

Humanitarian Crises and the Post-Cold War International Environment

Holbrooke, Richard. *To End a War*. New York: The Modern Library, 1998.

Judah, Tim. *Kosovo, War and Revenge*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000.

Council on Foreign Relations. *Humanitarian Intervention, Crafting a Workable Doctrine*. New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 2000.

US foreign policy has produced a varied mix of actors over the years, ranging from those whose approach is to quietly but firmly get on with things and those who march on to the scene forcefully and loudly. Holbrooke falls into the latter group. Ambitious, bright and articulate, Holbrooke strode into the mess that surrounded the international community's involvement in Bosnia determined to achieve a peace agreement and to make his own mark in the process. He succeeded on both counts. Advertised as the *New York Times Book Review's* choice for eleventh best book of the year (note that it didn't make it into the top ten), Holbrooke's account of his mission to Bosnia provides a vivid description of the negotiations and US decision-making that eventually resulted in the Dayton Peace Accord and, perhaps inadvertently, at the same time gives significant insights into himself as well. The book is very well written and finds a rare balance between telling a story in a way that is interesting and captivating for the general public while providing information and analysis that is useful to researchers and practitioners.

Essentially the book covers just over a year of activities beginning with Holbrooke's own involvement in the process and ending with the completion of the Dayton Accord. The focus is very much on Holbrooke's efforts on behalf of the US government. Those seeking in-depth background on the conflict itself or discussion of the UN involvement will not find it here. Nonetheless, even while Holbrooke sticks to telling his own part of the story he provides interesting insights into other aspects of the situation, especially into the characters of some of the people involved. Naturally, Milosevic plays a large role in this drama. It takes a good deal of reading between the lines, however, and not always successfully, to try to determine what drives Milosevic and how and why he made the decisions he did. By contrast, Holbrooke is unhesitating about his dislike and disdain for other characters, such as Mladic and Karadzic.

For those interested in how Holbrooke and the US went about moving the parties to the conflict toward a peace agreement and the nature and course of those negotiations this book is a valuable resource. Conversations, settings, people are all described here in tremendous detail. While one-sided in the sense that it only provides the US view, and even more particularly, the Holbrooke view, this is a very interesting story, very well told.

Tim Judah's book on Kosovo is, by definition, a different kind of accounting. Judah is a journalist who lived in Belgrade from 1990-95 and covered the collapse of Yugoslavia

and the resulting conflicts for a variety of publications, including the *Times*, the *Economist*, the *Observer* and the *Telegraph*. Judah provides a broad chronological overview of the Kosovo situation. The book begins with a few chapters on the history of the region before turning to the recent politics and events that led to the NATO bombing campaign. This is very much a journalistic account of the events in Kosovo and thus brings with it a journalistic sense of distance. A wide range of people and events are covered here, from the citizens of Kosovo, both Kosovar and Serbian, to the NATO diplomats and military personnel who made the decisions to launch and then carry out the bombing campaign. As a result, this book gives a very good overview, but it is an overview. There are a number of issues and decisions that are covered but not explored in detail. Nonetheless, Judah's account is highly readable and is a very useful tracking of the background and sequence of events that led to the bombing of Kosovo. In the process, Judah does provide some interesting vignettes. As with any conflict, the major turning points often come as the result of decisions and actions that seemed relatively minor or even inconsequential at the time. It is frustrating to realize how easily things could have gone differently if only certain actions and decisions had been prevented at the time. Judah also does a good job of foreshadowing many of the problems to come in Kosovo, particularly the problem of the persecution of the Serbs living within Kosovo.

The third book, *Humanitarian Intervention*, is a short book that includes a series of memos to the US president from four key US decision makers outlining proposals for a US policy on humanitarian intervention. The book is a product of a Council on Foreign Relations project. Four US experts in the field take the role of the advisors to the president, playing the National Security Advisor, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The result is an interesting, if hypothetical, policy discussion. The authors play their roles well, however. As expected the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff provide a more cautionary view tied to US "interests" than the Secretary of State (the author was also a woman, intentionally or otherwise, mirroring the actual situation at the time the exercise was carried out) who argues for a more expansionary view. As these are not really the decision makers in question the memos are more academic in nature than they would be in reality. They do give a very good indication, however, of the nature and extent of the US dilemmas relating to decisions about humanitarian intervention, as well as the debate about what we really mean by humanitarian intervention. As such, the book is a helpful contribution to that debate and would be a very useful base for discussion in a classroom setting.

These three books were much less connected in their themes than appeared to be the case at first glance. They represent three very different approaches to the subject matter with three (or more) very different lines of thinking. There is a link, however. All three books are struggling to explain and understand the new forces at work in the international community. The events in Bosnia and the US and NATO experience there unquestionably drove and influenced the decision-making about Kosovo. And each experience has, in turn, prompted and fueled the debate about the nature and desirability of humanitarian intervention. Together, therefore, these books are good examples of the searching that has gone on and continues to go on for the most appropriate and effective

responses to the various forces that have come to play a major role in the post-Cold War international environment and the humanitarian crises they tend to create.

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