alliance with interventionist liberal states. The core problem for Hopgood is not human rights, as such—that is, not the locally rooted, citizen-based quest for meaningful freedoms within particular nations or cultures. Rather, it is Human Rights, a globalized superstructure of norms, institutions, and organizations devoted to saving an abstraction: humanity.

For Hopgood, the Human Rights behemoth has its origins in humanitarian internationalism, a “secular religion” that rose in the late nineteenth century, as religion itself faded in Europe. Exalting innocent human life rather than a divine entity, it offered purpose and solace in a world without God. Faced with its most serious crisis in the Holocaust, this new religion, too, died, reemerging later in the twentieth century as the “human rights movement,” whose aims were breathtaking, particularly in the context of cold war conflict. By the 1990s, claims Hopgood, the Human Rights project had latched itself to liberal states, producing a type of symbiosis—with the United States, for example, mouthing popular rights rhetoric as part of its democracy-building efforts. More worryingly, during this time major human rights organizations began allying themselves with American power and force, as was the case in NATO’s wars in Afghanistan and Libya, for example (p. 101).

According to Hopgood, Human Rights has become a “product” sold to middle classes in Western countries “to assuage

guilt or to feel good” (p. 104). Meanwhile, it is offered up to—or forced down upon—people around the world, regardless of cultural, religious, or societal particularities. Its proponents’ preferred approach is to homogenize differences under a vision of universal principles sometimes enforced through “humanitarian interventions” or other forms of warfare (p. 65). Supposed human rights triumphs—for example, the “responsibility to protect” norm and the International Criminal Court—are deployed in erratic and cynical ways (p. 167). At the same time, rights remain fragile, even in their ostensible heartlands, as illustrated by the Obama administration’s policies on Guantanamo Bay and drone strikes (p. 13).

For Hopgood, the pretensions of Human Rights have far outstripped its usefulness. It has become a project unto itself, serving primarily the interests of international elites, and it causes more harm than good. But as his title makes clear, Hopgood also believes the Human Rights project is in its “endtimes.” The marriage with state power, particularly U.S. power, means that Human Rights will wane along with America’s relative decline in world politics. Other states, with political systems grounded in nonliberal assumptions or controlled by repressive governments, are increasingly vocal in challenging the Human Rights machine. China and Russia are only the most obvious examples. Their power makes them immune to outside imposition of human rights norms. Even smaller states, such as Sri Lanka, can resist the Human

Rights project because its dogma does not inspire majorities in these countries the way that nationalist and religious appeals do (p. 117). Only long-term internal change, shaped by indigenous, culturally specific ideas, will prove effective in advancing locally conceived versions of human rights.

But this is not a bad thing, says Hopgood. For local problems, local solutions based on socially embedded norms will prove more durable and effective than alien slogans. Further, the workings of state power will be more exposed if the fig leaf of Human Rights shrivels. China, Russia, and others make no bones about their support for sovereignty over human rights principles. Their internal violations of human rights are well documented. By contrast, the hypocrisies of liberal internationalists, who seek to universalize a Western concept of human rights—except with respect to repressive U.S. allies—will become more visible (p. 177).

Hopgood's provocation is powerful, and his privileging of locally and nationally inspired activism rings true. He does an excellent job of drawing together specific incidents to support his controversial views. Unsurprisingly, however, there are also nuances missed in such a broad argument. For one, it is sometimes hard to distinguish in Hopgood's narrative human rights from Human Rights. In actual conflicts, international NGOs and institutions offer genuine support to local movements. Locals wrap themselves in international norms and reach overseas for help. "Indigenous" action is seldom as pure as it might seem, and it is hard to imagine that such mixing of the local and the international will end anytime soon. Hopgood's faith in the effectiveness of activism "anchored in the expressed desires of communities

of solidarity, in women's rights and LGBT networks" (p. 21) also seems overly optimistic. Local opponents of these principles have great power and have powerful international allies of their own (p. 144).

Hopgood is right to emphasize the dangers posed by Human Rights' frequent impulse to intervene. He is also right to warn of its sometimes pernicious consequences: creating dependency, short-circuiting domestic organizing, and smothering home-grown conceptions of human rights. It is difficult, however, to view such NGOs as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch as irredeemably problematic. True, at times they have tied themselves to state power. They champion principles that are easily manipulated, such as the responsibility to protect, and thus risk causing more casualties than they seek to prevent. These organizations also sometimes risk subordinating local needs for peace and development to the quest for global justice, courtesy of an International Criminal Court marked by selective indictments and partial justice. But both NGOs have also maintained autonomy on critical issues.

Human Rights Watch, for example, has repeatedly and at great cost broken with U.S. politicians who fear criticizing Israel's policies toward Palestinians. Because of its stance, it has lost high-profile leaders, such as its cofounder Robert Bernstein, and has come under harsh attack from the Israeli government, allied NGOs, and the Israel lobby. Despite tactical alliances with U.S. power, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have also censured many U.S. foreign policies. Nor do these organizations condemn only America's support for its repressive allies. NGOs also speak out against various types of domestic

injustices in the United States, such as harsh prison conditions, the death penalty, and economic inequality.

Nonetheless, Hopgood's warnings about the dangers of cozying up to state power are timely and instructive. *The Endtimes of Human Rights* is a bracing alert for human rights professionals and all who care about global ethics. Scholars, practitioners, and NGO contributors

will need to reckon with this important book.

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Accountability for Killing: Moral Responsibility for Collateral Damage in America's Post-9/11 Wars, Neta C. Crawford (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 512 pp., \$39.95 cloth.

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This latest work from Neta Crawford focuses on the causes and consequences of, as well as accountability for, collaterally killed civilians in recent U.S. military operations in Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, and Yemen. It is the most comprehensive work of its kind.

The book is divided into three parts. The first lays out, in painstaking detail, who is killed in the course of these conflicts, how they are killed, and why they are killed. Crawford single-handedly gathers and analyzes data of such vast quantity that the result resembles the work of an NGO rather than an individual. For instance, she discovers and documents blatant discrepancies between civilian casualty reports by NATO and the United Nations in Afghanistan—discrepancies that cannot be explained away by competing operative definitions of “civilian” (pp. 105–107). She also closely examines the casualties resulting from the use of drones in Pakistan

and Yemen, casting doubt on the conclusion that this new form of combat results in fewer civilian deaths.

Crawford's most original philosophical contribution is her suggestion that we ought not to regard instances in which civilians are mistakenly targeted or instances in which more civilians are killed collaterally than had been anticipated as mere tragic accidents. For Crawford, such deaths are at least partly a result of institutional norms pitting a triptych of values against one another: the value of preventing civilian deaths, the value of accomplishing the mission at hand, and the value of protecting one's own combatants. Emphasizing the latter two values at the cost of the former *systemizes* unforeseen civilian casualties in a way that at least partly vitiates the otherwise exculpatory role that the *collateral* nature of these harms is thought to play in our moral reasoning in general, and in the calculation of proportionality specifically.