

BOOK REVIEWS

Hafner-Burton, Emilie M. *Making Human Rights a Reality*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013. 276pp.

Emilie M. Hafner-Burton is a professor in the School of International Relations and Pacific Studies at the University of California, San Diego, and director of the Laboratory on International Law and Regulation. She is the author of *Forced to Be Good* and recipient of the Karl Deutsch Award. Her newly published book *Making Human Rights a Reality* should appeal to human right activists, human rights legal system practitioners, politicians, political scientists, lawyers in practice of international law, philosophers of law, ethics, and politics. This book is a significant contribution to the literature on international human rights law and institutions, offering both reflections on the present state of international human rights enforcement and an innovative strategy for the future human rights enforcement. The most interesting feature of this book is that the author developed an ambitious and thought-provoking proposal for strategic implementation of the international monitoring mechanisms which protect basic human rights. In the last six decades, human rights promoters have concentrated their zeal on setting universal goals and procedures; however, the question is, as the author puts it, how international law that means to safeguard human rights for the world can be made effective. There are abundant legal norms and procedures aimed at protecting human rights; however, it has been far from satisfactory in terms of making those norms and procedures impact on real life situations and actualize protection of human rights on the ground of international law. As the author indicates, the international human rights legal system is powerless to put its own aspirations into practice. Thus, it has been a growing concern that human rights conventions and laws do not themselves lead to a worldwide enjoyment of fundamental human dignity, equality, and justice at an individual level. *Making Human Rights a Reality* is a progressive response to this concern. The author of the book forcefully argues that progress in actualizing protection of human rights can be made if the stewards of human rights work strategically with states that have dedicated resources to human rights protection.

This book consists of three parts. Part I, titled “the Calculus of Abuse”, examines why people commit human rights abuses. The author reveals that human rights abuses are not incidental events but rather are based on rational deliberation and calculations. The author also spells out the contexts which are conducive to abuses and popular rationales that people use to justify their abuse behavior. Part II, titled “International Law”, surveys the development of the international legal system involving human rights issues since the World War II. Since the *Universal Declaration of Human Right* proclaimed on December 10, 1948, a system of norms on war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide, slavery, torture, as well as legal instruments to protect economic,

social, and cultural rights have been developed within the international arena. The author analyzes how this system has operated, to what extent the international human rights legal system has been enforced, how relevant legal practitioners have functioned in this system, and how much scholarly research has been done in this field. Part I and Part II pave the way to Part III, titled “A Stewardship Strategy”, which is the core premise of the book. This last part focuses on enforcement issues, especially on those states that have played active and crucial roles in the enforcement of human rights legal norms. The central point of the stewardship strategy is the idea that steward states, the ones that willing to promote and take actions to implement human rights around the world, may incorporate rewards and punishments measures pertaining to human rights records within their foreign policies. This idea views nations as central actors in promoting and implementing human rights, entails localization and particularization of international human rights legal norms, and encourages multi-national collaboration or human right alliances which may include both governmental and non-governmental organizations.

The central concern of this book is practical; so are the problems it introduces. It is quite obvious that the stewardship strategy introduces the contradiction of implementing international law on human rights through particular legal and political systems of states yet increases the tension between ideal-international and local-national interpretations and understandings of human rights. Two possible directions are worth considering. Practically, a unilateralism (or the universalization of a particular interpretation of human rights) may be an outcome of the stewardship strategy if sovereign states play a key role in the success of human rights and only a handful of states enter into the stewardship. Although the unilateralist direction remains possible, and it is often resourceful, it is not desirable for commonly known reasons. The other possible direction is legal pluralism, the approach that translates ideal and abstract human rights standards and norms into multiple, particular, culture-specific languages and relationships. This may be a positive consequence of the stewardship strategy. After all, since the very beginning of the human rights movement it has been a collective effort in the pluralist spirit and the compromising style. However, the process of linking the universal ideals embodied in the notion of human rights to local laws, policies, and practice is also a double-edged sword. It is instrumental in removing the obstacles to enforcement of formal human rights protection. It may also compromise the interpretation and implementation of human rights by the mixed vernaculars of intra-national politics and diverse cultural expressions and expectations. It is interesting to understand how the stewardship strategy is tactically realized in not only *promoting* the ideal of human rights but also *implementing* human rights legal norms.

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