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Joanne van Selm, Khoti Kamanga, John Morrison, Aninia Nadig, Sanja Spoljar-Vrzina, Loes van Willigen, eds. *The Refugee Convention at Fifty: A View from Forced Migration Studies.* New York and Oxford: Lexington Books, 2003. iv + 252 pp. $70.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-7391-0565-8.

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A Multi-Dimensional Analysis of the Refugee Convention at Age Fifty

This book is an edited volume presenting a selection of papers from the seventh conference of the International Association for the Study of Forced Migration held in 2001 in South Africa. This volume is more than a commemorative volume; instead, it addresses the theoretical, ethical, and political variables of refugee protection. It analyzes the impact of the Geneva Refugee Convention on states and forced migrants fifty years after its introduction. The volume offers multi-disciplinary and multi-dimensional normative and empirical contributions from twenty-three authors, who reflect on the perspectives of many different regions, countries, and cultures. The volume basically provides an overview of the present interpretation and implementation of a fifty-year old political document, the "Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees" and engages in the defense of the once agreed international standards against any divergences and undermining. Each contribution is, in one way or another, unique and will certainly find interested readers.

In chapter 2, Gilbert Jaeger offers a brief historical background chapter on some aspects of the Refugee Convention's historical roots, its main content and essential aspects, as well as some problems that have arisen over time. Joanne Van Selm, in chapter 3, elaborates on the philosophical principal at the very heard of refugee protection: global solidarity. Jennifer Moore discusses the tension between "protection theory" and "accountability," whereas the former expresses a principle obligation towards shelter from persecution, the latter (as applied by France and Germany) only accepts responsibility in cases where state agents are the persecutors. Eftihia Voutira provides the reader with the ethic, linguistic, anthropological, and public policy definitions of the concept of "refugees" and thereby illustrates the history of the idea and its changes over time. And Jean Alain argues for defending the non-refoulement principle against any divergences from its historical meaning.

The empirical contributions illustrate developments in Europe, Africa, Asia, and South America and specifically detail the cases of Turkey, for example see Kirisci, and for South Asia, see Sen. Kemal Kirisci, for example, illustrates a divergent interpretation of the convention but also how international policy is challenging and reshaping national practice. Another contribution, by Carl Levy, concentrates on the specific problems of implementing the Refugee Convention in the European Union and examines the tension between the international Organization UNHCR and the supranational EU. Dallal Stevens assesses the impact of the Refugee Convention in the light of Roma refugees in the United Kingdom. Two chapters, 12 and 13, analyze the way by which the pathways and services refugees used to escape their situation are framed within ideas of smuggling and trafficking and are thereby successively criminalized. Aninia Nadig and John Morrison, in chapter 12, analyze the increasing hurdles migrants face in the light of the emergence of welfare states, the complex interrelation with "illegal migration" and also touch upon the historical dimension. Francois Crepeau, in chapter 13, highlights the paradox of humanitarian traditions met with entry restrictions affecting refugees.

A further two chapters address the mental and medical dimension of refuge. Geofrey Care, Edward Hauff, Annemiek Richters, and Loes van Willigen discuss the topic from the perspective of the service supplier, physicians, and psychologists, in refugee determination procedures. From a medical anthropological perspective, Sanja Spoljar-Vrzina challenges the limits of ethnography and emphasises the relevance of this discipline for interpreting and translating the suffering of refugees.

A review of the volume seems to confirm that conference proceedings, generally because they are based on an arbitrary process of incoming papers, tend to be inconsistent and incomprehensive and may not meet all of

a reader's expectations. The "spread of the book" (dust jacket) is not only its main asset but also its weakness. One might wonder why the chapters have been organized in an "quite arbitrary order" (p. 6). Instead, it seems possible to arrange them along normative, respectively empirical foci, the latter subdivided into country studies and specific topics, which would have been an improvement and certainly appreciated by the reader.

Because of their incomprehensive nature, some topics, such as the role of refugee camps, detention centers, and subsequent removals, have not been addressed, although recent publications such as Sergio Agamben's important works on the totalitarian nature of camp accommodation call for empirical testing.[1] Also recent concepts such as the "safe haven" idea as analysed by Jennifer Hyndman, whereby refugees shall be kept near the crisis in order to prevent international movements, are only implicitly reflected in Francois Crepeau's contribution.[2] It would have been pertinent to also incorporate the views from contemporary refugees, for example by way of a qualitative and empirical study or through a contribution from a refugee organization.

But what is most irritating is the lack of a historical perspective. The title is slightly misleading as it seems to offer a retrospective on "the refugee convention at fifty." Instead, it presents a snapshot of its state at *the age of fifty*. For example, no reference is made to the two main but contrasting themes characterizing the specific historical environment of the time when the convention was introduced. One was the utter failure of the international community and its early institutions in rescuing the European Jews from the Holocaust. The other was the cold war, including the Truman doctrine and its aim to roll back communism. As a result of this tension, initially two organization were founded, the Intergovernmental Committee for Migration in Europe (ICEM), later renamed the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), driven by contrasting ethics and competing with each other for funding.[3] Gilbert Jaeger, for instance, sketches the successive extension of the application of the Refugee Convention, but does not put the process into its political and socio-economical context. To take another example of the missing historical perspective, Dallal Stevens, when concentrating on the response to Roma refugees in the United Kingdom and the "media hysteria," could have referred to its historical predecessor, the worldwide "refugee panic" in the 1930s, leading to a closed-door policy which left the European Jews in the hands of the Nazis.[4] Meanwhile, the historical argument has been utilized by the critics of the Refugee Convention. For instance in 2001, British Home Secretary Jack Straw argued that because the Convention has been designed and agreed upon at a historically specific time, it is no longer suitable for contemporary crises and must therefore be reformed.[5] One must also agree with Crisp's criticism, made in the closing keynote address, that, because of the "liberal hegemony" that some critical issues, such as negative effects of refugees on receiving countries or the question whether states have a right to close their borders, have been avoided (p. 225).

The volume is, as Jeff Crisp in the final chapter rightly points out and questions, an engaged document of applied liberalism and thereby biased in two ways. First, it does not discuss some unpopular views which do, in fact, dominate the real world of refugee protection; second, it does not challenge the limits of political liberalism, as many other scholars do.[6] Also missing is the relation between the specific group this policy document is targeting (refugees) and the increasingly complex reality of migration in general. While some scholars already suggest a deconstruction of the dominant and convenient categories in migration studies, the difficulties of clear cut demarcation lines between different groups is not mentioned in this volume. Moreover, the popular accusation that refugees are mostly "economic migrants," although to some extent a war cry of restrictionists, does reflect some truth and would have been important to be addressed. This volume is however, for many reasons, interesting to read. It does not claim to be a comprehensive text book but nevertheless provides a range of important contributions not only for the specialist but also anybody generally interested in migration, international politics, and human rights.

Notes

[1]. Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford, Calif.: Standord University Press, 1998).

[2]. Jennifer Hyndman, *Managing Displacement: Refugees and the Politics of Humanitarianism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).

[3]. Miriam Feldblum, *Passage-Making and Service Creation in International Migration* (Pasadena: California Institute of Technology, 1999).

[4]. Louise London, *Whitehall and the Jews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

[5]. Jack Straw, *An Effective Protection Regime for the Twenty-First Century*, speech given to the Institute of Public Policy Research, London (February 6, 2001), accessible at

http://www.guardian.co.uk/Refugees*in*Britain/Story/0,2763,434341,00.html.

[6]. For an overview see, for example, Brian Barry and Robert E. Goodin, eds., *Free Movement: Ethical Issues in the Transnational Migration of People and of Money* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992).

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