



The Human Right to Dominate (Oxford Studies in Culture and Politics)

By Nicola Perugini, Neve Gordon

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At the turn of the millennium, a new phenomenon emerged: conservatives, who just decades before had rejected the expanding human rights culture, began to embrace human rights in order to advance their political goals.

In this book, Nicola Perugini and Neve Gordon account for how human rights--generally conceived as a counter-hegemonic instrument for righting historical injustices--are being deployed to further subjugate the weak and legitimize domination. Using Israel/Palestine as its main case study, *The Human Right to Dominate* describes the establishment of settler NGOs that appropriate human rights to dispossess indigenous Palestinians and military think-tanks that rationalize lethal violence by invoking human rights. The book underscores the increasing convergences between human rights NGOs, security agencies, settler organizations, and extreme right nationalists, showing how political actors of different stripes champion the dissemination of human rights and mirror each other's political strategies.

Indeed, Perugini and Gordon demonstrate the multifaceted role that this discourse is currently playing in the international arena: on the one hand, human rights have become the lingua franca of global moral speak, while on the other, they have become reconstrued as a tool for enhancing domination.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Nourished by a profound knowledge of the intricacies of the situation in Israel and Palestine, Nicola Perugini and Neve Gordon uncover a remarkable paradox of contemporary society: how the claim for human rights can coexist with the use of violence and serve purposes of domination. Their convincing analysis invites a critical rethinking of the global moral order." -Didier Fassin, editor of *Moral Anthropology* and *Contemporary States of Emergency*

"This is a stunning book. The clarity and insight of *The Human Right to Dominate* should be required reading for anyone concerned with human rights. The aim of the authors is not to debunk the concept, but to suggest that it must be open to a critical reinterpretation that subverts, rather than reinforces, relations of domination." -Joan W. Scott, School of Social Science, Institute for Advanced Study

"For Nicola Perugini and Neve Gordon, if we celebrate the idea of human rights when progress occurs, we must also blame it when things go wrong. And their disturbing book on the fate of human rights in Israel/Palestine in the last decade shows why - not least when illegal settlers claim the ideals for themselves. But while wary of easy uplift, *The Human Right to Dominate* ultimately calls for saving human rights from what they have become in an age when states usually win and our highest values can help launder endless wars." -Samuel Moyn, author of *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History*

"*The Human Right to Dominate* is a highly original, provocative, and timely contribution. Perugini and Gordon offer a critical realist examination of the state of human rights in light of the fact that states, militaries, and other national security actors have used the language of human rights to justify wars, occupations, and extra-judicial executions. This, they argue, is not a misappropriation but a paradoxical consequence of the successful elevation of human rights language into a globalized normative framework." - Lisa Hajjar, author of *Courting Conflict: The Israeli Military Court System in the West Bank and Gaza*

"This fascinating study of human rights is sure to receive much criticism for the way that Perugini and Gordon examine human rights. In particular, they are intrigued by the connection that is forming between human rights and domination.... Recommended." -*CHOICE*

"Not only does this book invite a critical reflection of the global moral order but it is a definite must read for anyone truly concerned with the state of human rights in our world today. Perugini and Gordon have used their profound knowledge of the intricacies of the Palestinian-Israeli situation to wisely and urgently suggest a critical reinterpretation of HR that subverts relation of domination." -*Law & Society Review*

"Perugini and Gordon have made a welcome contribution to the growing range of scholarship that takes a hard, critical look at what the human rights system has become. The book stands in conversation with the likes of Stephen Hopgood, Mark Mazower, Samuel Moyn, and Winfred Tate among others, who have chipped away at the naive and idealistic assumptions, interrupting the 'narrative of global salvation and redemption through human rights' (p.27) by examining the empirical realities of how human rights function in the world, for good or for ill, and always for politics" ---*Global Discourse*

About the Author

Nicola Perugini is a Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow in Middle East Studies and Italian Studies at Brown University.

Neve Gordon is Professor of Politics and Government at Ben-Gurion University and author of *Israel's Occupation*.

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