

UN Peacekeeping Operations

Richard Dale

Volume 19, numéro 1, spring 1999

URI : https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/jcs19_01re01

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

The University of New Brunswick

ISSN

1198-8614 (imprimé)

1715-5673 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce document

Dale, R. (1999). UN Peacekeeping Operations. *Journal of Conflict Studies*, 19(1), 132–134.

UN Peacekeeping Operations

Hillen, John. *Blue Helmets: The Strategy of UN Military Operations*. Dulles, VA: Brasseys, 1998.

Singe, Richard. *Mozambique: UN Peacekeeping in Action, 1992-94*. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997.

These two studies by an American independent military analyst, John Hillen and a British independent scholar, Richard Singe, (supported by the United States Institute of Peace, the Catholic Institute for International Relations in London, and the African Studies Center of the University of Cambridge) provide a fresh insight into the corridors of international policy and military operations in pursuit of peace. It appears that Hillens study emerged from his doctoral dissertation at the University of Oxford, while Singes labors were supported by a Washington peace think tank that has a solid record of producing well organized and written studies concerning different facets of international conflict management and resolution. Of the two studies, Hillens tends to be more in keeping with the customary academic format, with maps, tables, figures, a superior bibliography, and ample endnotes, but with a somewhat threadbare index. Singes work has maps, tables, an index, along with ample endnotes and an appendix. Both studies include a range of interviews with key United Nations and military figures.

Because of his military training and experience as an active duty officer in the US Army (although he later transferred to the reserves), Hillen concentrates his attention on the military aspects of United Nations peacekeeping, examining a wide range of operations from peace observation missions all the way up to the continuum of potential violence to peace enforcement. He finds that some of the military difficulties involved in peacekeeping can be traced historically to the absence of separate bilateral agreements between United Nations and individual military powers as provided for in Article 43 of the United Nations Charter, along with the concomitant absence of a Military Staff Committee anticipated in Articles 46 and 47. He argues that . . . all thirty-eight military operations managed by the United Nations between 1948 and 1996 were improvised endeavors, ad hoc enterprises whose legal and political legitimacy were based on a loose interpretation of Charter provisions. (p. 9) Consequently, he avers that . . . the UN Charter never provided an effective political, strategic, or military foundation for UN military operations in the way that the framers of the Charter might have hoped. (p. 9) This sets the stage for his inquiry, which is categorical rather than chronological. He separates United Nations peacekeeping activities into four clusters, namely, observation missions, traditional peacekeeping, what he terms second-generation peacekeeping and enforcement. In addition, he provides a case study of each of the four types, so that the reader can have a reprise of his general observations when probing UN observation missions in Iran and Iraq, traditional peacekeeping in southern Lebanon, second-generation peacekeeping in Somalia, and peace enforcement in Korea and the Persian Gulf.

His analysis of second-generation peacekeeping is the most unusual aspect of the book. There have been ten such operations, beginning with the Congo on 1960 and going on UNTIES in 1996 in Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium. The essence of these second generations operations, he points out, is that they are or . . . were much more comprehensive, with the UN attempting a near-simultaneous management of political, societal, economic, humanitarian, electoral, diplomatic, and military initiatives. (p. 26) Richard Singes study of UNOMOZ (UN Operation in Mozambique) fits into the second-generation category. Hillen explores the four major types of peacekeeping from a military perspective, looking at command and control techniques and procedures, force composition, force size, geographical representation and neutrality of the force, and the ensemble of military objectives or missions. This approach is a welcome complement to Paul F. Diehls classic treatment in his *International Peacekeeping* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993).

It is Hillens thesis that the United Nations operates best at the lower end of the conflict spectrum, especially at the observation mission or traditional peacekeeping level, where military skills play a less important role than diplomatic or political considerations. At these levels what appear as military inefficiencies, say, in the command and control area or force to area ratios, can be offset by other skills or by a relatively benign environment. At the end of the Cold War, in the late 1980s, the Security Council began to underestimate the complexity of the tasks it was asking second-generation peacekeeping missions to undertake, especially in terms of the deployment of military units and assignment of goals. Assigning blame in a scholarly fashion, Hillen does not excuse the United Nations but also faults the great powers for overloading the international organization with challenges it is ill equipped to handle, thereby having avoided grappling with the problems. It is a form of evasive foreign policy.

Richard Singe also finds fault with aspects of the United Nations operation in Mozambique, but he considers far more than the military aspects of the nation-repairing operation which was designed to institutionalize the 1992 Rome peace accord between the Frelimo (Mozambique Liberation Front) government and its Renamo (Mozambican National Resistance) opponents. This was one of the nastiest civil wars in all of Africa and invited the attention of neighboring white-ruled Rhodesia (until 1980) and apartheid South Africa as patrons for their Reamo client. The author criticizes the United Nations for failing to complete the land mine removal program in Mozambique, although he commends the organization for monitoring the 1994 general election as well as for its innovative approach to demobilizing two rival arms that had held much of the nation in thrall. Still, there were ample caches of undeclared arms, which have trickled into South Africa and added to the levels of civic violence and crime. He also shows, as Christopher Clapham has done on a wider scale in his *Africa and the International System: The Politics of State Survival* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996), just how displacing United Nations and non-governmental organizations can be in terms of African state sovereignty. At times, they can be alternate or surrogate governments. Additional pressure for conflict resolution in Mozambique came from its neighbors, some of whom supplied military units to guard land transportation corridors, so that regional powers and interests can serve to reinforce international pressures and rewards.

Richard Dale
Fountain Hills, Arizona