

## BOOK REVIEWS

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***Peacekeeping: Challenges for the Future.* Edited by Hugh Smith.** Canberra: Australian Defence Studies Centre, Australian Defence Force Academy, 1993. 229 pp.

The United Nations and peacekeeping have undergone a large-scale transformation in the wake of the Cold War. Not only has there been a change in the style of conflict management, but there have also been fundamental changes in its very nature and role. The result is a new historical context in which superpower rivalry and the “rules of the game” appear significantly less important, while ethnic conflict and humanitarian concerns pose enormous challenges to the world body.

Geoff Forrester in Chapter 1 of this volume notes that the number of “blue berets has grown from 6,000 a couple of decades ago to well over 60,000 today. Half of all UN peacekeeping operations have begun in the last five years . . . and in the last five years the UN has established another thirteen” (p. 1). And, they are large missions. Cambodia, the Balkans and Somalia are amongst the most pressing trouble spots and clearly ones that reflect different agendas, problems and operating styles. Japan and Germany are increasingly being pressed to contribute more manpower and the United Nations appears to be experiencing severe financial disarray in funding these ventures, with little help from recession-hit countries in the West. In the wake of a recent coup and fierce tribal fighting in Burundi in October 1993, the request for peacekeepers was turned down by the United Nations, who appear to have overextended itself.

Despite a serious crisis in funding, this has not prevented the growth in peacekeeping activity and academics have also been heavily involved

in analysing this process. New terms and concepts have been devised in this period, including peace enforcement, peace support, peace-building and peacemaking, among others. We have seen many volumes, articles and theses emerging from the post-Cold War period on the changing role of peacekeeping. Authors such as Professor Alan James, Thomas Weiss, Indar Rikhye, Robert Siekmann and Brian Urquhart, among others, have all produced useful work in recent years on the topic.

Unfortunately, the volume under review does not measure up to the stature or significance of this type of serious academic research. Neither does it address some of the significant questions that it sets itself. The book is based on papers presented at an international conference on the military aspects of peacekeeping, and was conducted in June 1993 at the Land Warfare Centre, Canungra, Australia. The idea was to look at the different experiences of the various armies with specific regard to the newly adopted "pro-active" approach taken by the United Nations. Senior army officers, academics, representatives from non-governmental organizations and government officials comprised the participants and, as one might expect, there was heavy Australian involvement.

There are twenty-one chapters in the volume and so my observations will be general rather than specific. The chapters which attempt to put the problem into some context or global perspective appeared the best and I would single out Geoff Forrester, Cathy Downes, Graeme Dobell, Paul Dibb, Hugh Smith and Colonel Bruce Osborn for their efforts to discuss the challenges and problems confronting peacekeepers. The vast majority of the remaining chapters are written by military personnel and make for rather tedious reading. Peter McAulay, for instance, "goes through" the history of the civilian police and their relation to peacekeeping in Chapter 3, offering very brief descriptions of Cyprus, Cambodia and Somalia, but fails to provide much analytical insight into the process.

Much of the volume is written in a "how to do it" cookbook style. Chapters 11-14, for instance, are written by different national military commanders providing their perspective on participation in U.N. operations. Descriptive? Yes. Analytical, interesting, insightful? The answer is an emphatic no. Overall, the text is devoid of a useful theoretical framework which would have given it more substance and meaning. And much of it appears to be self-serving and self-congratulatory. As Major E.E. Mangindaan of Indonesia writes, "as states in the constitution, Indonesia will always be prepared to assist in moves to abolish colonialism and to promote a world that is stable, free, peaceful and tranquil". Perhaps this section does not apply to East Timor.

Similarly, chapters by Colonel Bill Mellor on the Australian experience in Somalia ("by all measures successful"), Peter Keiseker ("I could

find few faults with the overall conduct of the Australian army in Baidoa (Somalia)" (p. 73), Brigadier Roderick Cordy-Simpson on Bosnia, Brigadier John Wilson on Yugoslavia, Lieutenant Colonel Steve Ayling on Cambodia, are mainly descriptive and uninteresting, lacking insight into the politics of the situations. The obsequious, self-congratulatory tones might be expected; which military officer would actually present his country in a critical light? And this is perhaps the main reason why the better sections of the book are by academics. It is not that U.N. military personnel have not been critical of operations in the recent past, but just that they are not represented here in this very one-sided perspective. This merely serves to hide some of the real and difficult challenges facing peacekeepers. These include defining what peacekeeping is really all about. Is there a new doctrine of "peace-enforcement" which has gained credibility in the light of the use of force in Somalia, for instance? Should the United Nations intervene in humanitarian relief in ethnic conflicts (Northern Iraq, 1991; former Yugoslavia, 1992; and Somalia, 1992). The implications of the U.N. peacekeeping forces themselves becoming a part of the conflict surely undermines the notion of peacekeeping. And yet, this issue is not dealt with in this volume.

Neither does it deal with many of the nasty side effects of large-scale military operations (albeit peacekeeping ones) in the host countries and for their civilian populations. In the post-Cold War period, these include prostitution and black marketeering, among others. Peacekeepers are notoriously poorly paid for the high risks they run on the "thin blue line". Should there be an increasing professionalization of the U.N. soldiery? Just what exactly should the role of the peacekeepers be in the "new world disorder"? Sadly, this work fails to leave us with any satisfactory answers.

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***Arms Control in the Post-Cold War World: With Implications for Asia/Pacific.*** Edited by Trevor Findlay. Canberra: Peace Research Centre, Australian National University, 1993. 329 pp.

Analysts of Asian politics know that the field of international relations in general (and, consequently, subfields such as peace research) is predominantly Eurocentric. European history and politics provide the inspiration