

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-54767-3 - United Nations Interventionism, 1991-2004

Edited by Mats Berdal and Spyros Economides

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United Nations Interventionism, 1991–2004

After years of paralysis, the 1990s saw an explosion in the number of United Nations (UN) field operations around the world. In terms of scope and level of ambition, these interventions went beyond the tried and tested principles of classical UN peacekeeping. Indeed, in some cases – such as Cambodia, Kosovo and East Timor – the UN presence assumed the form of quasi-protectorates designed to steer war-torn and deeply divided societies towards lasting peace. This book examines the UN's performance and assesses the wider impact on 'new interventionism' on international order and the study of international relations. Featuring eight case studies of major UN interventions and an introductory chapter outlining the most important theoretical and political features of the international system which have led to the increased interventionary practices of the United Nations, this book will appeal to students and researchers in international relations and international organisations.

MATS BERDAL is Professor of Security and Development in the Department of War Studies at King's College, London. He was formerly the Director of Studies at the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London.

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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo

Cambridge University Press

The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press,
New York

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521547673

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First published 1996 as *The New Interventionism, 1991-1994: United Nations
Experience in Cambodia, Former Yugoslavia and Somalia* edited by James Mayall;
updated with new title 2007.

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

United Nations interventionism, 1991-2004 / edited by Mats Berdal and Spyros
Economides. – [Rev. and updated ed.].

p. cm. – (LSE monographs in international studies)

Originally published: *The new interventionism, 1991-1994* / edited by
James Mayall, 1996.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN-13: 978-0-521-83897-9 (hardback: alk. paper)

ISBN-10: 0-521-83897-5 (hardback: alk. paper)

ISBN-13: 978-0-521-54767-3 (pbk.: alk. paper)

ISBN-10: 0-521-54767-9 (pbk.: alk. paper)

1. Peacekeeping forces – Case studies. 2. Diplomatic negotiations in international
disputes – Case studies. 3. United Nations. 4. Intervention (International law)
5. World politics – 1989– I. Berdal, Mats R., 1965– II. Economides, Spyros.
III. New interventionism, 1991-1994.

JZ6374.U553 2007

341.5'84-dc22

2006036485

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Preface

The original edition of this volume, *The New Interventionism, 1991–1994*, published in 1996 and edited by James Mayall, offered an initial assessment of the United Nation's (UN) interventions in the immediate post-Cold War. The volume concentrated on three case studies; Cambodia, former Yugoslavia and Somalia and included extensive chronologies, and the relevant Security Council Resolutions for each case, in several appendices.

In this volume we develop the debates on UN intervention post-1990 by updating the original three case studies and adding to them five more: Rwanda, Haiti, East Timor, Kosovo and Sierra Leone. In each case, the causes and consequences of UN intervention are examined in the context of the history of each specific crisis, as well as against the backdrop of wider changes – of both a normative and geopolitical kind – in international relations. The case selection is primarily driven by the extent of UN intervention and the significance of the UN experience in these crises for the functioning of the organisation and its international standing, as well as by their chronological and geographical scope.

As stated by James Mayall in the Introduction, this volume concentrates on the 'prospects for international cooperation, the preconditions for success, the causes of failure, and the constraints that must be overcome if the UN Charter is to act as a constitution for international society, rather than as a mere list of lofty but unattainable principles'. These themes were just as evident in the original volume, but that volume was published with the immediate post-Cold War context in mind; with the background of the much touted 'New World Order' which would allow for a significant UN interventionary role in a revamped international political system. We have moved on quite markedly from that prospect and the international context has developed in such a manner that a series of new factors have influenced attitudes towards the UN and its own ability to fulfil its Charter obligations.

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This volume not only revisits the themes developed in the 1996 edition but also addresses a novel set of concerns in relation to the UN and its role in international interventions. As shown in the new case studies, and with the experience of Cambodia, former Yugoslavia and Somalia in mind, UN interventions rapidly moved on from their more traditional peacekeeping functions throughout the 1990s. Growing out of, but also partly in response to, the experiences of the early 1990s, the UN has assumed responsibilities well beyond traditional peacekeeping, with a much stronger emphasis on *justice*-related goals, democracy promotion, post-conflict peacebuilding, and even economic development. In some of the new cases examined, notably East Timor and Kosovo, the UN assumed governance functions that were unprecedented in scope and authority.

Financial and logistical issues continue to permeate all debates on UN policy and its effectiveness both in the broadest possible terms and within the specific discussions on UN interventions. As in the original volume, contributors have sought to assess the degree to which the UN has ‘learned lessons’ from previous operations or whether it has proved unable to do so because of bureaucratic inadequacies and external pressures from the sovereign member states from which it gains its legitimacy and upon which it relies for direction and support. But what the new cases also show is that the role of the UN in an evolving international system is determined just as much by the debates on what it should be doing as well as what it can or has been enabled to do. The issues outlined above have come to the fore because of a range of crises which sparked off demands for international intervention. Thus the lessons learned – or those that should have been learned – stray far beyond operational and resource-based issues, and heavily into wider questions about the changing roles, and the constraints on them, of the UN in the field of international peace and security.

Since the first edition was published, Professor Michael Leifer, a contributor and driving force behind the initial project, has passed away. The intellectual rigour, kindness and enthusiasm he displayed were a source of inspiration to the other contributors, just as they have been to countless students over the years.

MATS BERDAL AND SPYROS ECONOMIDES
London, December 2006.

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Acknowledgements

The editors are much indebted to David Ucko and Eleni Xiarchogian-nopoulou for their help in the final stages of preparation of this book. Their research assistance, editorial work and technical skills proved invaluable.