Michael Barnett
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Michael Barnett is a University Professor of International Affairs and Political Science at the George Washington University. For two decades, humanitarian governance has been in a “crisis” owing to its perceived lack of effectiveness and legitimacy. In response, stakeholders have called for various reforms, including localization – shifting power from Western to Southern-based actors. Localization has widespread support, even among Western actors. If it is so popular, why so little progress? I argue that the presence of a Humanitarian Club – an exclusive group of Western actors – is a chief obstacle. I reflect on the existence of this Club and what it reveals regarding the enduring colonial nature of humanitarian governance; identify structural tendencies that might force decolonization; and discuss the possibility that bottom-up developments might unseat the Humanitarian Club.