

2007

Council Unbound: The Growth of UN Decision Making on Conflict and Postconflict Issues after the Cold War

Craig H. Allen

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review>

Recommended Citation

Allen, Craig H. (2007) "Council Unbound: The Growth of UN Decision Making on Conflict and Postconflict Issues after the Cold War," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 60 : No. 3 , Article 18.
Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol60/iss3/18>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Naval War College Review by an authorized editor of U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. For more information, please contact repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu.

violence occurred in 1992 in twenty-one of Peru's twenty-four departments, he ignores other important areas of the conflict. He also writes as though the war in Peru proceeded without an international context, except for the intellectual contribution of Mao Tse-tung. True, the Cold War had ended by the time Peruvian agents captured Guzmán, but many observers think the agents could not have succeeded without the help of outside intelligence. In addition, U.S. funding of antinarcotics programs not only disrupted a source of support to the Shining Path but also relieved economic pressure on the government of Peru when it was sorely stressed by the conflict.

The Peruvian war provides insights for the future of revolutionary movements in Latin America—in countries with elected governments and when no support will be available from a Cuba or a Soviet Union, as it was during the Cold War. Fortunately, any reader interested in those issues, as well as in a systematic treatment of the strategic lessons of two decades of conflict in Peru, can find an excellent source in Cynthia McClintock's 1998 *Revolutionary Movements in Latin America: El Salvador's FMLN and Peru's Shining Path*, published by the United States Institute of Peace Press.

PAUL D. TAYLOR
Naval War College



Matheson, Michael J. *Council Unbound: The Growth of UN Decision Making on Conflict and Postconflict Issues after the Cold War*. Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2006. 422pp. \$19.95

When a longtime Department of State attorney and former member of the prestigious International Law Commission takes the time to recount his considerable firsthand observations of the performance of the United Nations, *Naval War College Review* readers do well to take notice. At a time when a new U.S. geographic command is being stood up in Africa and military forces find their planning and operations centers increasingly visited by coalition, interagency, international, and non-governmental organizational representatives, it is indispensable to have a clear understanding of the evolving role of the UN Security Council and its technical commissions and tribunal investigators. Matheson provides us with an insightful description, one that nicely serves that purpose.

The book is arranged in seven chapters and five appendixes. The first chapter provides a straightforward description of the UN Charter provisions that serve as the framework for action by the Security Council. It is complemented by chapter 2, which describes the council's jurisdiction and mandate as the institution charged with the "primary responsibility for maintenance of international peace and security." The next three chapters provide general descriptions of the three principal modalities of Security Council actions: sanctions, peace-keeping and governance, and use of force. The growing importance of UN technical commissions is then described, followed by an examination of the UN role in prosecuting international crimes. The book is well indexed and includes summaries of some of the key council resolutions and a bibliography that will prove useful to those seeking more detailed coverage.

Matheson documents most of the recurring concerns in sanctions (problems with enforcement, collateral consequences, and possible legal limits on sanctions), peacekeeping operations (tensions produced by the principles of consent and impartiality applicable to Chapter VI peacekeeping operations), and the use of force. Also provided is a most welcome description of the various UN technical commissions and of the criminal tribunals established by the Security Council to address crimes committed in the former Yugoslavia and in Rwanda. His descriptions are concise, accurate, and well documented.

This book admirably serves its descriptive role and supports the author's thesis regarding the council's post-Cold War renaissance. In the end, however, one comes away feeling that the UN has been largely spared critical scrutiny in this book, that the writer, though eminently well qualified to take us through a more focused and prescriptive treatment of this vital international institution, stopped short. Now that Matheson has piqued our interest, perhaps he will provide us with those additional insights in a sequel—one that draws out the lessons to be learned from the “re-nascent” Security Council's response to the acknowledged threats to international peace and security posed by Iran's nuclear programs and the genocide in Darfur.

CRAIG H. ALLEN
Naval War College



Reveron, Derek S., ed. *America's Viceroy: The Military and U.S. Foreign Policy*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004. 214pp. \$75

In 2000, *Washington Post* reporter Dana Priest wrote a series of articles on the rising importance of the regional combatant commanders, comparing them to modern-day “proconsuls” whose Roman forebears served as regional governors and commanders in chief of their military forces. Reveron's *America's Viceroy*s examines this comparison, providing a historical and contemporary analysis of contemporary regional combatant commanders and their rising influence in the foreign policy-making arena. (While the implications of this rising trend are left to the reader, nowhere does the book imply that our combatant commanders are present-day Caesars, about to cross the Rubicon and seize Rome.) The last chapter of Reveron's book expertly examines their rising power and influence on traditional civil-military relations. In short, he finds, administrations use the military in non-warfighting ways, because of its size, capabilities, and “can-do” culture.

It is somewhat ironic that it was the military services and the Pentagon that fought hardest to prevent the ascendancy of the regional combatant commanders. Four decades of legislative changes to the Department of Defense and military mistakes from World War II to DESERT ONE finally culminated in passage of the Goldwater-Nichols Defense Reorganization Act of 1986. This act finally gave unity of command to the combatant commanders and reduced the service chiefs to the secondary role of training and equipping their forces. In hindsight, however, it was the Department of State, not the service chiefs, who suffered the greatest loss of influence with this change.