Expressed broadly, the topic of this paper is the problematique related to the issue of humanitarian intervention in post-Cold War world politics. The paper focuses on a specific notion, the new humanitarian interventionism, and a particular case, the 1999 intervention in East Timor authorised by the United Nations and led by Australia. Thus, conceptual analysis and case study comprise the main methodological tools of the study. The objective of the conceptual analysis part is to map different dimensions of the notion of new humanitarian interventionism and evaluate its utility in light of the chosen theoretical framework. The case study, in turn, aims at challenging the view of two established scholars, Nicholas Wheeler and Timothy Dunne, who have asserted that the East Timor intervention represents not only an example of the new humanitarian interventionism, but also a barometer for how profoundly the normative structure of the international society has been transformed. In addition to previous research, public addresses (including speeches, statements and interviews) given by the Australian prime minister, foreign minister, and defence minister in September 1999 are utilised as main data. These documents are mainly approached from the perspective of discourses.

The theoretical framework of the paper is centred on the debate between pluralism and solidarism which originated in the 1960s in the writings of the so-called English School scholars. Pluralism is based on the idea that international order, and thus ultimately also the well-being of individuals, depends on reciprocal respect for state sovereignty and its corollary, the norm of non-intervention. According to pluralists, the responsibility of state leaders is limited to their own citizenry. Solidarists, on the other hand, challenge this view by arguing that humanitarian intervention is a legitimate exception to the norm of non-intervention when needed to halt severe human rights violations. In light of this theoretical debate, Wheeler and Dunne’s account of the East Timor intervention can be interpreted as an assertion of a solidarist shift in international relations.

The study concludes firstly that the notion of new humanitarian interventionism is particularly valuable because it urges us to reconsider the basic constituent elements of humanitarian intervention by problematising the apolitical nature of traditional definitions. However, it should be noted that the notion of new humanitarian interventionism per se is susceptible to different interpretations, as different scholars utilise it differently in different contexts. Secondly, the study concludes that contestation of Wheeler and Dunne’s interpretation of the East Timor intervention is by no means unwarranted. Even though the intervention process did contain features linkable to solidarism, there are at least as strong grounds to argue for the perseverance and resilience of more traditional approaches.

Avainsanat-Nyckelord-Keywords
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Säilytyspaikka-Förvaringsställe-Where deposited

Muita tietoja-Övriga uppgifter-Additional information