

**Clarke, Walter, and Jeffrey Herbst, eds., Learning from Somalia: The Lessons of Armed Humanitarian Intervention. Boulder, CO: Westview, 1997.**

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**Clarke, Walter, and Jeffrey Herbst, eds.,** *Learning from Somalia: The Lessons of Armed Humanitarian Intervention.* Boulder, CO: Westview, 1997.

Of all the United Nations peacekeeping operations deployed in the early 1990s, Somalia has received more attention from scholars than any other trouble-spot. I published the first book on the humanitarian intervention in Somalia in 1993 and since then I have read more than 10 other books and over 200 articles on the subject. The question I asked myself when I received this book was: what does it tell us that we do not already know? The answer is, it has a lot to offer.

*Learning From Somalia* is the most comprehensive and insightful of all publications on Somalia so far. Comprising 14 essays initially presented at a conference at Princeton University in early 1995, the authors discuss many aspects of the UN operations from 1992 to 1995, providing fresh, controversial and provocative ideas. The book, which contextualizes Somalia in light of other operations, is grounded in the liberal and neo-liberal tradition. The editors have divided the essays into five parts, with each part focusing on a specific aspect of humanitarian intervention.

Walter Clarke, Martin R. Ganzglass and Ken Menkhaus examine the complex legal aspects of humanitarian intervention, while Lee V. Cassanelli and Andrew S. Natsios discuss the economic dimensions. The military and purely peacekeeping aspects are analyzed by Kevin M. Kennedy, John Drysdale and Gerard Prunier, while the decision-making process during the intervention is examined by James L. Woods, Jonathan T. Howe, Harry Johnston, and Ted Dagne. The conclusions and recommendations for future humanitarian action are provided in three different chapters by Thomas G. Weiss, Robert I. Rotberg, and Walter Clarke and Jeffrey Herbst.

Most of these contributors were involved in Somalia at one time or another during the period of intervention. For example, Jonathan Howe was the UN Secretary-General's special representative in 1993; Walter Clarke was the deputy chief of mission at the US embassy in Mogadishu in 1993; Andrew Natsios was the assistant administrator of USAID during the Somalia relief operations; and John Drysdale was a political adviser to UNOSOM I and II. Martin Ganzglass, Congressman Harry Johnston, Kevin Kennedy, Ken Menkhaus, and James Woods were also involved in the Somalia operations in different capacities. The other contributors are respected UN or Somali analysts.

Warning against the temptation to draw wrong conclusions, or to use the so-called "Somalia syndrome" as an excuse for inaction, *Learning From Somalia* examines the background to the crisis, the clan structure, the emergence and sustenance of the warlords, the struggle for territory, and the collapse of societal institutions. Some of the contributors bemoan the lack of a clear framework through which the international community can address the problem of "failed states," especially where there is no national authority to claim sovereignty. The book also analyzes the weaknesses and strengths of the efforts by the UN and the United States through the first UN operation in Somalia (UNOSOM I) from mid-1992, the US-led Unified Task Force (UNITAF) from December 1992 (code-named Operation Restore Hope), and the second UN operation

(UNOSOM II) from May 1993. The failure of these missions are rightly blamed on poor mandates, inadequate resources, the lack of political vision, and misguided policy decisions. The lack of a clear political strategy meant that most of the time UNITAF and UNOSOM played into the hands of the warlords.

Walter Clarke, for example, argues that "much of what went wrong in Somalia operations can be traced to the Bush and early Clinton administrations' schizophrenia when confronted with the fact that any intervention would deeply involve the United States in Somali politics." The Bush and Clinton administrations refused to acknowledge the fact that famine and starvation in Somalia were political and economic problems that could not be addressed effectively without a political strategy. In 1992-93, for example, food was the issue around which political and military power in Somalia revolved. Had UNITAF had a clear political strategy and tried to disarm the militias and warlords, UNOSOM II would have inherited a completely different situation, and the outcome of the UN deployment would probably have been positive. Had serious efforts been made to match resources with the mandates, the Somali problem would have been handled very differently. Clarke explains how the US administration and Congress came to blame the United Nations for the Security Council resolutions on Somalia which were drafted in Washington and by the Pentagon.

I am unable to summarize this rich, clear and nuanced account of the intervention in Somalia in a review of this size. Indeed, *Learning From Somalia* is an outstanding collection of essays which I recommend highly for anyone who is interested in understanding the UN debacle in Somalia.

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