

Marten, Kimberley Zisk. *Enforcing the Peace: Learning from the Imperial Past*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004.

Sean Ryan

Volume 25, numéro 2, winter 2005

URI : https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/jcs25_2br04

[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

Ryan, S. (2005). Compte rendu de [Marten, Kimberley Zisk. *Enforcing the Peace: Learning from the Imperial Past*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004.] *Journal of Conflict Studies*, 25(2), 163–165.

In another article, Francois Debrix analyzes and sketches the ideological intent of what he calls “tabloid realism”: a sensationalizing, persistently conservative discourse of national security in foreign policy literature. Found in the literature authored by Robert Kaplan, Samuel Huntington, and Zbigniew Brzezinski, “tabloid realism,” according to Debrix, not only seeks to grab the attention of the public by providing an overtly panic-stricken representation of international affairs, but also proliferates fear-inducing images of current realities to influence policy-making decisions.

Although Debrix successfully highlights the pessimistic perceptions of “tabloid realism” and the alleged ideological intents of its authors, he does not focus enough on its empirical flaws. If 11 September was a clash between the Islamic and Western civilizations, how could the main allies of the US in the war against the Taliban be the Islamic Northern Alliance? And if there is a clash between the Russian-Orthodox civilization and the Islamic one, how can the main ally of the Russian Federation and predominantly-Christian Armenia be the Islamic Republic of Iran?

In conclusion, despite the loosely-related themes and the lack of an elaborated discussion of geopolitical issues directly related to the rise of *al-Qaeda* in Afghanistan, or the geopolitical causes of anti-Americanism among radical Islamists, the book provides several well-developed analyses about the emerging world order and international relation theory, terrorism, American foreign policy, and political effects of narratives.

Omar Ashour is a Doctoral Candidate in the Department of Political Science at McGill University.

Marten, Kimberley Zisk. *Enforcing the Peace: Learning from the Imperial Past*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004.

Those interested in peacekeeping and what it has evolved into over the past decade need to locate a copy of Kimberley Zisk Marten’s *Enforcing the Peace*. Appropriately titled, it explores the role of military forces not just in ending violence, but in rebuilding entire states. That exploration follows two paths. The first retraces the “complex peacekeeping operations” of the past 10 years. Marten uses that term to “highlight [the] interwoven military, political and economic components” which, she claims, distinguish those operations from their simpler predecessors. (p. 4) The second path leads further back to examine American, British, and French colonialism around the turn of the twentieth century. The resulting comparative analysis thoroughly dissects “the notion of

imposing liberal democracy abroad” before concluding that it is nothing but a “pipedream.” (p. 155)

After a sharp introduction that lays out the book’s main currents, Marten begins a more detailed investigation of peacekeeping efforts during the nineties. She briefly examines situations in Cambodia, Somalia, and Rwanda before offering more comprehensive overviews of peacekeeping in Eastern Slavonia, Haiti, Bosnia, Kosovo, and East Timor. The latter cases mark the evolution of peacekeeping from its traditional roots to the complex operations that constitute the central element of *Enforcing the Peace*. Fittingly, this section also contains an extensive explanation of what actually makes “complex peacekeeping operations” distinct.

Marten then shifts fluidly from nineties peacekeeping to colonial occupation, beginning with a few key differences and then quickly moving to various fundamental similarities. She focuses in particular on the influence of national self-interest and humanitarianism as prime motivators in both eras, as well as on how the justification of foreign control has largely remained, via international law, under the commanding influence of the United States, Great Britain, and France. (p. 89) “In other words, the conjunction of interests and humanitarianism in empire may have come full circle, in ways that set the course of peacekeeping operations in the future.” (p. 91)

The remainder of *Enforcing the Peace* examines how and why efforts to change societies both recently and a century ago have for the most part ended in failure, followed by what lessons from those failures suggest for the future. Marten identifies two chief causes and presents an excellent analysis of each in turn. They are the lack of political will among occupying states to commit the necessary resources for a sufficient period of time to properly cultivate desired changes, along with the lack of coordination that has plagued overly ambitious multilateral operations. All of this builds to a disheartening, but powerful conclusion:

For those who truly want to transform the politics and culture of foreign societies in the name of liberal democracy, there should be no expectation that complex peacekeeping operations – or anything else demanding coordinated liberal democratic state action – are the best way to accomplish it. (p. 148)

If *Enforcing the Peace* were to end there, it would still be an extremely valuable book. Yet Marten finishes her work by outlining an alternative model that abandons any aspirations of forcing institutional change on foreign states. Peacekeeping interventions would instead aim only to provide security throughout the country so that it could go about the business of getting back on its own feet. Hence the name “security-keeping.” (p. 158) Marten covers both its strengths and limitations, along with why history suggests it can be successful and how it would be applied in practice. It is a convincing plan.

Stylistically, this book has been written exceptionally well. Central themes are woven throughout the book, often in ways that show various angles of a crucial issue. For example, by the end the reader cannot help but have a very good grasp not only of how the military has and has not been used in peacekeeping, but also of how it could and should be used. *Enforcing the Peace* is also quite concise, delving into greater detail only when necessary. The language is neither so technical as to be inaccessible, nor so general as to be vague. There are great little passages at the beginning of each chapter to refocus the reader's attention and set the tone. The data behind *Enforcing the Peace* is also substantial. Marten's research took her around the world, from the Lester Pearson Peacekeeping Center in Nova Scotia to NATO headquarters in Belgium. She collected information in Australia, India, and Japan, and she was briefed at both Fort Bragg and US Camp Bondsteel in Kosovo.

Kimberly Zisk Marten has two previous books to her credit, one of which won the Marshall Shulman Prize. Now she has another outstanding piece of work. Insightful, relevant, and succinct, *Enforcing the Peace* is certainly an excellent contribution to peacekeeping studies and deserves unqualified recommendation.

Sean Ryan holds BA and BEd degrees from the Memorial University of Newfoundland. Despite having planned to visit Asia for one year in 2002, he has been teaching English there ever since.

Cassidy, Robert M. *Peacekeeping in the Abyss: British and American Peacekeeping Doctrine and Practice After the Cold War*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004.

Bob Cassidy's book is a must read for all security professionals, including serious thinkers in academe. It is particularly relevant as the US military, specifically the army, is searching for self-identification in the midst of addressing complex security challenges across a wide spectrum. Cassidy lucidly traces the lost opportunity of the 1990s to grapple with post-Cold War challenges including situations that at one time or another were described as peacekeeping, peace enforcement, peace-making, stability and security operations, low-intensity conflict, etc. Why did the army struggle so with understanding and preparing for its role in myriad contexts and operations?

Cassidy sheds light on this struggle in two ways: first, his book is a comparative look at the British and American experience with what he calls, Armed Humanitarian Operations. Second, he tackles head-on, the military strategic cul-