

Mayall, James, ed. *The New Interventionism 1991-1994: United Nations Experience in Cambodia, former Yugoslavia and Somalia*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Robert Baer

Volume 19, numéro 1, spring 1999

URI : https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/jcs19_01br02

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

The University of New Brunswick

ISSN

1198-8614 (imprimé)

1715-5673 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce compte rendu

Baer, R. (1999). Compte rendu de [Mayall, James, ed. *The New Interventionism 1991-1994: United Nations Experience in Cambodia, former Yugoslavia and Somalia*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996.] *Journal of Conflict Studies*, 19(1), 163–165.

Mayall, James, ed. *The New Interventionism 1991-1994: United Nations Experience in Cambodia, former Yugoslavia and Somalia*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

This study examines carefully three major interventions carried out by the United Nations from 1991 to 1994. The interventions include Cambodia, former Yugoslavia, with much emphasis on Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Somalia. Edited by James Mayall, the study includes contributions from Mayall, Mats Berdal, Michael Leifer, Spyros Economides, Paul Taylor and Ioan Lewis.

The need for such a study cannot be over emphasized. Since 1994, the United Nations still finds itself engaged in the former Yugoslavia (with a new focus on Kosovo), has been involved in Rwanda, deals with reoccurring problems in Iraq, and has carefully watched events unfold in Sudan. Although UN involvement in troubled areas has apparently slowed from its rapid pace of the early nineties, UN involvement will certainly continue well into the next century. More important, is Mayall's examination of the constraints that must be overcome if the UN Charter is to act as a constitution for international society. Certainly some of these issues have been addressed after the world witnessed the shameful television coverage of UNPROFOR soldiers shackled to streetlights. However, many problems still remain.

Anyone could see that more than just peacekeepers were being chained to streetlights. Also bound was the optimistic UN role in a "New World order," which had been only recently borne out of the successes of the Gulf War. Mayall and his three selected UN interventions help the reader understand why UN peace-building efforts went from desert victory to almost an ignoble end on the streets of Sarajevo.

In his introduction, Mayall discusses how improper implementation and drafting of mandates was a crucial issue in producing many difficulties faced by the UN in Cambodia, the former Yugoslavia and Somalia. In each study, the authors explain how UN forces on the ground confronted numerous mission changes based on unclear or changing mandates. Peacekeepers in Cambodia, for example, were suddenly confronted with running a national election. UNPROFOR in the former Yugoslavia had to deal with what Economides and Taylor call "creeping escalation" as the mission went from peacekeeping to near-enforcement and eventually enforcement. UN forces in Somalia went from humanitarian efforts under Chapter VII to hunting Aideed or anyone else who attacked UN troops. Certainly these changes in mandate wouldn't be too serious if the UN force could adapt to the changing situation. However, this leads to another problem confronting UN interventions.

The second issue brought out by Mayall lies in the fact that the stated goals of many mandates cannot be met because UN forces on the ground do not have the required resources. Also, sometimes contributing nations may have the resources, but do not have the national will to support the stated goals of a mandate. Efforts in Cambodia were hampered by a lack of linguists in some UN detachments and many deploying units did not have the support structure to effectively begin and sustain operations in a timely

manner. Peacekeepers in Yugoslavia did not have the resources to adequately defend themselves or cover the required terrain to maintain peace. Finally, UN personnel in Somalia lacked area experts who could have helped prevent some mistakes made in administration and psyops efforts.

In conclusion, the editor points out some obvious shortcoming, in UN intervention efforts and discusses a few others, such as intelligence (information) gathering systems, a doctrinal base to guide UN forces, clear cut command and control channels, and logistic/deployment planning. However, mandate creation/ enforcement along with resourcing and providing the will for the mandate were the greatest problems confronting the three operations examined in the study. Having the proper means to achieve the desired ends has always been a challenge in any type of military operation. For Clausewitz, it was how he judged a military commander as a genius. The title was only reserved for those few individuals who could achieve a desired end with very little means. It is clear that all too often, available resources fall well short of approved mandates thereby leaving a string of frustrated American, British and Canadian UN commanders trying to make much out of little. This problem is clearly drawn out in this study and is an important lesson learned as evidenced by NATO whose participation in Bosnia helped fill this gap of resources versus mandates.

Robert Baer
Fort Leavenworth, KS