

***Peacekeeping in East Timor: The Path to Independence.* By Michael Smith with Moreen Dee.** International Peace Academy Occasional Paper Series. Boulder, Colorado and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003. 214pp.

Major General Michael G. Smith, now retired from the Australian army, was the deputy force commander of the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) peacekeeping operation (PKO) from January 2000 to March 2001. In writing a “first-hand account” of his experiences in East Timor, Smith is assisted by historian Moreen Dee, and bolstered by prefaces from Sérgio Vieira de Mello (UNTAET head) and Xanana Gusmão (East Timor’s President). Essentially, the book outlines the nature of the PKO in East Timor, with the plain intention of drawing out didactic lessons on peacekeeping in general.

General Smith contends that the likely nature of conflict in the future will be the type of low-level violence experienced in places like, *inter alia*, East Timor, Bosnia, and Kosovo, and so the international community had best be prepared for it. The cause of this, the author tells us, is an apparent increase in subnational and transnational violence (for example, see p. 20) in a world increasingly prone to division along identity lines. One could put forward a compelling case that this type of low-level violence is not new — what might be new is a willingness by global actors to intervene (albeit in selected cases). East Timor is a classic case in point. While INTERFET (International Force East Timor) under Australian leadership may have intervened in 1999, the East Timor conflict goes back to the 1970s. Conflicts like those in the Balkans, Somalia, Rwanda, and so on, have far older origins. The end of the Cold War, coupled with public pressures in liberal democracies for intervention in humanitarian crises, mean that civil war is likely to gain international attention. Thus, Smith’s essential point stands — that modern militaries had best prepare for such conflicts.

*Peacekeeping in East Timor* starts with a standard, and sensible, potted history of the East Timor situation. From page 67, Smith begins his assessment of the PKO in East Timor, before making his recommendations at the end. One wonders what lessons can be learnt from East Timor. Although East Timor ranks as one of the United Nation’s most ambitious undertakings, it was, relative to all the other missions since the birth of peacekeeping, one of the most straightforward. Smith notes that the East Timor operation had the consent of the vanquished — the Indonesian Government — as well as the general population of East Timor. East Timor’s resistance fighters, Falintil, who had lived in East Timor’s rugged interior during the twenty-four years of bitter warfare with the Indonesian army, showed

behaviour during the reconstruction that was “exemplary” (p. 48). Smith admits that these conditions are “rare”. Yet the term “exceptional” might be more apt.

That said, however, chapters four and five of this volume provide some valuable lessons for future peacekeeping missions. There are many recommendations in these sections, and they cannot all be repeated here. Some should be elementary, although worth repeating, such as legitimacy, achievable mandate, an exit strategy, moving through to other areas like effective governance, language skills, addressing past human rights abuses, and so on. Smith argues that the modern peacekeeping soldier should have a mixture of “warfighting and constabulary-CMA [civil-military affairs] qualities” for the types of conflict likely to be faced (p. 124). One issue that concerns General Smith is the failure of key member-states to have forces on standby to mount an operation such as East Timor (p. 124). Fortunately for East Timor, Australia — one of the few countries in the global community with the will and capacity to conduct such an operation — had prepared for such a contingency in 1999.

While Smith’s first-hand account conveys much about peacekeeping (or peacemaking) in East Timor, there is also much that it conceals. Smith’s goal is not to point the finger at country contributions or military leaders who may not have measured up — compare this to the exposé of various United Nations missions written by William Shawcross (*Deliver Us From Evil: Peacekeepers, Warlords and a World of Endless Conflict*, 2000). It is well known, for example, that while Australian and New Zealand forces patrolled the border regions, later to be joined by a small Singapore detachment, other contributions preferred the safety of the hinterland. UN PKO missions are often like that. Problems with the wider UN mission, including a large number of civilian personnel, are couched in careful terms: “The UN was accused of saturating Dili with vehicles and personnel, creating an artificial and unsustainable local economy — a situation that did little for the East Timorese.” Is Smith confirming here that UN resources were poorly distributed? Or is it simply that the accusation was made? In fact, it was the case that UN resources could have been more effectively used. A struggle for power between the East Timor leaders and UNTAET staff developed during the mission, which Smith also mentions in passing.

However, it must be noted that Smith’s book is a valuable addition to the literature on East Timor. It is particularly welcome, given Smith’s prominence in the East Timor operation as an important actor. This publication is the second sponsored by the International Peace Academy on East Timor — the other being that of United Nations Mission in East Timor (UNAMET) head, Ian Martin (*Self-Determination in East Timor:*

*The United Nations, the Ballot, and International Intervention*, 2001, 171 pp.). Smith's work makes a valuable contribution in both explaining the nature of peacekeeping in East Timor and providing some useful lessons for such operations. Most of all, it reminds the reader that the United Nations, which is constrained by its member-states, still has a long way to go in preparing for low-intensity conflicts around the world, in which, as General Smith warns, it will most likely find itself involved more often.

ANTHONY L. SMITH  
*Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies*  
*Honolulu, Hawaii, USA*

***Vietnam and Beyond: A Diplomat's Cold War Education.* By Robert Hopkins Miller.** Lubbock, Texas, USA: Texas Tech University Press, Modern Southeast Asia Series, 2002. 247pp.

Cover to cover, *Vietnam and Beyond* is an interesting read. The author, Robert Miller, used his long career in the U.S. foreign service as the prism through which he viewed the highs and lows of American foreign policy from post-World War II to the end of the Cold War. In this history, the highlight of this lifelong dedication to the foreign service is the author's posting to Saigon as well as his involvement in the negotiations, both as a middle-level officer in the State Department in charge of Vietnam (Vietnam Working Group) and as a member of the U.S. delegation at the Paris Peace Talks with Vietnam. Miller's assertions regarding key decisions as well as key personnel in the State Department (for whom he worked) and in the Defence Department (with whom he had to work) are fairly guarded, and as a result uncontroversial. Even though he did not rise to the very top of the bureaucratic hierarchy in the State Department, his presence at the key moments of U.S. foreign policy towards Vietnam renders him a legitimate voice on the state of play at that time. The facts in Miller's assertions also appear to be well supported by declassified official documents.

The reviewer came away after reading the book sensing that the author's life was well-led and his experience of the Vietnam War was fairly straightforward. It was also privileged, given his position as a foreign service officer in Saigon. Like many others who were veterans, Miller also gave an account of blood and tears. He was a casualty in the bomb attack on the U.S. Embassy in Saigon in 1965. It is useful to