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Edited by Tim Dunne and Nicholas J. Wheeler
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Human Rights in Global Politics

There is a stark contradiction between the theory of universal human rights and the everyday practice of human wrongs. This timely volume investigates whether human rights abuses are a result of the failure of governments to live up to a universal human rights standard, or whether the search for moral universals is a fundamentally flawed enterprise which distracts us from the task of developing rights in the context of particular ethical communities. In the first part of the book, chapters by Ken Booth, Jack Donnelly, Chris Brown, Bhikhu Parekh and Mary Midgley explore the philosophical basis of claims to universal human rights. In the second part, Richard Falk, Mary Kaldor, Martin Shaw, Gil Loescher, Georgina Ashworth, Andrew Hurrell, Ken Booth and Tim Dunne reflect on the role of the media, global civil society, states, migration, non-governmental organisations, capitalism, and schools and universities in developing a global human rights culture.

TIM DUNNE is a Lecturer in the Department of International Politics at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth. He has published several journal articles on international relations theory, and is author of *Inventing International Society: A History of the English School* (1998).

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Preface and acknowledgements

Human Rights in Global Politics developed out of a conference which brought together some of the leading theorists and activists working on human rights. We asked them to reflect on the growing disparity between the almost globally accepted standard for the protection of universal human rights and the daily denial of those basic rights to millions of people.

The Department of International Politics at Aberystwyth was an appropriate venue for the conference. After all, the first ever endowed chair in the field was instituted to advance ‘a truer understanding of civilisations other than our own’, a theme which recurs in this volume. We wanted to harness this normative ambition to new thinking in international theory. Our guide in this respect was an earlier conference entitled ‘After Positivism’ – later published by Cambridge as *International Theory: Positivism and Beyond* and edited by Steve Smith, Ken Booth and Marysia Zalewski – held in Aberystwyth seventy-five years after the birth of the discipline. We are delighted that Cambridge University Press is publishing the revised proceedings of this second in a series of conferences. Throughout the preparation of the volume, John Haslam has been a very encouraging commissioning editor. He attended the original conference and has stood by the project from the outset.

Our aim to gather together some of the most influential scholars in the world was made possible in large measure by the Cadogan Research Initiative of the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales. Generous financial support from the University also enabled us to extend the scope of the conference beyond the contributors to include a number of distinguished guests: Hayward Alker, James Der Derian, Michael Freeman, Andrew Linklater, James Mayall, Radmilla Nakarada, Margo Picken, Hidemi Suganami, Ann Tickner and R. B. J. Walker. We recorded the conversations generated by the panels and have drawn from them in the course of producing this book.

As ever in a project of this kind, we have benefited enormously from the support of colleagues in the Department. In particular, we owe a

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special thank you to Steve Smith for his guidance during the planning stages, his overall contribution to the occasion and his constant probing of our assumptions about the metatheoretical foundations of the human rights discourse. We would also like to thank Michael Cox for the characteristically discerning advice he provided during the completion of the book. Our other two debts can also be traced back to the history of this Department since both of the individuals in question were 'Inter Pol' students in the early 1960s.

R. J. Vincent's book on *Human Rights and International Relations* has had a profound influence on our thinking on this subject. In this and in his later work, Vincent combined a cosmopolitan moral awareness with a keen sense that political power is concentrated at the level of states. We have often expressed our personal regret that his tragic and premature death denied us the opportunity of hearing his reflections on human rights in global politics some ten years after his *magnum opus*. As a mark of our admiration for his work, we dedicate this book to his memory.

John Vincent's contribution to the 'academy', as he liked to call it, is celebrated annually in the form of a memorial lecture given at Keele University. Ken Booth gave the second R. J. Vincent Memorial Lecture on 'Human Wrongs and International Relations'. Although an admirer of Vincent's contribution to the discipline, Booth expressed disquiet about the capacity of sovereign states to enhance human rights. The difference between Booth and Vincent can be framed in terms of whether international society is a civilising or a corrupting force. Our introduction to *Human Rights in Global Politics* examines whether it is possible to steer a course between these two positions. Additionally, it provides a sustained discussion of the unifying themes of the volume.

Not only has Ken Booth been one of the foremost influences on the eventual shape and content of the book, he has also been typically generous with his time despite the clamour of other commitments. Both of us would like to thank Ken warmly for his unstinting support and for demonstrating that, when it comes to human rights, the professional is the personal.

Descending from the summit of the intellectual influences that have guided our thinking on the subject, we would like to acknowledge all those who have assisted in the publication of the book. The anonymous referees provided very important comments and constructive criticisms, as did Marysia Zalewski on chapter 10. A special thank you to Elaine Lowe, whose patience and technical skill are apparently limitless. In addition, Pauline Ewan provided us with valuable assistance in the final production of the manuscript. Lastly, the other members of the

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Department provide an environment in which research is prized and ideas matter. Tim would also like to thank Caroline for not allowing academic matters to get in the way of life.

At the outset, we took the view that the royalties from the book should find an appropriate destination. All the contributors agreed to our suggestion that we should donate the money to Sight Savers International, a non-governmental organisation committed to the elimination of blindness and visual impairment. With this, it is our hope that reading human rights may in a small way be eliminating human wrongs.

TIM DUNNE AND NICHOLAS J. WHEELER
Aberystwyth, June 1998