

The United Nations and Peace Enforcement: Wars Terrorism and Democracy

Mohammed Awad Osman
Ashgate Publishers, (Aldershot, 2002) IX + 224 pp.
ISBN 0-7546-1726-2

The idea that the United Nations would use force to impose its will on states strikes many as an odd notion. On the face of it, the notion of peace enforcement by the UN would actually appear to stand in complete contrast with the tents of the organisation. After all the concept of non-violent peacekeeping, although now extended to include other organisations, such as NATO, is one that was for almost forty years synonymous with the United Nations as it sought to fulfil its mandate under the stifling conditions of the Cold War. Indeed, the very foundations of peacekeeping are constructed around a rejection of enforcement, both in terms of political orders and actions on the ground, by peacekeepers wearing the now famous blue beret.

In reality, however, the concept of peace keeping, including the sister-concept of peace observation, was never mentioned in the founding charter of the United Nations. Instead peacekeeping has been called Chapter 6½, falling, as it does, between Chapter VI, 'Pacific Settlement of Disputes', and Chapter VII, 'Action with Respect to Threat to the Peace, Breaches of the Peace, and Acts of Aggression'. In particular the basis of peace enforcement can be found in Article 42 of Chapter VII,

'Should the Security Council consider that measures provided for in Article 41 would be inadequate or have proved to be inadequate, it may take such action by air, sea, or land forces as may be necessary to maintain or restore international peace and security. Such action may include demonstrations, blockade, and other operations by air, sea, or land forces of Members of the United Nations.'

As this Article 42 shows, the United Nations, as a new world organisation founded at the end of the Second World War, was clearly intended to take a far more robust approach towards threats to international peace and stability than its subsequent history would lead many to believe. Specifically, the Charter of the United Nations shows that the organisation was mandated to use force to ensure that steps taken by states that would have wider consequences for international relations would be met with a concerted, and, if needs be armed, response by the

international community.

However, despite this explicit intention that the UN would play a forceful role in maintaining international peace, prior to the end of the Cold War there was only one UN led enforcement action: the Korea War, 1950-1953, which saw a United Nations force, under the command of the United States, sent to the Korean Peninsula. It was to be a unique experiment. The Cold War had already started and it was not until the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the East-West standoff before the UN got another chance to try to put into action a more robust use of military forces for the protection of international peace and security.

As a result of the way in which the organisation rapidly evolved in the early 1950s, which led to the development of peace-keeping, peace enforcement, although a key concept of the United Nations, is also a much misunderstood principle. *'The United Nations and Peace Enforcement: Wars Terrorism and Democracy'*, by Mohammed Awad Osman, is therefore a useful addition to the literature on the United Nations insofar as it attempts to examine the theoretical and practical role of peace enforcement in the work of the United Nations, both in terms of its historical function and as a world body in the twenty-first century.

The book effectively starts with chapter two, which examines enforcement theory in general. This is a thorough examination of the subject matter and covers a wide range of issues, such as the development of notions of collective security, the re-conceptualisation of UN peace enforcement into peacekeeping as a result of the Cold War, a definition of the term in contemporary terms, the role of enforcement within the wider context of the UN system and an analysis of the viability of peace enforcement as a tool for stabilising the international environment.

The third chapter examines the case of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. Although one would expect this to look solely at the steps taken to authorise military action under UN Security Council Resolution 678, and the conduct of the operation to remove Iraq from Kuwait, the chapter also examines the non-military aspects of peace enforcement, steps such as economic sanctions and the naval interdiction that was instituted under UN Security Council Resolution 665. This contributes to a wider understanding of the notion of peace enforcement than is generally recognised internationally.

The fourth chapter looks at the role of the United States in peace enforcement operations. This is interesting insofar as when the book was written the two most significant peace enforcement operations carried out in the name of the UN, Korea and Kuwait, were both instigated by the United States. Since then, of course, there have been two further operations carried out with UN blessing, whether explicit or implied, Afghanistan and Iraq. In this chapter the author raises some very important

questions relating to the relationship between the UN and the US (page 61):

1. Is the enforcement action a UN or US action?
2. Is the relation between the UN and the US based on cooperation or exploitation?
3. Can a UN which is largely dependent on the leadership of the US achieve the objectives of collective security?

Chapter five analyses the constitutional problems surrounding the use of force and includes discussions on a range of issues related to collective self-defence and peace enforcement, both in terms of the UN acting at a global level and with regard to regional arrangements laid down in Chapter VIII of the UN Charter. This is a very interesting contribution to the work and provides some valuable insights into the sorts of problems the UN faces when considering peace enforcement operations.

Chapter six looks at a more contemporary and current problem: the use of peace enforcement as a tool to fight terrorism. This is obviously a topic that has a particular resonance in the age of President Bush's 'War on Terrorism' and we have already seen two examples of how the use or support of terrorism by 'rogue' regimes has opened up new directions for the justification of the use of force at the international level. The book was prepared prior to the invasion of Iraq, but also fails to cover the US led invasion of Afghanistan. Instead the work concentrates more fully on the use of sanctions against Libya and Sudan. Needless to say, the War on Terrorism has become seen by many as a tool for the United States to justify a more robust foreign policy. It is a shame that the book could not cover such an interesting and important issue in as much detail as one would hope and expect.

The final section of the book amounts to an overview of various UN operations over the last fifty years. The seventh chapter looks at the Cold War period, examining the case of Korea and Congo, the second of which is more usually regarded as a traditional peacekeeping mission. Chapter eight examines peace enforcement in the post-Cold War era and includes accounts of a number of operations such as the mission to support the Kurds in the aftermath of the Gulf War and the various UN led and supported missions in Somalia, Liberia, Angola, Rwanda, Zaire, Bosnia and Haiti.

Overall the book certainly makes a number of very interesting points and there is much here that is genuinely thought provoking. If there is a major drawback it is a feeling of imbalance about the work. There is too much emphasis on some points, such as the example of Kuwait, with other areas that could have done with more elaboration or development. It would seem that the reason for this structural weakness of the volume is largely due to the fact that the work is based directly on a doctoral thesis. While undoubtedly a very good piece of academic work, a

standard thesis rarely amounts to a good book. Usually a work that wants to make the transition requires very heavy editing. Indeed, usually an entire rewrite is required. This rewrite is required to give the work a much more accessible feel. In this case it has not been done as well as one would hope. However, the difficulty of making the transition is certainly one that is familiar to anyone who has been through the process and the author is certainly not alone in this respect.

Despite this organisational weakness, the work is nonetheless a worthwhile attempt to address some very real issues that confront the international community in the modern era. There are many more new questions, however. In the light of the US led operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, is there a role for the UN as an agent of enforcement? Moreover, how does the UN tackle terrorism, a force that transcends the realist, state-centred foundations of the organisation? Most importantly, how is the UN to find a way to operate in conjunction with the US in those cases where the US acts without direct UN authorisation and yet the requirement for rebuilding necessitates post-conflict UN involvement? Can the UN 'forgive and forget' and, if so, what does this do for the organisations credibility? If not, what does this mean for the longer term future of the organisation?

The fact that the invasion of Iraq was not clearly supported by the United Nations obviously raises questions about the legitimacy of using military force without a clear and credible threat that would allow a 'defensive' response and without UN mandate. This is obviously an interesting issue for scholars working in this area of International Relations to look at in the future as the nature of the United Nations as a party supporting and running international enforcement actions remains unclear as a result of Iraq. As both Iraq and Afghanistan have showed, rebuilding a state that has been invaded is no easy task. While the invaders may believe that they have come as liberators, both cases have shown that there are many people who regard them as occupiers. This throws open a whole new range of problems for the UN.

The work therefore opens the door to further examination of these issues and in doing so provides a good account of one of the most interesting subjects in International Relations. Moreover, the subject is becoming increasingly relevant and interesting in ways that have hitherto been obscured by the international system. The whole nature of peace enforcement appears to have been changed by the 2003 Iraq invasion and it will be interesting to see what the effects of the US-led operation will be on the use of force by the United Nations in future. In the meantime, 'The United Nations and Peace Enforcement: Wars Terrorism and Democracy' is a useful survey of the subject of peace enforcement as it evolved in the second half of the twentieth century.

James Ker-Lindsay