

BOOK REVIEW

ANTHONY M. DeStefano,
THE WAR ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING:
U. S. POLICY ASSESSED
(NEW BRUNSWICK, NJ:
RUTGERS UNIVERSITY PRESS,
2007, 146 pp., HBK.)

In the late 1990s the U.S. government became increasingly concerned by what many called modern day slavery, human trafficking. Human trafficking, as defined in the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, is the “recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power for the purpose of exploitation.” As a journalist for New York’s *Newsday*, Anthony M. DeStefano has covered trafficking cases and legislative efforts to combat trafficking at the national and international level since 2000. His recent book, *The War on Human Trafficking: U.S. Policy Assessed* surveys developments in this area by focusing in on U.S. efforts to combat human trafficking.

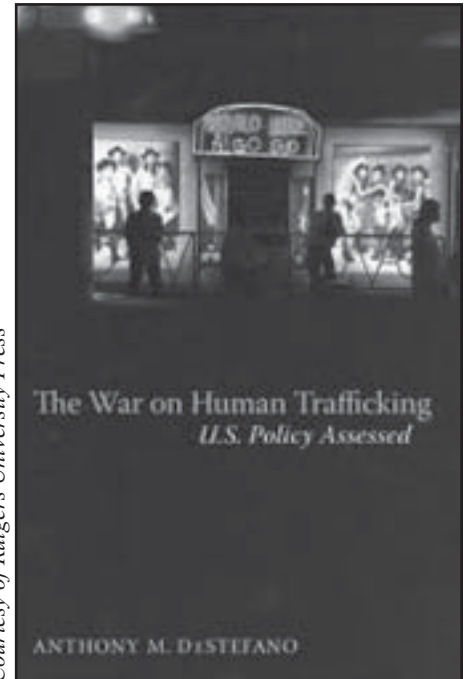
DeStefano begins by discussing several of the trafficking cases that mobilized support for Congressional action. The author then analyzes the legislative process that culminated in the passing of the federal Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA). Although the TVPA had a broad coalition of supporters, a debate developed between those who sought to use legislative action to push an anti-prostitution agenda, and those who felt that combating sex trafficking should not become a method of combating prostitution. Critics of the anti-prostitution agenda also felt that labor trafficking should receive equal attention to sex trafficking. Although DeStefano discusses the debate surrounding how to characterize and address sex trafficking throughout the book, he unfortunately fails to include any statements of opinion from persons on either side of the divide. The author concludes this section by highlighting important provisions of the TVPA, specifically those that address the

U.S. government’s three anti-trafficking aims — prevention, law enforcement and prosecution, and victim protection — most notably the T-visa.

The author next considers U.S. efforts to prevent trafficking abroad by turning to the Balkans. These chapters are some of the most insightful in the book. They discuss the U.S. government’s growing recognition of trafficking as a problem that only international cooperation can effectively combat as well as the challenges that the Balkan region faces in enacting and enforcing anti-trafficking legislation. DeStefano’s interest in the region comes across in his passionate discussion of the horrors that trafficking victims deal with, the difficulties of finding and prosecuting perpetrators, and the diligent efforts of a few motivated individuals. Although these chapters are some of the most interesting, this discussion might be better placed in a book focusing specifically on the Balkans or a book comparing U.S. anti-trafficking efforts in different regions of the world.

DeStefano uses the remaining chapters to discuss problems that have arisen with the TVPA, focusing on the challenges of finding and prosecuting perpetrators. These problems have arisen, in part, from the shift in funding priorities after September 11, 2001 and from the difficulty of estimating the number of victims living in the United States (State Department analyst Amy Richard’s influential 2000 report estimated 45,000 to 50,000 people are trafficked into the U.S. annually, a number that has been widely-criticized as a gross overstatement). DeStefano also criticizes the effectiveness of the Congressionally-mandated Trafficking in Persons Report. The annual report ranks countries according to their efforts to address trafficking and serves as the basis upon which the U.S. government can impose sanctions. DeStefano discusses some indications of the ranking system’s effectiveness as well as the critique that the reports are based on political considerations.

Overall, *The War on Human Trafficking* presents a fine overview of U.S. efforts



Courtesy of Rutgers University Press

to combat human trafficking. In simply brushing the surface of policy debates and anti-trafficking programs, however, the book leaves the reader wanting to know more about major players’ motivations and how they built, or failed to build, a network of support for their various agendas. Ultimately, the book serves a useful role in assisting people unfamiliar with human trafficking to better understand this important issue. Unfortunately, it will likely leave people in the anti-trafficking field unsatisfied.

In addition to not taking an in-depth look at the politics behind the development and the results of trafficking legislation, the reader is left wishing the book had better transitions between its diverse sections. This is unfortunate considering that DeStefano’s thesis is a good one — that honest policy is crucial for the world to eliminate this form of modern day slavery. One finishes DeStefano’s book looking for more focused volumes on human trafficking.

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Sara Ramey, a J.D. candidate at the Washington College of law, wrote this review.