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Political Studies Book Note Form

Thank you for offering to review:

The Fog of Peace: A Memoir of International Peacekeeping in the 21st Century by Jean-Marie Guéhenno. Washington DC: The Brookings Institution, 2015. 331pp., £19.50 (p/b), ISBN 9780815726302

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Name of reviewer (CAPITALS): TERESA LAPPE-OSTHEGE

Institution: University of Sheffield

'One needs a reliable compass to navigate through the fog of peace'¹, Guéhenno states in the prologue of this book. By sharing his personal experiences and insights as Under-Secretary General for UN peacekeeping operations, Guéhenno seeks to depict the moral dilemmas and diplomatic challenges posed by violent conflicts. He aims to contribute to the improvement of international conflict prevention and resolution by identifying and understanding past mistakes of peacekeeping operations.

In this, at times very personal, recount of his role in UN peacekeeping between 2000 and 2008 Guéhenno successfully combines critical self-reflection with convincing academic rigour. Central to his argument is the view that the UN has failed to adapt to the changing realities of contemporary peacekeeping as being an essentially moral and political undertaking. His detailed accounts of the unfolding of various crises on the international stage compellingly draw a picture of the UN's paralysis stemming from internal disagreements, power plays and lack of clear strategies at times when precise mandates were most necessary.

Guéhenno manages to illuminate the hidden parallels and connections that enabled - or hampered - political solutions to the crises that unfolded in Afghanistan, Iraq, Georgia, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan, Lebanon, Kosovo, Haiti, and Syria. From disunity on the UN's response to Iraq that damaged the credibility of the

¹ p. xvii.

Security Council to navigating the risks of either failed intervention or abstention that could enable further mass atrocities in the DRC, Guéhenno's arguments draw their persuasive power from his honest engagement with criticism and (personal) diplomatic failure.

However, his accounts tend to chronicle political events in the corridors of the UN, forcing the reader to search for his argument buried in sometimes overwhelming detail. Nonetheless, his insights as deputy to Kofi Annan's UN Envoy to Syria, negotiating between government and rebel forces in 2012, most compellingly illustrate the reasons for its failure and provide a rare glimpse of the dilemmas peacekeepers face on the ground.

The book speaks to those involved in the field of peacekeeping, academics and practitioners alike, as it illuminates the negative pressures that globalisation inflicts on contemporary states, societies and international institutions. Without a doubt, Guéhenno's ability to draw parallels between fundamentally different conflicts and their impact on the UN as an intergovernmental institution are a most valuable contribution to understanding the failures and successes of contemporary peacekeeping.