

The UN and Peace Operations

Carpenter, Ted Galen, ed., *Delusions of Grandeur, The United Nations and Global Intervention*. Washington, DC: CATO Institute, 1997.

Schmidl, Erwin A., ed., *Peace Operations Between War and Peace*. London and Portland OR: Frank Cass, 2000.

The title of *Delusions of Grandeur* says a great deal about the assumptions that form the basis of most of the chapters of this book. But the title is misleading. This is not really a book about the UN so much as it is a book about US policy toward the UN. And, more to the point, it is a book based on the assumption that US policy toward the UN in the post-Cold War has gone too far in the direction of allowing the UN to do too much and too far in terms of US involvement in that trend.

The book is not anti-UN as such. And thankfully, the book does not fall into the all-too-frequent trap of portraying the UN as a separate independent entity whose decisions are made by people with no connection to national governments. Indeed, many of the chapters reflect a sense that the UN is often the victim of the major powers' inability to get their act together to deal properly with conflicts either inside or outside the UN. According to many of the authors, the US - read the Clinton administration - is as much at fault as anyone, if not more so, for allowing and even encouraging the UN to stray from what one author called the UN's years of "admirable restraint" during the Cold War.

The Cato Institute, a Washington-based think tank founded to promote libertarian ideals, published the book, which is a product of a conference held by the Institute in 1996. As a consequence, the book sometimes feels slightly out-of-date. The book has five sections, each focused on a different issue area (the UN as a whole, military operations, funding and bureaucracy, the social and environmental agenda and economic development). The background information provided in the various chapters is adequate but basic, in part because the chapters have been kept fairly short, as well as because the purpose of many of the chapters is to get a message across.

In among the heavy criticism of both the UN and the Clinton administration, and the not so hidden agenda to discourage rather than encourage greater UN involvement (whatever form it might take) in the issue areas examined, there are some important contributions that are easy to overlook if one assumes from the overall tone of the book that one automatically knows what is being said. Two examples stand out. Ted Galen Carpenter's chapter "The Mirage of Global Collective Security" raises, though does not answer, some critical questions that are rarely addressed in studies on the United Nations. Is the objective of "stability," inherent in the UN Charter, an objective without bias? Can stability be equated with justice? Are there not situations in which letting a conflict run its course will generate a more peaceful, stable outcome in the long run? Michael Maren's chapter on NGOs and international development bureaucracies uses the example of Somalia to demonstrate how both NGOs and bureaucracies can become caught up in the

need to provide aid for aid's sake, and how little impact that whole process can have on a society in need.

That said, the overall tone of the book is difficult to escape. For practitioners and academics familiar with the field the book provides little in the way of new substantive information. However, for those looking for a portrayal of the views of a certain sector of US opinion on the United Nations, this book certainly fits the bill.

By contrast, *Peace Operations Between War and Peace* tries to deal with the murkiness surrounding almost every definitional aspect of UN operations, and the resulting implications of that problem. Of the seven chapters, three deal specifically with the implications that definitional and operational ambiguity can have on the ground. Somalia and Bosnia are the examples used to illustrate those dilemmas. One chapter is a photographic essay that provides a mixed bag of photos primarily from the UN and the Austrian Ministry of Defence. Aside from human interest, it is not entirely clear what this adds to the book.

The other three chapters focus on the debate surrounding the idea of "peace operations." Erwin Schmidl, the editor of the volume, provides a historical overview of peace operations, demonstrating that the concept of such operations can be traced well back into the nineteenth century. His overview also involves an examination of the differing terms used to describe these operations. Schmidl provides no definitive answers to the apparently endless debate on definitions (peacekeeping vs peace enforcement vs peace support, É etc.) but does propose that a generic term "peace operations" can be broadly defined. Jarat Chopra, well known for his part in developing the concept of second generation multinational operations, proposes a unified concept of "peace maintenance" and provides a detailed outline of the tasks and definitions that are involved in such a concept. According to Chopra the concept of peace maintenance "links the strategic and operational levels of command and control, and constitutes the exercise by the international community as a whole of political authority within nations." Christopher Dandeker and James Gow discuss the concept of "strategic peacekeeping" which, in their view, lies between traditional peacekeeping and peace enforcement.

The papers in this book are the product of conferences held in 1997 and 1998 under the auspices of the Institute of Military Studies of the Austrian Ministry of Defence. The overall objective was to contribute to the "lessons learned" process that has been going on inside and outside the UN, almost from the moment the UN began engaging in multidimensional operations at the end of the Cold War. While the chapters are interesting and useful, as a unit the book does not quite hang together as a whole. This is evidenced by the varied and sometimes unconnected discussion found in the three chapters on definitions and concepts. A concluding chapter of some sort, drawing together the various ideas and proposals put forward in the authors' contributions would have been very useful. The absence of such a chapter, however, may be an indication that such a task was too difficult and unwieldy to undertake.

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