Che’s December 1964 visit took him to eight African countries and featured a provocative speech in which he called socialist countries ‘to a certain extent, accomplices in the imperialist exploitation’. The words signalled the launch of an Africa policy that was both activist and independent. In Kissinger’s world, Cuba acted as a Soviet puppet, but Gleijeses is at pains to point out how Cuban policy in Africa usually led rather than followed Soviet desires.

Che’s disastrous involvement in the Simba rebellion in what is today the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where he met a less than impressive Laurent Kabila, comes across as Cuba’s low point in Africa. Conditions were so bad, the morale of the Simba troops and leadership so low, that Che was convinced that revolution could be found only in Latin America. The final decision to launch a Latin American-wide revolution from the mountains of Bolivia, where Che ultimately was killed, was nurtured in the jungles of the Congo. The Simbas collapsed under assaults led by white mercenaries, bolstered by aircraft flown by right-wing Cubans paid by the US, and directed by Washington.

Cuba’s independence of action was best demonstrated in Angola. On the eve of independence set for November 1975, Cuba’s ally, the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola, MPLA, was under attack from Zairean troops sent by Mobutu Sese Seko, mercenaries, and US, Chinese and South African support for its rivals, Holden Roberto’s FNLA movement and Jonas Savimbi’s UNITA. In August, Leonid Brezhnev rejected Castro’s request to send troops to Angola. Three months later, with a South African column bearing down on Luanda, Castro decided to dispatch thousands of troops without Soviet consent, using Cuban ships and planes. Only in 1976, when the Cuban and MPLA forces had driven the South Africans back across the Namibian border did the Soviets embrace Castro’s Angola policy.

Cuba’s initial victory in Angola lifted the morale of Africans throughout southern Africa and finally awoke the Americans to the need for change. Kissinger paid his first visit to Africa in 1976, and Washington began to push for reform in Rhodesia and later South Africa. There Gleijeses’ story ends.

The Cuban internationalist troops remained in Angola for the next 15 years, culminating in the late 1980s in the battle of Cuito Cuanavale, the largest set-piece confrontation in Africa since the Second World War. The Cuban-South African showdown finally convinced both countries it was time to leave Angola. The Cuban troops returned home, while South Africa granted independence to Namibia and began a process of change that led to the release of Nelson Mandela and the holding of the country’s first all-race elections in 1994.

One can only hope that Gleijeses will follow up this beautifully written account with a similar history of the post-1976 period of Cuba’s involvement in Africa.

Bloomberg News

KARL MAIER


For better or worse, Africa has had more than its fair share of military interventions. Initially at least, ‘humanitarian’ interventions would appear to be an improvement on other kinds. But as Richard Falk has pointed out, armed humanitarianism tends to reflect the interests of the powerful and, like the Mississippi,
only flows south. After the mixed results of ostensibly humanitarian interventions in Uganda, Liberia, Somalia, Rwanda and Sierra Leone, amongst others, Africans have just cause to be sceptical that a legal right sanctioning such activities would be something to be welcomed.

In this lucid and insightful volume, Chesterman provides a sophisticated but accessible account of the historical and contemporary relationships between humanitarian intervention and international law. *Just War or Just Peace?* provides both an excellent teaching resource for advanced undergraduates and beyond, and a wealth of information for researchers and professionals working in this area. It is therefore unfortunate that the book is currently unavailable in paperback.

Chesterman starts by distinguishing between a unilateral ‘right’ of humanitarian intervention and ‘enforcement action duly authorized by the Security Council under Chapter VII of the UN Charter’ (p. 5). His conclusion is that incorporating such a unilateral ‘right’ of humanitarian intervention into international law is ‘a recipe for bad policy, bad law, and a bad international order’ (p. 236).

The argument begins with a succinct overview of the historical antecedents of humanitarian intervention, most notably the just war tradition. Chapter 2 then provides a very accessible account of the arguments for and against a unilateral right of humanitarian intervention in international law. Chesterman focuses on whether a legal basis for humanitarian intervention can be found either in the principles of the UN Charter or in customary international law. (He does not devote much attention to other international agreements such as the 1948 Genocide Convention or certain provisions of the 1949 Geneva Conventions and the 1977 Additional Protocol I as a basis for humanitarian intervention.) He concludes that neither the Charter nor international custom provides justification for such a right. Following a similar logic, chapter 3 argues that a norm sanctioning a doctrine of unilateral intervention in defence of democracy ‘is neither legally accurate nor politically desirable’ (p. 90).

The unfolding story of humanitarian intervention is brought up to date in chapters 4 and 5 where Chesterman focuses on state practice and the delegation of UN Security Council enforcement powers in the 1990s. Starting with the Gulf War and ending with NATO’s intervention in Kosovo, this decade produced an unprecedented number of extraordinary and exceptional cases that highlighted the significant gap that exists between the use of force as sanctioned under international law and the actual use of force in world politics. Here Chesterman’s chief concern is the ‘plasticity’ of the UN Security Council and the political compromises concocted in the informal (and unrecorded) meetings that make up an increasing proportion of its work. Particularly worrying is the increasing tendency for the Security Council to be seen not as the sole repository for legitimating the use of force but as one policy justification among several. The concluding chapter draws the book’s various themes together to reinforce the argument that no unilateral right to humanitarian intervention is sanctioned in either the UN Charter or customary international law.

The tension that runs throughout the latter stages of the book is based, on the one hand, on Chesterman placing great weight on the need to uphold an international legal regime that prohibits a unilateral right to intervention, even in response to extraordinary cases of genocide and large-scale and systematic human rights violations. However, on the other hand, he suggests that in practice international law has been unable (or at least reluctant) to declare such interventions illegal, with the result that in some extreme cases international society is right to ignore the strict letter of international law and impose ‘only a nominal penalty’
on offenders. This would appear to suggest that, unfortunately, not only can international law offer little guidance on these inherently political issues but also that those with the power and preference to do so will continue to intervene in situations that sufficiently shock their consciences, whether or not their behaviour is in accordance with international law. This situation is deeply troubling for those who believe international law can and must restrict the use of force by the powerful. However, for those who believe that, for better or worse, law will remain a function of a given political order, it suggests that the most urgent need is to find consistent political responses to the dilemmas of humanitarian intervention. Although this will be extremely difficult, it is only then that the legal answers will become clear.

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Paul Williams


Dr Easterly is a senior adviser of the research team at the World Bank; hence his finding that international aid has generally failed to achieve its declared purposes may astonish some readers. Between 1950 and 1995 a thousand billion dollars (at 1985 values) were transferred from rich to poor countries. Chiefly intended to fill financing gaps in the amounts of investment supposedly required to attain targets of growth in income, it was ‘one of the largest experiments ever based on a single economic theory’. But available data show only four countries receiving significant amounts of aid where investment was increased at least equally with aid, and only one country (out of 138) where income in one period was positively related to investment in the immediately preceding period. Interestingly, this dismal record has not stopped aid agencies, including the World Bank, from continuing to equate aid needs with financing gaps.

Easterly reviews other failures in prescribing for growth. Education has been greatly expanded in poor countries, but the data do not show it to have been any more effective in raising income than machines and buildings were. Population control has been promoted by USAID (and by the World Bank under McNamara) but current evidence shows no general relationship between population growth and growth in income per head, while the relationship over the long run has, of course, been positive. Adjustment lending after 1980 failed, with few exceptions, to reform economic policies since borrowers usually did not want reform and the lending agencies — judging by their conduct — did not really expect it. Debt forgiveness, the latest shibboleth, has been going on since 1979, but once again a positive association with economic growth is absent, and governments relieved of some debts show a discouraging tendency to contract others.

The bedrock of growth according to Easterly (and many others) is technical progress. Its economic nexus is response to incentives. Poor places remain poor because they are not the locations of technical progress and because incentives are in any case often blunted or misdirected by policy. Incentives dictate the movement of capital and skills away from poor places, and thereby consolidate their poverty. But why has aid not corrected this disequalizing tendency?

Easterly comes close to saying, but never quite says, that poor places are poor not because they lack capital and skills but because their demand for these resources