

# Book reviews

## International Relations theory

**A theory of world politics.** By Mathias Albert. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2016. 278pp. Index. £64.99. ISBN 978 1 10714 653 2. Available as e-book.

Niklas Luhmann, born in 1927 and originally a legally trained civil servant, discovered Talcott Parsons in the early 1960s and fell deeply under his influence. In the 1980s he began to develop a new type of systems theory, a school which was in free fall under the anti-positivist onslaught. His magnum opus, *The society of society* (Berlin: Suhrkamp), was published in 1997 and translated subsequently into English, under the title *Theory of society* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013). This was a somewhat heroic effort since even German sociologists find Luhmann's work challenging. An author who deliberately keeps his prose enigmatic to prevent it being understood 'too quickly' is not likely to recommend himself to an Anglo-Saxon audience. It is fortunate, therefore, that we have Mathias Albert's transformation of Luhmann's work into a theory of world politics. The book is to be recommended for those curious about Luhmann's brand of systems theory—but not merely on this account.

Luhmann-style systems theory owes more to evolutionary biology than to the mechanical metaphors used by Parsons. Societies are bounded entities, operating in an environment and responding to it. They are held together by communications—societies are, in short, communication systems, and they split and differentiate as they develop internally. Seen in relation to one another, they may be understood in different ways: they may be stratified, segmented or functionally differentiated. They may also be understood in interaction. There is one big 'world society' but it splits, segments and differentiates across time and in time. Chapters three and four especially will recommend themselves to those interested in world politics. Here, Albert introduces the idea that world politics is a specific form of political communication system, within world society that splits and differentiates in different ways.

He joins the current trend—as seen in Barry Buzan and George Lawson's *The global transformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2015; reviewed in *International Affairs* 91: 4, July 2015), C. A. Bayly's *The birth of the modern world, 1780–1914* (Malden, MA, and Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004) and Jürgen Osterhammel's *The transformation of the world* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014; reviewed in *International Affairs* 91: 3, May 2015)—in distinguishing the Westphalian system, an 'interaction' system of segmented parts, from the truly global system ('the structural contours of world society') that we live in today. The latter began to emerge in the early decades of the nineteenth century and its forcing elements were the global empires, white ascendancy and internationalized nationalism. It is during this time that the contemporary image of global space was imagined and that the comparison of units—in particular their power—became a dominant form of

understanding relationships. Finally, chapter four is also concerned with the different ways political authority can be organized in the world political system.

Overall, Albert's case-studies are more suggestive than fully argued. For example, he could have used map-making to analyse whether the image of the system as truly global only emerged in the middle of the nineteenth century. Furthermore, the author's insistence on segmentation and stratification gives a very fuzzy direction to his argument. But then he makes a very strong case for the 'lots of activity but little progress' view of international relations. His main target, in that sense, is the Whig history of international relations as a unidirectional story of increasingly liberal societies 'coming of age'. Viewed in that light, *A theory of world politics* is a revealing way of mapping the activity, and the differentiation.

*Cornelia Navari, University of Buckingham, UK*

**Justice in conflict: the effects of the International Criminal Court's interventions on ending wars and building peace.** By Mark Kersten. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2016. 274pp. £60.00. ISBN 978 0 19877 714 4. Available as e-book.

At the heart of Mark Kersten's book lies one notoriously difficult question: what are 'the effects of the International Criminal Court's interventions on ending wars and building peace'? In making this the centrepiece of his analysis, Kersten attempts to shed new light on a conundrum that has become known as the 'peace versus justice dilemma' in international criminal justice—an ambitious undertaking given the complexity of the problem.

In the first two chapters, Kersten presents the potential clash between justice and peace as one of the central challenges arising from judicial interventions by the International Criminal Court (ICC). The ICC, according to Kersten, is 'an institution predisposed to intervening while conflicts are ongoing' because it pursues criminal accountability in the midst of 'ongoing and active conflicts' (pp. 2–3). These international judicial interventions, however, do not always have positive effects on the dynamics of the underlying conflict. Rather, the experiences of judicial interventions have demonstrated that pursuing justice—especially during ongoing conflicts—can be detrimental to peace processes and prolong and exacerbate conflicts. Kersten is deeply unsatisfied with the framing of this debate as a trade-off between justice and peace, and in chapter three he proposes a new framework for analysing the effects of ICC interventions, which brings key elements of the study of peace processes into the 'peace versus justice' debate. His analytical framework has three closely linked aspects: first, the influence of ICC interventions on 'conflict narratives' (pp. 40–44); second, the impact of these narratives on the 'attitudes and incentives of warring parties' (pp. 44–7); third, the influence of the ICC on the dynamics of peace processes (pp. 48–63). This analytical framework, Kersten hopes, can guide further empirical studies and help scholars to ask 'the right questions' about the effects of the ICC on ongoing conflicts (p. 63).

Kersten himself applies it to the cases of northern Uganda (chapters four and five) and Libya (chapters six and seven). In both, he finds evidence that the ICC bolstered already dominant narratives of a heroic party fighting an 'evil' enemy. Yet the impact of these narratives on the motivation of parties was very different in the two wars. In the case of northern Uganda, Kersten observes, it was in fact the skewed narrative of a 'good' government combating an 'evil' opposition that sparked the Lord's Resistance Army's 'desire to set the record straight' and ultimately brought its leaders to the negotiating table (pp. 79–84). In the case of Libya, on the other hand, the court's intervention helped to entrench the view that Gaddafi was an 'evil' that had to be eradicated and thus 'lent the Libyan opposition and their international backers support in their ultimate aim to overthrow the Gaddafi regime'

(p. 121). In chapter eight, Kersten makes another important contribution to the scholarship on international criminal justice: here he presents the ICC as a ‘political institution with its own set of interests which influence its decision making’ (p. 168). In other words, he rejects the legalist illusion of courts acting beyond the dynamics of politics and insists on the role of the ICC as a political actor. Kersten’s central claim is that the ICC’s actions are guided by a negotiation between its own institutional interests—which determine the court’s selection of cases as well as its targeting of particular individuals—and the interests of the political actors on whom the court depends.

Kersten provides a compelling and perceptive examination of one of international criminal justice’s most difficult conundrums. While it might disappoint hardnosed legalists, who expect sustained discussions of legal technicalities, *Justice in conflict*’s cardinal virtue is that it situates the ICC within the broader ethical, political and legal environment in which world politics take place. So does the book resolve the ‘peace versus justice dilemma’? It does not, of course. It is remarkable, I think, that after having produced one of the most sophisticated recent studies on the debate, Kersten arrives at the following conclusion: there may never be a consensus regarding the effects of the ICC on peace, justice and conflict processes (p. 201).

This, to be sure, is a rather agnostic stance, but it is also a realistic one. For as long as the ICC is determined to intervene in ongoing conflicts, the ‘peace versus justice dilemma’ will continue to haunt international criminal justice. The only way to address this problem, it seems to me, is to abandon the illusory hope for a permanent, abstract solution and replace it with a focus on practical, situational judgement in each and every individual conflict.

*Christof Royer, University of St Andrews, UK*

## **International history**

**Folly and malice: the Habsburg empire, the Balkans and the start of World War One.** By John Zametica. London: Shephard–Walwyn. 2017. 416pp. £22.20. ISBN 978 0 85683 513 1.

The libraries are clogged with books on the origins of the First World War. Most of them have little new to say. But *Folly and malice* stands with T. G. Otte’s *July crisis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014; reviewed in *International Affairs* 90: 6, November 2014) as a seminal work which forces readers to reflect further on issues they had thought settled. It questions established versions of history, especially Christopher Clark’s *The sleepwalkers* (New York: HarperCollins, 2013) and Sean McMeekin’s *The Russian origins of the First World War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013). John Zametica has the inestimable advantage of knowing Serbo-Croatian, and his research is securely based on Serbo-Croat sources in addition to ones in Czech, French, English, Austrian, Russian and German—as well as very wide reading in the secondary literature in all of these languages.

Christopher Clark’s thesis, mirroring the explanation in David Lloyd George’s memoirs, suggests that ‘the nations slithered over the brink ... Not one of them wanted war; certainly not on this scale’, while McMeekin regards Russian mobilization as a prime cause of the war. However, the central thesis of *Folly and malice* is that Austria–Hungary, with German support, wanted the war and that neither Serbia nor Russia had aggressive intentions. Zametica shares the view of an older generation of historians, such as Lewis Namier and A. J. P. Taylor, that, by 1914, Austria–Hungary faced desperate internal problems and its leaders saw war as an escape from them. Austria–Hungary had become ‘the sick man on the

Danube' (p. 632), 'increasingly panic-stricken and yet assertive . . . reckless and frenzied' (p. 631). Germany, Zametica believes, was prepared to support its ally so as to 'open the path to German continental hegemony' (p. 632). Both countries were well aware that a war against Serbia might lead to Russian involvement and therefore a world war. Zametica fingers as guilty men not so much Kaiser Wilhelm II, inconsistent and volatile and not taken seriously by the civil and military authorities in Germany, but Count Leopold Berchtold, the Austro-Hungarian Foreign Minister, Emperor Franz Joseph, who could and should have vetoed the war, and German Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg, who has largely escaped historical condemnation.

Historians, swayed by the romance of monarchy, have suggested that the murdered Archduke Franz Ferdinand, 'a peg on which fanciful theories about an enlightened Habsburg Monarchy could be hung', would have broadened the Dual Monarchy so as to embrace the Slavs. In fact, as Zametica argues, trialism was not taken seriously except briefly and inconsequentially by Alois Lexa von Aehrenthal, Foreign Minister of Austria-Hungary from 1906 to 1912. The Hungarians were particularly opposed to it. So was the Archduke, who favoured a more centralized monarchy—Habsburg, Catholic and German.

Nor was the Archduke, as is sometimes suggested, a man of peace who would have curbed Vienna's warlike tendencies had he lived. He was, in fact, as militarist and imperialist as the Viennese establishment—indeed perhaps more so—and had a particular dislike of the Serbs, and indeed of Slavs in general. Contrary to what some historians have argued, during the time of the Balkan Wars in 1912–13, he was more bellicose than the Austrian establishment, though he did at times urge caution until army modernization was complete and 'our internal circumstances will be better'.

Austria-Hungary used the assassination of the Archduke as a pretext for war. It accused Serbia of complicity, but the legal expert charged with investigating found 'nothing to show the complicity of the Serbian Government in the directing of the assassination . . . On the contrary, there is evidence that would appear to show that such complicity is out of the question'. Alexander, Count of Hoyos, chef de cabinet to Berchtold, declared after the war that he did not believe Serbia to be complicit. The later assertion of Colonel Dragutin Dimitrijević, head of Serbian military intelligence and leader of the Black Hand organization, that he had planned the assassination, was made when on trial for his life, and is not to be taken seriously.

Zametica perhaps goes too far in his view that Serbia had abandoned irredentist aims in Bosnia and Herzegovina by 1914. Admittedly, Gavrilo Princip, the assassin, favoured not a Greater Serbia, but a Union of the South Slavs—Yugoslavia—which Serbia opposed. However, he had been trained, equipped, financed and smuggled across the border by elements in Belgrade. Zametica mischievously draws a controversial lesson from the story. The multinational Habsburg empire could not survive the growth of national feeling. Yugoslavia, which succeeded it in the South Slav lands, could hold together only under the authoritarian leadership of Marshal Josip Broz Tito—and fell apart after Tito's death. In this sense, Marshal Tito was, as A. J. P. Taylor once wrote, 'the last of the Habsburgs'. Some have seen the European Union as a successor to the Habsburg empire, a roof over nationalities. Will it suffer the same fate? Perhaps Zametica does not intend us to take this analogy too seriously. But his views on the EU do not detract from what is a powerfully argued work, whose conclusions will be carefully studied by historians for many years.

*Vernon Bogdanor, King's College London, UK*

**Nixon's back channel to Moscow: confidential diplomacy and détente.** By Richard A. Moss. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky. 2017. 390pp. £41.50. ISBN 978 0 81316 787 9. Available as e-book.

Richard A. Moss has chosen a crowded field for his book. President Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger's push to engage the Soviet Union diplomatically and open up relations with China is the object of a number of major monographs, countless biographies, three thick volumes of memoirs by Kissinger himself and one by Anatoly Dobrynin (*In confidence: Moscow's ambassador to America's six Cold War presidents*, New York: Random House, 1995). To these must be added at least seven separate volumes of primary sources in the *Foreign Relations of the United States* series—five dedicated to relations with the Soviet Union, and two to China. Given the wealth of existing materials and sources, it is not surprising that *Nixon's back channel to Moscow* does not propose a total reinterpretation of detente. Rather, the book offers a careful dissection of the everyday practice of foreign policy, and a word of caution against excessive reliance on 'back channels' instead of traditional diplomacy.

Contrary to some of the existing literature, Moss does not present President Nixon and Kissinger as revolutionary innovators in terms of strategic vision, or even in their choice of bypassing traditional channels and instead cultivating informal contacts. In fact, they simply reacted to opportunities and circumstances, both domestic and international. In 1969, the Nixon administration entered office with the necessity to find a way out of the Vietnam War. Engaging the USSR and China appeared the most promising route. Given the problems the administration had with leaks to the press in its early days, neither the diplomatic nor the military apparatus could be fully trusted. Therefore, establishing a secure back channel with reliable and responsive foreign officials provided an effective response to both issues, as it allowed the engagement the administration needed while keeping the process firmly in President Nixon's and Kissinger's hands. Initial success transformed this technique of conducting foreign affairs into a standard *modus operandi*.

It is here that Moss finds most to object in the idea of diplomacy through back channels. The Nixon back channel achieved important results for the United States: some progress in Vietnam, agreements on nuclear weapons and a new line of communication with both Moscow and Beijing. However, most of these achievements proved short-lived. Part of the reason, as Moss argues, lies with the nature of back channel diplomacy itself. First, once the protagonists of informal diplomacy were gone, the back channel became useless. After President Nixon's resignation following the Watergate scandal, his successors were either unable or unwilling to go back to the channels. Second, informal diplomacy was useful in initiating the discussion of thorny issues and breaking bureaucratic impasses. However, it was far less effective in addressing complex problems, such as nuclear disarmament, which required the technical expertise that only experienced professionals had. Back channels can be useful tools, but should not replace the business of government.

The main challenge for the reader is the level of detail in the book. Moss does not shy away from a very thorough discussion of virtually all available evidence. While this would not be a problem in itself, the number of documents, memoirs and secondary sources on the era of detente is so vast that it creates confusion rather than clarity. At times, the book reads almost like a day-to-day catalogue of meetings and conversations between President Nixon, Kissinger, their collaborators and their foreign interlocutors. This will be an asset for the dedicated scholar of the Nixon era, but a more casual reader risks losing the plot. Furthermore, presenting the evidence in a more concise manner might have left the author some space to explore other areas. For example, it would have been interesting to see

more discussion of President Nixon and Kissinger's approach to the global South, besides the cases of India and Pakistan examined in chapter four. Likewise, themes not directly linked to security receive comparatively less attention in the book. In recent years, several scholars—such as Roham Alvandi in *Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014) and Daniel J. Sargent in *A superpower transformed* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015)—have shown how crucial non-security issues were in this period.

*Nixon's back channel to Moscow* provides a dispassionate look at informal diplomacy in the era of detente, and a careful assessment of its successes and some of its pitfalls. Moss's matter of fact approach to President Nixon and Kissinger's policies is a refreshing contribution to a field that is still obsessed with judging them.

*Alessandro Iandolo, University of Oxford, UK*

## **Governance, law and ethics**

**Evidence for hope: making human rights work in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.** By Kathryn Sikkink. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. 2017. 336pp. £27.95. ISBN 978 0 69117 062 6. Available as e-book.

Human rights work. This is the message Kathryn Sikkink delivers in her most recent book, *Evidence for hope: making human rights work in the 21<sup>st</sup> century*. Writing in response to the current widespread pessimism about human rights, the author's intention is not necessarily to soothe hostile audiences, as the term 'hope' in the title would suggest. Rather, she reclaims powerful human rights lessons and rectifies common misunderstandings to advocate for more proactive, well-informed action at a time when this is sorely needed. Unlike other, conventional academic works in the field, *Evidence for hope* combines scientific rigour in addressing major, contemporary criticisms of human rights with the ability to propose objective means of promoting them exactly where it seems most crucial. In order to do this, Sikkink relies on both scholarship and practices to suggest tailored policy recommendations to deal with ongoing human rights violations.

Such a comprehensive book was made possible by the author's careful review of the history of international human rights laws, institutions and movements around the globe. Sikkink has a firm grasp on human rights, avoiding modish precedents which could suggest imposition from the Global North towards the South. The first chapter legitimizes human rights by reminding readers of their diverse origins: Latin American jurists, diplomats and activists early in the 1940s envisioned and advocated for international human rights law; while states in Africa, Asia and the Middle East took the lead in the 1960s and 1970s to build the first strong international human rights institutions. In other words, here one finds evidence of the global South's protagonism in the international human rights system.

Though the author makes a strong case for seeing it as a truly global movement, the march of human rights is inevitably slow, cumulative and struggle-driven. This very aspect of the movement has potentially contributed to the present gloom felt even by those who work in the field. Domestic and transnational mobilization continues to play the core part in turning human rights into reality, despite gains being barely noticed in the short term. Rather than doubting whether positive change is under way, Sikkink argues for reasoned, well-informed and patient hope and resilience as regards human rights. She demonstrates through in-depth research that progress comes through the incremental creation of laws and institutions, a process in which significant results become more evident in the long run, an argument which is rarely heard in the debate. Interestingly, this historical clarification

pays homage to several movements from the periphery of the world that struggled for and achieved impressive human rights advancements.

In the second part of the book, the author supports her argument for hope by analysing the achievements of human rights over time. Statistics on the number of individuals killed in wars, on the use of the death penalty, infant mortality and women's education, for instance, all point to similar trends of positive change. Overall, the empirical evidence presented in this book suggests that the human rights situation around the world is in better shape than ever before. Despite this, there are naturally also areas of regression (the refugee crisis and the use of torture) and areas of uncertainty—where 'invisible harms' (disappearances, extrajudicial executions, rape and political imprisonment) and newly expanded rights (sexual minorities, disabled people) tend to be under and over reported, respectively. Making sense of the different yardsticks to measure the progress of human rights and acknowledging uncertainty make *Evidence for hope* a wise reaction to recent, unhelpful reports of the death of human rights.

The combination of historical and empirical examination allows this book to communicate how the past has immediate practical implications for the present and future. Based on findings in the literature on the causes of human rights violations and the explanations for compliance with international law, Sikkink suggests six policy tools for improvement: 1) avoid war and violent solutions; 2) promote full-fledged, homegrown democracies; 3) avoid dehumanizing and exclusionary ideologies; 4) further the ratification of treaties and enforce existing human rights law; 5) end impunity through extended accountability processes; and 6) support, expand and protect human rights mobilization. As such, *Evidence for hope* is a great example of using applied history for problem solving and policy advice.

Finally, what makes *Evidence for hope* so interesting is the unconventional writing style. In this book, Sikkink generously allows readers behind the scenes as she brings the chapters to life with personal stories. Opening up about her professional and personal trajectory—as a scholar, a woman and, above all, a human being—amplifies her voice and the book's lessons. In today's world, where creative thinking on present and future human rights challenges becomes increasingly imperative, *Evidence for hope* shows that there should remain no stringent boundaries between being, thinking and doing in the human rights field.

*Isabela Garbin Ramanzini, Harvard University, USA*

**The chessboard and the web: strategies of connection in a networked world.** By **Anne-Marie Slaughter**. New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press. 2017. 224pp. £18.99. ISBN 978 0 30021 564 9. Available as e-book.

The digital age is the age of metaphors. When we go 'online', we go everywhere and nowhere simultaneously. When we connect to the 'web', we interact with virtual communities that are ever present and never present, and as we try to navigate our way through 'cyberspace' we often encounter 'firewalls' that prevent our access to information. We are also all members of a myriad of intersecting 'networks' that we can neither visualize nor touch. It is therefore fitting that Anne-Marie Slaughter begins her investigation of contemporary diplomacy with two metaphors—those of the chessboard and of the web.

According to Slaughter, the chessboard metaphor has long since encouraged diplomats to view diplomacy as a strategic battle of wits in which policy-makers analyse the actions of powerful states while anticipating the counteractions of other states. Yet equally important nowadays is the metaphor of the web, which encourages diplomats to view the world as consisting of a vast infrastructure of networks which connect individuals, groups and

## *Book reviews*

organizations. These networks pay little attention to traditional diplomatic concepts, such as boundaries and sovereignty, and thrive on relationships and innovation.

Importantly, Slaughter does not advocate that policy-makers employ one metaphor at the expense of the other, but that they simultaneously apply both in order to fulfil their foreign policy goals. Viewing the world as consisting solely of unitary states ignores the networks that connect citizens, institutions and organizations as well as the interdependence that binds the fate of nations. Similarly, viewing the world merely as a web of networks ignores traditional diplomatic levers. As Slaughter summarizes, policy-makers need to see in 'stereo' (pp. 66–75).

The first part of Slaughter's book is dedicated to explaining the logic of networks and analysing their characteristics. To do so, Slaughter draws insight from numerous disciplines ranging from political theory to computer science, biology, nanotechnology and social psychology (pp. 42–65). It is the breadth of her analysis that offers policy-makers a robust understanding of how networks operate and why they have come to dominate contemporary life. Next, Slaughter begins to weave together the chessboard and the web to exemplify how they can complement one another. As she herself remarks, policy-makers are good at creating coalitions to force the hands of other states. They are not, however, as adept at creating or leveraging networks of individuals and organizations geared towards achieving similar goals (pp. 74–5).

In the second part of the book, Slaughter distinguishes between different types of networks and the manner in which they can be used to specific ends. Resilience networks, for instance, may help nations face crises, whereas task networks may help streamline processes (pp. 80–134). Here, again, Slaughter offers a host of examples which is what makes this book so relevant. Slaughter's case-studies range from the US military to cities facing climate change, individuals collaborating online after natural disasters and scientists outsourcing research projects to online publics.

Slaughter then addresses the notion of network power. Her book has a moral argument at its core, one which states that diplomacy is not merely about power and interests but about people—about ensuring their well-being and creating environments in which they can flourish. Herein lies the power of the network: in its ability to connect communities, to stimulate conversations and to propose innovative solutions to 'wicked' problems (pp. 61–82). In summary, Slaughter's book is both a guide for diplomats and a vision for the future of diplomacy. The web therefore emerges as more than a metaphor but as a new grand strategy to guide foreign policy-making. While her account focuses primarily on US foreign policy, its lessons and insights are applicable to many states. The only domain in which Slaughter fails to address a substantial challenge is that of privacy rights. She seems to have an innate trust in the social media companies that facilitate many of the networks now comprising the web. Yet the more networked the world becomes, and the more the web deals with sensitive issues, the more the power of US tech giants will need to be checked. Diplomats will need to find a way to lead the charge for digital rights—one that incorporates the chessboard and the web.

*Ilan Manor, University of Oxford, UK*

**Dilemmas of humanitarian aid in the twentieth century.** Edited by Johannes Paulmann. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2016. 460pp. £75.00. ISBN 978 0 19877 897 4.

*Dilemmas of humanitarian aid in the twentieth century* is a comprehensive historical account of humanitarianism from the mid-nineteenth century to the 2000s. It situates developments in international aid, assistance and relief in various parts of the world within larger, enduring themes. As the editor, Johannes Paulmann, underlines, ‘some of the dilemmas of modern humanitarianism have been inherent in humanitarian practice for more than a century’ (p. 3). The contributors to the volume focus on interconnected turning-points in the history of humanitarianism. Matthias Schulz and Daniel Maul detail the beginnings of aid internationalism, focusing on the ICRC and the American Friends Service Committee, from the late nineteenth century to the first two decades of the twentieth. They argue that the emergent humanitarianism ‘undermined the sole authority of the state in international relations’ (p. 61). Nevertheless, as Alain Guilloux remarks, these new forms of assistance were ‘integrated with military health services and firmly entrenched in nationalistic values’ (p. 401).

The interwar period brought about a new stage in humanitarianism, characterized by two phenomena. First, as Davide Rodogno (with Shaloma Gauthier and Francesca Piana), Joëlle Droux and Heide Fehrenbach show in separate chapters, there was a shift towards professionalization, reliant ‘on social scientific knowledge-based approaches to the management of humanitarian problems’ (p. 167). Rodogno investigates how the League of Nations’ mission in Western Thrace, Greece, from 1922 to 1924, turned into a social engineering experiment—hardly unique at the time. Droux describes the transformation of the Save the Children International Union into ‘an expert network advocating child protection’ (p. 187). Fehrenbach examines the continuity between pre- and post-1945 developments by looking at the International Social Service’s, and later the United Nations’, roles in international adoption. Second, Francisco Javier Martínez-Antonio, Caroline Reeves and Rodogno tie humanitarianism to imperialism and western claims of civilizational superiority. In his chapter about the ICRC’s reactions to the Rif War in Morocco—which involved two colonial powers of different weight, Spain and France, as well as Riffian forces—Martínez-Antonio connects the weakness of the nation-state to humanitarian non-intervention. Similar ambiguity characterized the ICRC’s position in Biafra, Bangladesh and Ethiopia. Reeves shows how the Chinese Red Cross movement was tied to nation-building and to the country’s will for membership among the ‘civilized’ nations. This story is counterbalanced with a discussion of the American Red Cross’s extraterritoriality, which signalled the West’s control over a China that allegedly could not reform on its own. Daniel Palmieri and Irène Herrmann emphasize that, during the Second World War, Sweden and Switzerland advanced their national interests through local Red Cross societies and the ICRC.

In the post-1945 period, the connection between the globalization of humanitarianism and military and (neo-)colonial interests remains an underlying thread. Shobana Shankar discusses how the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) acquired its apolitical and universalist reputation by becoming involved in assistance to Africa. She insists that there was intense competition over humanitarian interventions in decolonizing African territories, which led to decentralization, as aid often crippled the new states’ sovereignty. Youngsun Hong discusses the Algerian War through the lens of Cold War politics and the surge of internationalism in the global South. She stresses that ‘the postwar global humanitarian regime’ was constructed on ‘the civilizational difference between Europe and extra-Europe. This view also underpinned the Cold War logic, which portrayed decolonization crises in the global South as security problems’ (p. 290).

Konrad J. Kuhn, Florian Hannig, Michael Vössing and Michal Givoni analyse another shift in humanitarianism, taking place from the 1960s onwards. They distinguish two departure-points: the challenge to government prerogative to distribute relief and the demands for solidarity within the ‘Third World’, based on principles of justice and the right to freedom from famine, disease and oppression. Kuhn deals with the reactions to the humanitarian crisis of the Nigerian–Biafran War and the campaign against the Cahora Bassa Dam in Mozambique. He argues that ‘the “Third World” became a political and social laboratory and performative tool for forming new concepts of solidarity and justice’ (p. 326). The closing chapters bring readers into the post-Cold War era. Guilloux explains Asian states’ reluctance to endorse post-1945 humanitarian norms. While pointing to these countries’ focus on sovereignty and to the lack of homogeneity in the region, the author also insists that ‘the legacy of colonization, control of the United Nations by western powers in the 1950s and 1960s, western pressure and interventions, and the Cold War’ are contributing factors (pp. 406–407). Eva Spies examines ‘participatory development’, which aims to involve the beneficiaries of interventions by ‘listening to their needs and aims, and encouraging them to assume responsibility for and control over “their” development’ (p. 420). However, there remains tension between empowerment and donors’ and aid workers’ inability to come to terms with the ‘other’ and to question how their expertise applies in local contexts.

The dilemmas of humanitarianism boil down to six phenomena: the distance between those who suffer and the providers of aid; the impact of the media, which is sometimes at odds with assistance priorities; the politics of empathy, as narratives of suffering and relief obscure the roots of crises; the links between humanitarianism and politics, as the former is instrumentalized for the benefit of the latter; aid organizations’ own policies, which combine national, international and transnational agendas; and the intercultural and subjective relationships between donors and beneficiaries. This edited volume discusses these dilemmas in ‘a polycentric, multilayered manner’ (p. 28), surveying humanitarianism in the *longue durée* and within a global context.

*Bogdan C. Jacob, Institute of History of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Hungary*

## **Conflict, security and defence**

**Armageddon and paranoia: the nuclear confrontation. Sir Rodric Braithwaite.** London: Profile Books. 2017. 512pp. £17.72. ISBN 978 1 78125 719 7. Available as e-book.

Rodric Braithwaite’s new book is, like his other works, well and clearly written, informed by careful research and a thought-provoking read. The bulk of the text is devoted to an account of the nuclear confrontation between the United States and the USSR from 1945 to the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, with an analysis of its evolving consequences. Like *Across the Moscow river* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), *Moscow 1941* (London: Profile Books, 2006) and *Afgantsy* (London: Profile Books, 2011; reviewed in *International Affairs* 87: 3, May 2011), the book benefits from Braithwaite’s deep affection for Russia and the Russians—bolstered by his ability to get the knowledgeable among them to talk to him with trust. It is fitting in this regard that he has dedicated *Armageddon and paranoia* to his late wife Jill, who played such a vital part in that achievement.

Braithwaite begins his account by recalling the moment when, as a boy, he read in *The Times* on 8 August 1945 that Hiroshima had been obliterated by an atomic bomb two days earlier. He concludes at the end that ‘humanity had got itself into a fix from which it

seemed incapable of extricating itself ... The sword of Damocles remained suspended, though by a stouter thread' (p. 405). He had in mind, in referring to a stouter thread, the 'cobweb' (p. 316) of international agreements covering both nuclear and conventional arms limitation, gradually developed from 1963, which he discusses in detail in his book. But while the dangerous logic of mutually assured destruction (MAD) had, as Braithwaite describes, become ever clearer over time to US and Soviet leaders, as well as to their British and French counterparts, the sword of Damocles was still there. Their efforts to create a world free of nuclear weapons has never been realized.

Anyone, Soviet, American or European, who lived through the years of the Cold War—and from its beginning with Hiroshima through to the Cuban Missile Crisis in particular—will remember their persistent fears of extinction under a mushroom cloud. Braithwaite extends this period into what he calls a second Cold War in the first years of the Reagan presidency—a memory that perhaps has been mellowed for others by the achievements of the later Reagan, Gorbachev and Thatcher years. Those achievements, however, have been frayed recently. The arms limitations, agreements and the behaviour and attitude that underpinned them have been weakened, in the European theatre in particular, and as the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty has lost some of its force. There are more nuclear powers in the world today and not all of them are led (speaking with due diplomatic caution) responsibly. The current President of the United States and the current, but also longer-serving, President of Russia, make freer reference to their abilities to reduce others to ashes than was the case until quite recently. The underlying narrative between Washington and Moscow, and between other European powers and Moscow for that matter, has, too, returned to something closer to that which prevailed in the middle of the last century.

There are numerous references in *Armageddon and paranoia* to the then US contention that the Soviet Union aimed to dominate the planet. That may indeed read as paranoia today, but should be remembered along with the reality of Soviet action in Europe and beyond, together with the ideology that appeared to inspire it. Braithwaite records, for example, the comment by Milton Bearden, the head of the CIA's Soviet/East European Division at the time of the Soviet Union's collapse: 'We didn't realise how f\*\*\*\*\* scared Soviet leaders were of us' (p. 214). Braithwaite's account of the confrontation is also a story of the inherent difficulty that each of the principal sides had in understanding, let alone empathizing with, each other, particularly during its formative years—especially considering the force of the emotional narrative that informed their relations. Furthermore, his comment as to the relationship today is apt: 'the myth that a great country had been destroyed by a lethal combination of secret foreign enemies and the domestic traitors they recruited ... survived, took deep root, and flourished in Putin's Russia' (p. 235).

*Armageddon and paranoia's* account of the development of the atomic bomb in the United States and its use in Japan is followed with the argument that Stalin instantly saw that attack as atomic blackmail against the USSR (p. 75). He would, of course, would he not? The wider truth may, however, be that once a nuclear weapon had been shown to be feasible, others would seriously aspire to have such weapons themselves—all the more so in the case that they felt themselves at risk from potential or actual enemies. That is, after all, why the British began their own programme during the Second World War—in case Nazi Germany got there first. The 'inexorable logic' (p. 397) still has politicians, whatever their nationality, trapped in its web—even though, as Braithwaite makes clear, an actual nuclear war would make 'no sense'. *Armageddon and paranoia* abounds with the illustration of these truths, and with the anguish of the scientists, whether Soviet or US, who pursued the development of ever more terrible weapons despite themselves. Few, indeed, were able to act on the truth

## *Book reviews*

set out by the leading British scientist Henry Tizard, when the development of hydrogen weapons was considered by the United Kingdom in the mid-1950s: 'We are not a Great Power, and never will be again, but if we continue to behave like a Great Power we shall soon cease to be a great nation'. The inference for some of today's leaders is obvious, but the chances of it being respected are remote.

*Andrew Wood, Chatham House, UK*

**Weapon of choice: small arms and the culture of military innovation.** By **Matthew Ford**. London: Hurst. 2017. 251pp. £20.81. ISBN 978 1 84904 650 3.

Over the past decade, the study of change and transformation in military organizations has become a major and very productive subfield of security and strategic studies. The campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan have led researchers to explore mechanisms of military change beyond the 'major transformations' studied in the 1990s, in particular bottom-up adaptation. One of the contemporary challenges for the field is to reconcile the study of top-down innovation, including the introduction of major weapon systems that have had a structuring effect on the armed forces, with the analysis of small-scale, incremental change. In particular, there is a need for more studies exploring how adaptation can become institutionalized as this subject is currently under-researched.

Matthew Ford's book helps fill this gap in a creative and well-researched manner, which makes it an important point of reference for future work in the field. First, Ford correctly identifies that innovation studies are usually overly focused on major weapon systems at the expense of smaller innovations. Second, instead of seeing culture as a barrier to the institutionalization of bottom-up adaptation, he contends that an approach rooted in the social shaping of technology (SST) yields more explanatory power. Indeed, there is an ontological problem in treating culture as an independent or intervening variable. An approach weaving together technological practices and their cultural environment helps capture the struggles for power, status and authority between competing individuals and groups, which shape weapon design, production and adoption.

To illustrate his claims, Ford examines a number of debates related to small arms since 1900, gradually adding layers of complexity to his analysis. He begins with an intramilitary debate in the United Kingdom and the United States on the ideal design of the assault rifle, which reveals different conceptions of military professionalism. The following chapter introduces readers to the role played by civilian engineers in defining weapon requirements when the professional community—the armed forces—is divided on what constitutes the ideal weapon. He then traces a scientific debate on the definition and measurement of 'lethality', which took place between the 1940s and the 1960s, and illustrates that the 'science of killing' was hotly contested and thus easily used by various groups to promote their preferred technological solutions. The next chapter deals with the influence of bureaucratic infighting on weapon adoption, which can favour some actors (such as weapons producers) at the expense of others, before turning to the importance of a supranational bureaucracy, such as NATO, as a standardization mechanism. Interestingly, he notes that despite its political primacy, the US is far from always getting its way in terms of approved standards within the alliance and was forced to adopt a Belgian design for ammunition in the 1970s. Finally, the last chapter explores the ways industries can play with 'warrior envy' and the competition for social status between military units, where elite units are emulated by standard infantry, possibly at the expense of weapon design.

The way Ford gradually introduces more complexity to his analysis—which may be surprising to readers used to the ‘theory-testing’ standard of writing regularly employed in security and strategic studies—is one of the strengths of the book and means that the author is not a prisoner of his theoretical approach. For example, in addition to SST, he borrows from the literature on bureaucratic and alliance politics, which allows him to capture the variety of factors that influence small arms design and production. The author must also be commended for his mastery of the technical details of small arms functioning and design, which he manages to integrate into his narrative without overwhelming the reader: he masterfully goes back and forth between technology and politics, thus making what could have been a dry work an easy read.

Two limitations must, however, be noted. First, Ford could have referenced the existing literature on applying SST approaches to armament policies in more detail. While he correctly identifies gaps in the innovation and adaptation literature, it could also have been useful for readers to see how his focus on small arms compares with existing studies applying SST to major weapon systems, such as nuclear capabilities. Second, the author could have further developed the implications of his approach for future research on military adaptation and innovation, as this is unfortunately limited to a few pages in the conclusion. However, those minor criticisms should not discourage readers interested in military change from engaging with this fine book.

*Olivier Schmitt, University of Southern Denmark, Denmark*

**The forgotten front: patron–client relationships in counterinsurgency.** By **Walter C. Ladwig III**. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2017. 362pp. £67.43. ISBN 978 1 10717 077 3. Available as e-book.

Insurgency is the most prevalent type of war nowadays: with the exception of (uninhabited) Antarctica, insurgencies are now taking place on every continent—even in Europe. As the Syrian Civil War illustrates, contemporary insurgencies usually ‘attract’ external interventions in favour of either the insurgents or the counter-insurgents. In the context of a growing number of regionalized or internationalized intrastate conflicts, Walter Ladwig III has written a thought-provoking book on the intricate relationship between a patron (the external actor who supports the besieged government) and a client (the indigenous regime that confronts the insurgency)—an under-studied aspect of irregular warfare.

With a strong record of publications on this subject, Ladwig does not just analyse this patron–client relationship in the abstract, but creates a new theory about this key theme in counter-insurgency (COIN). He applies insights from the discipline of economics and, in particular, from agency theory. Contrary to popular belief, the patron–client relationship in irregular warfare does not always evolve in the patron’s favour and usually entails more *quid pro quo* than imposing *diktats* from above. In fact, the patron–client relationship is often saddled with two problems: first, the divergence of a patron’s goals or ideal timescale from those of the client (especially in the key field of reforms) and, second, the weak motivation of a client to comply with a patron’s advice due to the latter’s strong commitment to (and dependence on) the alliance (pp. 26–47). Ladwig painstakingly examines the four theories of patron–client dynamics (power asymmetry, aid dependence, relative strategic value and selectorate theory) and argues that patrons attempt to influence their clients either through incentives (*inducement*) or through strict conditions on aid (*conditionality*) (pp. 53–83).

Ladwig selected three twentieth-century civil wars—in El Salvador, the Philippines and Vietnam (oddly Greece was omitted)—as ‘test tubes’ for his key hypotheses, due to their

similar characteristics. First of all, these conflicts took place during the Cold War with US involvement in supporting the regimes fighting the insurgency—all in the name of the containment of communism. Second, the US military was not directly involved in these conflicts, despite several dissenting voices in Washington, and only in the case of South Vietnam did Washington eventually deploy troops. And third, the parliamentary regimes in these countries underwent immense pressure from extra-parliamentary (and non-democratic) actors and, in two of the above cases, were replaced by military juntas.

By using a plethora of archives (24!), the author examines these wars in detail and concludes that US allies did not always conform to the superpower's wishes—with the exception of their former colony (Philippines) where inducement delivered. South Vietnam and El Salvador complied only when the US set conditions for the provision of aid (p. 7). For example, the author demonstrates that South Vietnam was not always an 'obedient client' of the US, as people tend to think, since neither President Dwight D. Eisenhower nor John F. Kennedy attached strict conditions to aid (pp. 209–212). This inability of the US always to control the actions of its allies, especially when it came to mass violations of human rights, protracted the conflict in South Vietnam and tarnished the reputation of the superpower in El Salvador. But Ladwig does not devote his book only to theory-building and hypothesis-testing, he also offers advice on how to navigate the murky waters of patron–client relations (pp. 47–51; 305–312).

Quite naturally, this book suffers from minor flaws, but these do not diminish its usefulness. For example, the author does not examine the four main variables in insurgent strategy, such as geography (pp. 16–17). Furthermore, the author could have extended his in-depth analysis to contemporary conflicts as, in the age of information, another (independent) variable is added to the equation of war: mass media and public opinion. This variable can dramatically affect an irregular conflict and, by extension, the patron–client relations.

In summary, the book is essential reading for specialists of International Relations and of strategy, as it critically examines the patron–client relationship in the context of COIN and contributes immensely to the scholarship on irregular warfare. I am hopeful that this book will pave the way for new works on other actors, for example Britain, and, especially, on contemporary conflicts, including the Syrian Civil War.

*Spyridon Plakoudas, American University in the Emirates, UAE*

**Does terrorism work?: a history.** By Richard English. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2016. 368pp. Index. £15.67. ISBN 978 0 19960 785 3. Available as e-book.

Victory is a concept that rarely applies to modern terrorism. Terrorism is the realm of *partial* victories and, more often than not, of elongated stalemates. A terrorist group may well shed blood in the name of pushing forward its purported agenda, only to find itself hemmed in and perhaps eliminated by state security forces. But the germ of the terrorists' cause might live on, perhaps in the form of political movements it inspires or changes into. As for the state, while it may defiantly declare not to have given in to the terrorists, this rings hollow if it made big concessions along the way or adopted such repressive measures as to have justified their grievances. In other words, it is hard for any side to declare victory.

What can be construed as success in a terrorist campaign is a worthy subject for scholarly attention. Richard English's book asks a straightforward question: does terrorism work? The answer is anything but simple. At its heart, English's undertaking is to study causation and outcomes. He unpicks the agendas and operations of different terrorist campaigns so as

to fathom how far their causes were advanced, and in what conditions this occurred.

This book adopts a historical approach, and herein is the central conundrum of the undertaking: just how much is there to learn today from terrorist campaigns rooted in the twentieth century? While casting the matter as one of ‘old versus new terrorism’ is too simplistic, the yawning gap between the mechanics of terrorism in different eras becomes strikingly apparent when one works through the four terrorist campaigns English selected to study in detail. Each is unique, but to adapt George Orwell’s phrase, one seems rather more unique than the others. Three of the case-studies examine non-state armed groups seeking some form of secession from an existing state—the Provisional Irish Republican Army’s (PIRA) campaign against the United Kingdom, Hamas’s against Israel, and the Basque Homeland and Liberty’s (ETA) against Spain. The other case is Al-Qaeda and it seems like the odd one out—given its far more expansive, and arguably less focused or defined, campaign goals which are being executed by a franchise of groups operating under its name.

Moreover, *Does terrorism work?* advances no grand theories, aside from a useful taxonomy for distinguishing between degrees of success. Ultimate goals clearly differ from more immediate ambitions, and the notion of ‘partial strategic victory’ (as explored here) is an intellectually healthy way of thinking about outcomes—especially if terrorist campaigns are being waged with generational timescales in mind. Tactical successes and the existential rewards of simply participating in a violent struggle add further nuance to understanding success in the context of terrorism. Al-Qaeda, for example, has not expelled the United States, and its apostate presence, from the Middle East, but it has advanced and sustained a resistance movement that links different parts of the world in which Islam is practised. Unfortunately, and to the detriment of this case-study, Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) receives only a cursory mention. Perhaps the author felt that an explicitly historical analysis of a terrorist campaign that is still in motion was unwise.

Stylistically, the book is very much written in the academic mould. Footnotes litter, and sometimes interrupt, sentences, thus providing a paper trail of sourcing which occasionally disrupts the flow. On the rare occasion the language becomes more casual, a rather questionable aside is delivered (is describing the Bible as ‘the most important of all books’ [p. 220] really appropriate in a work of this nature?).

None of this ought to undermine the usefulness of the book. Context is the crucial ingredient when it comes to analysing what amounts to success for a terrorist campaign and, thankfully, this is a book awash with historical detail. This detail will force the reader to think more precisely about the circumstances in which terrorists of many types have been able to proclaim successes. Finally, perhaps the most crucial insight is delivered early on: ‘It is worth remembering that state responses to terrorism almost certainly do more to shape the world and its politics than do non-state terrorist acts themselves’ (p. 3). Bringing about decisive political change is rarely within the purview of the terrorists—rather, terrorism works by provoking overreaction and by latching onto or exacerbating existing global trends. Taken in this light, English usefully draws attention to the vexed question of victory or what amounts to success in terrorist and counterterrorist campaigns.

*Samir Puri, King’s College London, UK*

## Political economy, economics and development

**Rape loot pillage: the political economy of sexual violence in armed conflict.** By Sara Meger. New York: Oxford University Press. 2016. 248pp. £48.77. ISBN 978 0 19027 766 6. Available as e-book.

In *Rape loot pillage*, Sara Meger offers a feminist political economy perspective on sexual violence in conflict. Meger's book is skilfully written and very well argued. Although other feminist scholars have also discussed securitization, Meger's analysis goes deeper, by drawing on the Marxist concept of 'commodity fetishism' to explain the "fetishization" of sexual violence in international relations' (p. 17). Meger argues that 'fetishization' has created a political economy of conflict-related sexual violence, in which 'rape as a weapon of war' becomes simply a commodity for consumption.

In chapter one, Meger sets the scene by discussing the recent securitization of sexual violence, moving on, in chapter two, to advocate for the use of a feminist political economy approach to the analysis of conflict-related sexual violence. She argues that, because conflicts involve struggles over productive and reproductive resources, sexual violence perpetrated in this context is often linked to the political and economic drivers of conflicts and to the operation of gender at the individual, cultural and structural levels. Meger states that conflict-related sexual violence 'serves the wider project of "flexibilization" of raw material extraction that is essential for a larger, productive global economy (p. 96). In chapter three, Meger provides a preliminary typology of sexual violence in conflict, by looking at how and why sexual violence is perpetrated in ideological, economic, genocidal and interstate wars. In the following three chapters, the author goes on to discuss sexual violence as, respectively, an instrument of terror, a weapon of war and an element of genocide. She then dedicates the last two chapters to studying the political economy of sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and sexual violence against men and boys in conflict.

It is undeniable that Meger's book is a valuable and much needed contribution to the study of conflict-related sexual violence from feminist a political economy perspective. However, after reading *Rape loot pillage*, I was left with a number of questions. To start with, I wondered whether Meger's approach to sexual violence was perhaps too reductionist and lacking in nuance. Despite acknowledging the diversity of sexual violence in conflict, Meger limits her analysis to sexual violence perpetrated by armed actors, including government forces. However, sexual violence is widely committed by civilians, including intimate partners. Despite this, in her case-study on the DRC, Meger only analyses violence perpetrated by armed groups, including the country's armed forces. By choosing only to discuss sexual violence by armed actors as a strategy for warfare, Meger prioritizes the study of this kind of sexual violence and, inadvertently, contributes to the securitization of rape, a perspective which she herself is highly critical of.

*Rape loot pillage* is very rich on a theoretical level, although the analysis could have been deepened by including the voices and experiences of survivors of rape. In writing the book, Meger did not draw on interviews with victims of rape and, as such, this volume lacks a grounded perspective, rooted in survivors' experiences of rape in conflict. Moreover, distinguishing 'rape as a weapon of war' from rape as an instrument of terror or of genocide, although conceptually possible, may not be easily applied in practice. Questions also need to be asked about the usefulness of such categorizations of rape to survivors.

Gender-based violence is a continuum and sexual violence by civilians and armed actors in conflict cannot be studied in isolation. Furthermore, a political economy approach alone

does not account for the prevalence of sexual violence among and by civilians in conflict and post-conflict societies, nor does it convincingly explain opportunistic rape by armed groups. While Meger's book provides a very useful addition to the literature on rape by armed actors, a more nuanced and broader analysis of sexual violence in conflict—one that is rooted in survivors' experiences—is still needed.

*Sahla Aroussi, Coventry University, UK*

**The world after GDP: politics, business and society in the post-growth era.** By **Lorenzo Fioramonti.** Cambridge and Malden, MA: Polity Press. 2017. 240pp. £50.00. ISBN 978 1 50951 134 1. Available as e-book.

Nauru is a tiny island in Micronesia, the smallest nation in the Pacific and the third-smallest state in the world after the Vatican and Monaco. A remote colonial outpost for centuries, Nauru rose to global prominence in the 1970s when, all of a sudden, it recorded the highest GDP per capita in the world. A mass exploitation of its extensive reserves of phosphate, which is a key ingredient for the industrial production of fertilizers, triggered this unexpected economic boom. But the overexploitation of the mines quickly led to land degradation, altered the local ecosystem and condemned the island to extreme weather patterns and constant drought. The persistent impoverishment of the island has now pushed Nauru to the bottom of the global ranking for GDP per capita and has forced its government to constantly rely on foreign aid from Australia, Taiwan and New Zealand. The moral of this story is twofold. Economic growth is not for ever. Short-sightedness, greediness and mismanagement can lead to abrupt reversals of fortune in small and large economies alike. Second, GDP, which is a measure of market activity, often provides a distorted view of reality. Nauru's skyrocketing economic performance paved the way for its permanent impoverishment, but official national accounting figures only revealed this when the damage to the island was already irreparable.

Lorenzo Fioramonti provides a comprehensive, passionate and detailed overview of what is wrong with GDP and sketches out a somewhat ambitious socio-economic vision for building better societies. In his own words, GDP 'drives a suicidal race to the cliff, which imposes stressful habits, generates irrational desires and threatens to tear the world apart, while undermining the very social and natural foundations that make life possible'.

Fioramonti, though, is sometimes too forceful and biased in his negative assessment of GDP. It has benefits which are worth mentioning, such as the many ways in which the measurement is effective as an economic policy-making tool. First, GDP tracks the performance of the economy and monitors the evolution of incomes and expenditure. Second, it allows for immediate and straightforward comparisons between countries. Third, it provides essential information about the fiscal capacity of a country. Finally, it shows how the economy reacts to different policy scenarios. Thanks to the guidance provided by GDP, central bankers have managed to reduce the severity of the business cycle. Before the Second World War, the average duration of a downturn in the United States was 21 months; since the 1950s this has dropped to eleven months.

Thus, the problem is not GDP *per se*, but the way it is used. GDP was never meant to be an indicator of welfare, happiness or well-being—even if it ended up being treated as such. Even Simon Kuznets, one of the intellectual fathers of this metric, recognized that GDP was a highly imperfect indicator that had to be used 'only with some qualifications' as, in his view, 'the welfare of a nation can scarcely be inferred from a measure of national income'.

So Fioramonti's position is hardly new. Already in 1990, the UN tried to move beyond GDP with its Human Development Index; in 1995 the think-tank Redefining Progress published the Genuine Progress Indicator; in 2008 French President Nicolas Sarkozy convened the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress; the OECD uses a dashboard of indicators for its Better Life Index; and in 2011 the UN adopted a resolution on 'Happiness: towards a holistic approach to development'. These schemes, like *The world after GDP*, advocate for the adoption of a mixed measurement that does not focus on one indicator. For example, the UN Resolution on Happiness was inspired by the Kingdom of Bhutan, which, for more than forty years, has maximized Gross National Happiness (GNH) rather than GDP. This indicator revolves around four pillars: sustainable development, preservation and promotion of cultural values, conservation of the natural environment and the establishment of good governance.

But there are dangers with these alternative metrics too. GDP, no matter how flawed, captures an objective dimension of growth, while alternative measures are biased towards more subjective features of development. It is difficult to find a widely accepted definition of happiness. We are not all happy in the same way, which makes comparing countries difficult. And dictators could easily manipulate happiness-related indicators when they fail to boost their economies. Rather than dismissing GDP, as Fioramonti does without providing a clear alternative, it would be wiser to refine it and combine the information it provides with other socio-economic indicators, including the GNH.

Fioramonti's book is not just a detailed critique of GDP, it is also a political manifesto against capitalist societies in a globalized world. He is an active supporter of the sharing economy and community-based lifestyles, and argues in favour of the proliferation of 'myriad peer-to-peer energy projects, local farmers' markets, slow food co-operatives, community gardening projects, maintenance and refurbishment services, craft workshops, people-to-people care initiatives, integrated health, parent-driven schools and participatory conservation practices'. While the author clearly has a point, he does not make a convincing case for how and why the world should all of a sudden move in that direction—or whether that system would necessarily be superior to the current one. Like all great inventions, GDP has been abused beyond its original purpose. It is now time to recognize its limitations, but it is too early to call for its demise.

*Edoardo Campanella, IE University, Spain*

**Popular culture, political economy and the death of feminism: why women are in refrigerators and other stories.** By Penny Griffin. Abingdon and New York: Routledge. 2015. 264pp. £95.00. ISBN 978 0 41552 226 7. Available as e-book.

Popular culture is often deemed to be 'unworthy' of analysis, yet it is essential in producing our knowledge of the world and each other. This is especially true for women, who historically have been represented in film, television and literature through narratives of sexual violence and/or derision. However, within Penny Griffin's field—International Political Economy (IPE)—popular culture is not recognized as an important site of investigation (p. 4). Griffin's book, therefore, is a highly important and exciting contribution to the field. She states that IPE scholars need to put their 'gendered lenses' on to make true sense of politics (p. 4) and offers an exploration into the ways that popular culture has produced and maintained damaging narratives surrounding feminism. Overall, she makes the point that 'representations matter' (p. 1) and that dismissing popular culture ignores its enormous impact on current politics and our understandings of gender, which are inextricably linked.

Griffin collected data for her book through general discussions around the analysis of popular culture, citing Angela McRobbie's *The aftermath of feminism* (London: Sage, 2008) and Janet Halley's *Split decisions* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006) as foundational texts for her analysis. She also collected online survey data from participants who answered in-depth questions relating to feminism and popular culture, which formed the basis of a qualitative analysis of their responses.

The first chapters set out the importance of western popular culture's impact on feminism and, subsequently, on the 'circulation (and regulation) of knowledge' in general (p. 21). Griffin makes the important point that, despite IPE's focus on understandings of 'power relationships involved in capitalist culture', it has wholly failed to discuss the creation of identities through popular culture. For example, she notes that we (civilians) make sense of war by watching television shows and films such as *MASH*, *Rambo* and *Black Hawk Down* (p. 24). Thus, she contends that popular culture helps to produce knowledge for the maintenance of existing world orders. Citing Stuart Hall, Griffin places emphasis on the importance of discourse in producing and sustaining meaning about our identities and lived experiences.

Moreover, she suggests that while the media and communications industries are controlled by a small number of individuals, new technologies have meant that popular culture is produced 'by the people as it is for the people' (p. 35). This leads Griffin to ask questions about the way in which feminism has been positioned through the production of popular culture. For example, she cites Hollywood as an example of how a lack of women in production often leads to damaging representations of femininity on screen. Likewise, the practices of film criticism are in themselves gendered, with it remaining a 'predominantly male activity' (p. 58). Griffin notes that while the gender divisions are less apparent in areas such as television, radio and the news media, these are still dominated by white men. She continues to explore the ways in which verbal and visual messages are created through popular culture by highlighting the importance of reading an image. Here, she adopts a post-structuralist perspective on the process of reading, deconstructing an image by 'contextualizing, historicizing and seeking out the ambiguities and ambivalences in a given source' (p. 65). This chapter continues to discuss popular culture's 'uneasy relationship' with feminism, suggesting that feminist ideas are often incorporated into television shows and films in order to address women as 'consumers'.

Next, Griffin attempts to discuss where feminism sits within popular culture today. She notes that the announcement of the 'death of feminism' has led to uncertainty about feminism's role within popular culture (p. 89). In many ways, Griffin argues, popular culture has contributed to the maintenance of its image as being 'uncool' or 'outdated'. However, despite western culture still representing women in a discriminatory manner, Griffin states that she was uplifted and encouraged by some of her findings. Mostly, she proposes that the question of 'where has feminism gone?' should be turned into 'where is feminism embodied?' Here, Griffin uses the example of social media as a space for resistance and feminist practice (p. 181). Moreover, she suggests that feminism has many definitions, it has different meanings for different people, with individuals embracing it for a variety of reasons.

Griffin's most important contribution to the literature is her challenge to the notion that popular culture is not a 'serious' field of enquiry for IPE. Within the social sciences, popular culture is often seen as being frivolous or soft, compared to traditional, 'hard' scholarship. However, Griffin's book makes a crucial point about the importance of popular culture, which opens the doors for a wider discussion about how we 'formulate knowledge about the world' (p. 177). Her research into anti-feminism and popular culture provides readers

## *Book reviews*

with a strong insight into the ‘vibrant yet fragmented’ nature of feminism today and with hope about its future. In this sense, another triumph of Griffin’s book is its resistance to normative understandings of social media as being a place for narcissistic millennials. I would like to see more written about the relationship between feminism and social media, perhaps with a stronger emphasis on its ability to carve out spaces for resistance online. For example, I especially enjoyed Griffin’s discussion of the Ryan Gosling ‘Hey Girl’ meme as a play on celebrity feminism and would have liked to have seen a more in-depth discussion of meme culture in general.

*Amelia Morris, University of Birmingham, UK*

## **Europe**

**Public opinion, legitimacy and Tony Blair’s war in Iraq. By James Strong.** Abingdon and New York: Routledge. 2017. 228pp. £110.00. ISBN 978 1 13820 071 5. Available as e-book.

When the report of the Iraq Inquiry was finally published in July 2016, the executive summary alone was 150 pages long. The full Chilcot report filled twelve volumes; the inquiry had certainly been exhaustive. Moreover, compared with the preceding Hutton and Butler reports, it was much more critical of the Blair government’s decision-making procedures, and particularly of the decision to join the United States in intervening in Iraq. It seemed, therefore, that there could be nothing more to say about the Iraq War. James Strong’s analysis of how Britain wound up fighting what many British people considered an illegitimate war in Iraq proves, however, that this is not the case. He adopts a constructivist approach and presents readers with a detailed analysis of public opinion polls and of the parliamentary and public debates prior to the invasion. Strong focuses particularly on the legitimacy of the war and his investigation adds to and complements the findings of the Chilcot report.

Strong does not set great store by opinion polls on their own, agreeing with Bourdieu and others that polling ‘creates the attitudes it claims to observe, by prompting responses, setting agendas and framing issues’ (p. 23). But polling does influence discussions among the elites who constitute public opinion. For this reason, Strong examines poll results before and during the war, together with a detailed qualitative content analysis of concurrent debates in the press and parliament. He finds that, although there was consistent public opposition to the war, once it became inevitable, polls, the press and parliament all ‘rallied round the flag’ (p. 33). But even in times of fierce opposition, the Blair government could rely on the Murdoch press and the Conservative Party for support. Moreover, whenever opposition to the war increased, the government employed a strategy of increasing its public communications, which was by and large effective in influencing the debate. Ironically, however, it was the manner of that communication that leads Strong to conclude that Prime Minister Tony Blair’s war in Iraq did not enjoy legitimacy.

Strong favours a Habermasian approach to defining legitimacy, because this fits with the Blair government’s explicit attempt to secure support for the intervention in Iraq through public debate. Legitimacy, according to this approach, is a discursive construct derived from and dependent on the way in which public debate produces social consensus. For social consensus to be legitimate, it must be achieved not by strategic persuasion, but by ‘communicative action’—that is by ‘the collective exercise of reason among free actors’ (p. 62). The three criteria which determine whether consensus is legitimate are truthfulness (presenting an accurate and complete account of the reasoning on which

belief is based); openness (encouraging a wide range of actors to join in the debate); and flexibility (willingness to revise one's position). Strong argues that the Blair government did not meet any of these criteria. It was not honest about the basis for the claims that it made (for example, the claim that Iraq presented a serious threat to the United Kingdom). Downplaying weaknesses in the evidence, it discouraged discussion of alternative scenarios that contradicted its own narrative, and Prime Minister Blair was certainly not willing to revise his personal position, since he was convinced that he was right. In short, the government's strategy of increasing its public communication when opposition to the war increased did succeed in influencing the agenda of debate in the short term, but it also fatally undermined the war's legitimacy. The most obvious example of intervention in the debate that deviated from the criteria of truthfulness, openness and flexibility was the publication in February 2003 of the 'dodgy dossier' (suggesting, among other claims, that Iraq could use weapons of mass destruction within 45 minutes of an order to do so). The dossier purported to be a neutral exercise in public information, but it was, in fact, an act of policy advocacy.

Strong concludes that whether or not the Iraq War was legal, it was illegitimate. But the way in which the decision to go to war was reached has had a long-term effect on foreign policy decision-making in the UK, arguably making it more democratic. Public pressure forced the Blair government to allow Members of Parliament to vote on the final decision to go to war. At the time, this worked to the government's advantage, since there was stronger support for the war among the Conservative opposition than there was in the Labour party. But it is now virtually unthinkable that any government could go to war without a vote in the House of Commons. And because of what happened in Iraq, governments can no longer rely on the approval of the House of Commons, as the vote against intervention in Syria in 2013 demonstrates. James Strong's excellent monograph, the first in the Routledge Studies in Foreign Policy Analysis, is a valuable addition to the FPA literature as well as to the many studies of the Iraq War.

*Margot Light, London School of Economics and Political Science, UK*

**Far-right politics in Europe.** By Jean-Yves Camus and Nicolas Lebourg. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. 2017. 320pp. £23.95. ISBN 978 0 67497 153 0. Available as e-book.

Although its topic is cutting edge and contemporary, *Far-right politics in Europe* fails to provide incisive analyses and instead settles for copious description, graced by the occasional qualifier. The text is replete with examples and references, but lacks any clear line of argument or defining thesis. The narrative is generally rather unguided and it is without an overall sense of direction.

These failings are partially explained by the fact that the book is a translation from French of *Les droites extrêmes en Europe*. Jean-Yves Camus is an expert on the French far right and radical Islamic groups. He is an associate research fellow of the French Institute for International and Strategic Affairs and, since 2014, he has run the Observatory of Radical Politics at the Jean Jaurès Foundation, a left-wing Parisian think-tank. Nicolas Lebourg is also situated on the political left in France, with ties to the French Socialist Party. He is a member of Camus's Observatory at the Jean Jaurès Foundation and a research fellow at the Institute for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies at George Washington University. Both are well-known and well-respected observers of extreme political movements. Despite their left-wing political views, the authors do not force on the reader an ideological

bias in their examination of the far right in Europe. Their failing is the lack of a frame of reference, rather than having one which is too strong.

The translator, Jane Marie Todd, is an experienced French-to-English practitioner who has won, among others, the Translation Prize of the French–American Foundation. Yet her rendering of the text into English is painfully and offputtingly close to the French. However, given the stylistic proclivities of the authors, it would have been particularly difficult to transmute the book into the kind of prose an English speaker would write and would like to read. For example, ‘this interpretative debate is particularly rich because of the burgeoning of ideologies and taxonomies that occurred within a limited span of space-time’ (p. 21) is the type of unexciting, meandering sentence that frustrates readers looking for a train of thought.

The book begins with an introduction that purports to define the far right while avoiding a definition which would have restricted the ability of the authors to go off on multiple tangents: ‘Hence, even if one considers the left–right axis relevant, one must not think that the far right lies to the right of the conservative and liberal parties. The political is multidimensional, and every political field intersects somewhat those adjoining it—but less along a single line than in interconnected spheres, each of them autonomous’ (pp. 42–3). Quite how things which are interconnected can at the same time be autonomous remains unexplained. Thankfully, the introduction does move largely according to a chronology, from the French Revolution to the present.

The subsequent chapters rely less on French references than the introduction. Chapter one, ‘What to do after fascism?’, looks at a variety of European countries, while the much shorter second chapter, ‘White power’, covers racist supremacy in many European countries—although, once again, more descriptively than analytically. The third chapter, ‘The new right in all its diversity’, constitutes a grab bag of trends and examples. Chapter four, ‘Religious fundamentalism’, concentrates almost exclusively on Roman Catholicism as a breeding ground for far-right politics, with a passing reference to Judaism. It is tempting to view this as a condemnation by Camus. The remaining chapters, ‘The populist parties’ and ‘What’s new in the East?’, are more or less self-explanatory and broadly conform to the earlier ones in their comprehensiveness and their randomness.

Only in the extremely brief conclusion do we begin to discern an actual analytical argument. This is typical of a traditional, French intellectual presentation, in which it is necessary to read an entire essay or book before the author offers his thesis at the very end. The book’s conclusion is entitled ‘Might the far right cease to be?’, and the authors’ answer is ‘no’. This is because the far right, as they describe it, modulates and mutates over time like any other political movement—and will do so especially if it remains significantly radical. The conclusion’s first sentence—‘The European far-right field has demonstrated a capacity to adapt to structural changes that no-one in the postwar years would have suspected’—would have made an excellent first sentence of the book. Had this thesis statement been pursued with rigour and discipline, the book could have given readers the full benefit of the authors’ extensive knowledge on the subject.

*Nicholas Dungan, SciencesPo, France*

## Russia and Eurasia

**The Crimean nexus: Putin's war and the clash of civilizations.** By Constantine Pleshakov. New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press. 2017. 192pp. £16.89. ISBN 978 0 300 21488 8. Available as e-book.

The title of the book—probably foisted on the author by the publisher—includes 'Putin', 'clash', 'war', 'civilization' and 'nexus', so readers may be excused for thinking that this is yet another exercise in Russia bashing: long on emotions and speculation but short on facts and analysis. This is certainly not the case.

There are not many authors who are as well qualified to cover the subject of Crimea as Constantine Pleshakov. He is a third-generation Crimean. After graduating from Moscow State University's department of Chinese history, Pleshakov joined the Institute for US and Canadian Studies in 1982. In 1995 he was invited to teach in one of the US colleges and subsequently became a naturalized citizen of the United States.

In his new book, Pleshakov pursues two principal subjects, namely an in-depth description of Crimea, providing a good coverage of all relevant elements and, equally well presented, a devastating evaluation of western, particularly US, policies in the region. The numerous embarrassing statements and policies of western politicians quoted by the author are revealing and well footnoted. Pleshakov's matter of fact criticism of the US and its exceptionalism is fair.

In chapter two, he addresses the issue of the alleged promises made by western leaders not to operate militarily beyond the 1989 internal German border. Promises were made, although they were not legally binding, and Russia never forgot them. NATO's enlargement eastwards guaranteed that its relationship with Moscow got progressively worse. When Russia reacted to some of the West's policies and interventions, western countries were usually annoyed and almost always surprised. If Russia were to 'invest' US\$5 billion in Mexico—the amount Washington 'invested' in Ukraine, according to Victoria Nuland (p. 54)—to improve its democracy, US politicians would most probably become hysterical. Pleshakov is much kinder to European politicians, maybe because he is based in the US and maybe because he would have had to spend too much time identifying them and their policies.

*The Crimean nexus* goes on to discuss the 'Agreement on the settlement of crisis in Ukraine', which was signed on 21 February 2014 by Viktor Yanukovich, the president of Ukraine, and three opposition leaders, and was witnessed by the EU. The agreement was instantly violated by the opposition, but the EU would not criticize it because that would have pleased Moscow. It is very likely that, if the US and the EU 'had been willing to enforce the February 21 agreement, Ukraine would have a new government without providing the Kremlin a pretext to seize Crimea' (p. 160).

This is the best book so far about the recent Russian-Ukrainian conflict, although it does not mention several important issues, possibly because in the institutionalized anti-Russian atmosphere of the West, with his own background, the author did not want to be accused of lobbying for Russia. Thus *The Crimean nexus* does not discuss the Crimean referendum of 20 January 1991—seven months before the failed coup against Gorbachev and the 'Act of Declaration of Independence of Ukraine'. Neither does Pleshakov mention the referendum of 27 March 1994, although he touches on the unsuccessful attempt of Yury Meshkov, a brutal but democratically elected leader of Crimea, to seek Russian support for independence. Neither referendum might have met legal standards but they represented important political and ethnic trends in the peninsula. The delicate matter of the legality of President

Yanukovych's electoral victory in 2010 has also been ignored by the author—although the final report of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe observer mission, released on 28 April 2010, does make it clear that Yanukovych was legally elected. Furthermore, the questions about the legality of Yanukovych's removal could provoke questions about the maturity of the present elected leaders and, more importantly, of Ukrainian voters. Yanukovych is gone, the voters are still there.

The last, excellent but brief, chapter covers reactions in the US to the conflict. The picture painted by the author is fair but not pretty. This is maybe the reason why he does not offer any suggestions as to what can be done about the conflict or try to predict the future. The future, at this stage, looks simple but not pleasant. Moscow will not give up Crimea. The West can grudgingly accept the present state of affairs, prolong and possibly widen the sanctions or embark on a suicidal military confrontation.

Finally, the author uses very few Russian or Ukrainian sources, but that seems to be deliberate. The English-language sources are good and the book is as much about western policies as it is about Crimea. *The Crimean nexus* is excellent and informative. It covers all the angles of the Crimean conflict and it is a pleasure to read.

*Henry Plater-Zyberk, The Russian/Ukrainian Defence and Security Review, Czech Republic*

**Orders to kill: the Putin regime and political murder.** By Amy Knight. New York: St. Martin's Press. 2017. 320pp. Index. £21.99. ISBN 978 1 25011 934 6. Available as e-book.

Some critics of President Putin, in Russia and elsewhere, rightly or wrongly regard him as a very accomplished liar, crook, kleptocrat and oligarch—but is he also an aider and abettor of terrorism and other manifestations of extremism? Obviously, a good place to examine this possibility would be The Hague, but in the meantime Amy Knight's book provides independent observers with much relevant material for a provisional assessment of the available evidence.

Knight's latest monograph is a very helpful collection of much of the non-classified information on some of Putin's most prominent alleged victims—both before and after he became president. Knight concentrates on the possibility of Putin being indirectly involved in the mysterious deaths of some of his persistent critics, such as Galina Starovoitova (d. 1998), Sergei Yushenkov and Yuri Shchekochikhin (d. 2003), Paul Klebnikov (d. 2004), Anna Politkovskaya and Aleksandr Litvinenko (d. 2006), Natalya Estemirova, Sergei Magnitsky, Stanislav Markelov and Anastasia Baburova (d. 2009) and Boris Nemtsov (d. 2015). One hopes that in an expanded, second edition, the author will discuss the strange demise of Anatoly Sobchak in 2000, as there are particularly strong grounds for thinking that Putin might have had some personal input into this particular tragedy. *Orders to kill* also speculates about the possible reasons for the suspicious deaths of Andrei Kozlov (d. 2006), and several more ambiguous figures such as Badri Patarkatsishvili (d. 2008), Alexander Perepilichny (d. 2012) and Boris Berezovsky (d. 2013). Knight, however, refrains from mentioning Mikhail Lesin (d. 2015), a former close accomplice of Putin, who just might have been thinking of defecting before dying from a succession of ferocious blows while on a short trip from one of his homes in California to Washington. Knight also provides information on the shady background of the Boston Marathon bombers.

Naturally, much of the currently available open-source evidence is only circumstantial, but could *all* the people named above, who succumbed when and where they did, have done so without a preliminary silent nod of approval from the man at the top? It seems somewhat unlikely, but the President is, of course, innocent until proven guilty. Barring the defection

of a trusted, high-ranking, disillusioned Russian official, we may have to wait a long time before a definitive answer to this not unimportant question is available.

*Orders to kill* also reminds readers of Putin's ultimate responsibility for three atrociously mismanaged rescue efforts during his first few years as president. First, the loss of the entire crew of the *Kursk* submarine in 2000—some of the sailors might have been saved if foreign offers of help had been accepted more promptly. Second, after the Dubrovka theatre hostage crisis in Moscow in 2002, some of those most guilty of the easily avoidable deaths of audience members were even rewarded for their ineptitude. Finally, the attack on a school in Beslan, North Caucasus, in 2004, resulted in hundreds of deaths because of the gross professional incompetence of those responsible for negotiating with the terrorists and for the clumsy attempt to bring the siege to an end. It is not known whether Putin is troubled when he is reminded of these disasters. After all, they are relatively minor incidents in comparison with the thousands of deaths, and not only in Chechnya and Ukraine, for which he is, as commander-in-chief, ultimately responsible. Such deaths might also be regarded as some of the 'political murders' of the book's subtitle, but they are outside the remit of this book. Knight concludes by stating that at 'some point, the Kremlin will face a day of reckoning' (p. 305).

Finally, alternative views might suggest that Putin can also be seen as a strategist with an impressive programme to split and weaken the West and thereby regain Russia's role and destiny as one of the world's Great Powers. Whether the tactics he is applying will prove to be counterproductive is not yet clear, but the widespread western reluctance to believe that the Cold War was merely suspended some thirty years ago and has now returned—literally with a vengeance—is a great help. Knight quotes former FBI Director James Comey as testifying that Russia is now 'the greatest threat to democracy "of any nation on earth"' (p. 309). Thus perhaps she will examine the wider context and the longer-term consequences of Putin's (mis)rule in her next volume?

*Martin Dewhurst, University of Glasgow, UK*

**Russia: the story of war.** By Gregory Carleton. Cambridge, MA, and London: Belknap Press. 2017. 304pp. £23.95. ISBN 978 0 67497 248 3. Available as e-book.

Scholars of Russian history and practitioners of contemporary Russia policy would benefit from reading Gregory Carleton's *Russia: the story of war*, given Russia's recent return to the forefront of international relations. The worsening of relations between Russia and the West—due, among other things, to Russia's interventions in Syria and Ukraine, interference in the 2016 US presidential election, and ongoing row with the US over the downsizing and closures of diplomatic facilities—makes Carleton's book essential to understanding how and why Russia sees itself as it does. His main argument is that the country's historical experience with warfare, which it considers unique, has given rise to a national 'myth of exceptionalism' that forms the foundation of a 'civic religion' which all Russians can unite around. War, more than anything else, Carleton claims, binds Russians together. Moreover, as the author notes, while a few key historic battles may be ingrained in Russian memory, none are more so than the Second World War—the civic religion's 'paradigmatic centre'—in which over 20 million Soviet citizens were killed.

Carleton argues that Russia's sense of exceptionalism is not dissimilar to America's, at least in terms of its adaptability, but what sets it apart is that Russia considers its history as cyclical rather than linear—that is, the country always emerges from a crisis or war reborn. Regarding Russia's civic religion, Carleton asserts that it is based on a number

## *Book reviews*

of important traits: a perpetual fear of invasion, and thus mistrust of outsiders, given the country's strategic geographic location; a quasi-religious duty to protect the 'motherland'—both its people and land—and the one true faith (Orthodox Christianity); the historical view that Moscow is a 'Third Rome', separate from the Vatican and Constantinople (Istanbul), controlled respectively by heretics and infidels; and the belief that Russia is the natural protector of traditional values that are increasingly under threat from the immoral West.

A strength of Carleton's analysis is that he rightly acknowledges the contrasting viewpoints of Russia and the West with regard to Russia's actions and its role in the world. As he claims, the West typically considers Russia as a villain whereas Russia tends to view itself as 'the defender, the protector, and even the savior or liberator', leading to what Carleton describes as the country's historic 'Janus-faced reputation'. However, to be fair, any western criticism of Russia is based on its behaviour rather than identity. As Carleton eloquently explains throughout his work, Russia's national identity is founded on the notion that the country is forever encircled by entities—whether the Mongols, Napoleon Bonaparte, Nazi Germany, Chechen terrorists or the US and NATO—who seek to weaken or otherwise cause it harm. He adds that Russia is widely considered, by contrast, to be an expansionist power in mainstream western discourse. For example, Carleton discusses Harvard University historian Richard Pipes, who describes how Russia, from roughly 1550 to 1700, 'acquired an average of 35,000 square kilometers—an area equivalent to modern Holland—every year for 150 consecutive years' (p. 30).

Given Russia's expansionist activities during the twentieth century, which included forcibly incorporating the Baltics into the Soviet Union, and the more recent examples, such as its 2014 annexation of Crimea, the Russian perspective that it is historically a victim of aggression from external actors with malign intent cannot be supported in all cases. Undoubtedly, some external forces have harmed Russia greatly over the course of its history, but it is inaccurate to say that Russia is forever a victim and not an aggressor. With regard to the current conflict in Ukraine, Russia officially views it, despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, as one spurred by a western-backed coup. In this scenario the US, the global bogeyman replacing Nazi Germany, removed a democratically elected president to support a neo-fascist government that allegedly represses ethnic Russians and Russian speakers, as part of a continual effort to weaken Russia.

Another critically important insight offered by Carleton is that this myth of exceptionalism and civic religion are not solely the creations of state propaganda outlets nor are they only propagated by them. Rather, they are ingrained into the Russian psyche dating back centuries, or at least to the period in which the Russian state was being consolidated, and are expressed not only via governmental organs but also through popular culture, including film, novels and poetry. Thus, it can be inferred that when attempting to understand official Kremlin statements or narratives, one should not be completely dismissive of them as mere propaganda. Instead, one must consider how Russia views itself, as well as the actions taken by outside powers, when developing a response to particular Russian actions. In short, Carleton's review of Russia's myth of exceptionalism and its civic religion provides an excellent start to achieving such an understanding.

*John A. Pennell, King's College London, UK*

**Disclaimer:** please note that the views expressed in this document reflect the personal opinions of the author and are entirely the author's own. They do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) or the United States Government. USAID is not responsible for the accuracy of any information supplied herein.

**Chechnya's terrorist network: the evolution of terrorism in Russia's North Caucasus.** By **Elena Pokalova**. Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger. 2015. 280pp. ISBN 978 1 44083 154 6. Available as e-book.

Russia's experiences with terrorism and counterterrorism—occurring in the shadows of the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s and subsequently in the 2000s—remain little known outside the country. In this book Elena Pokalova provides a detailed record of the North Caucasus insurgency and the Russian counterterrorist response to it.

The book's most important contribution to the scholarly literature is the author's analysis of the evolution of the North Caucasus insurgency, as well as of the changes in Moscow's approach to countering the threat. The North Caucasus insurgency itself evolved, as Pokalova points out, 'from a separatist war in Chechnya to an anti-Russian struggle in the North Caucasus to a global fight against the enemies of Muslim faiths' (p. 161). Overall, the author emphasizes the insurgents' terrorist tactics, while her treatment of Russian counterterrorist measures focuses mainly on the strategic level.

Drawing on extensive analysis of primary source material—much of which is available only in Russian—the second and third chapters of the book focus on the first and second Chechen wars respectively. They depict the terrorist actions carried out by the insurgents and highlight the fact that Russia confronted some terrorist tactics earlier than the West did. These include, for example, the 1991 plane hijacking, which took place almost ten years before 9/11 (p. 34), and the 1995 radiological attack in Moscow, which represents a seminal, yet under-reported, event in the history of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear terrorism (p. 49).

Pokalova also analyses hostage raids—a frequently used and devastating tactic employed by the North Caucasus insurgents—and notes that the insurgents strategically intensified their brutality over time (p. 134). At first, they accommodated some requests made by female hostages, as evidenced in the case of the 1995 raid on Budyonnovsk, and they allowed hostages to talk to their relatives by phone during the 2002 Moscow theatre siege. But later, the insurgents started targeting children, as seen in the 2004 Beslan school siege. However, its excessive brutality robbed the insurgents of popular support and forced them to abandon the tactic (p.137).

Moscow's initial, purely military, response helped achieve the goal of maintaining Russia's territorial integrity, but failed to deliver sustainable peace in the North Caucasus. Moreover, Russia's military measures led to the further alienation of the Chechens and neighbouring populations, and so continued to feed the insurgency. Pokalova argues that the North Caucasus insurgency declined only after Moscow's decision in 2009 to employ a softer approach. This included socio-economic measures designed specifically for the region, followed by some regional concessions concerning religion (p. 174). Pokalova compares the 2009 change in Russian strategy to the 'hearts and minds' method of counterterrorism championed by western strategists, and notes that it proved crucial in addressing the local grievances that the insurgency had been exploiting.

Pokalova's in-depth study draws on extensive analysis of primary material, ranging from websites run by North Caucasus insurgents to news clips and government publications. Her secondary sources include both English and Russian scholarship on insurgency and counter-insurgency in the North Caucasus and on the history of the North Caucasus and Islam in Russia more broadly. The book would be relevant to students and scholars focusing on contemporary conflicts in general and counterterrorism and counter-insurgency in particular, as well as those studying the region of Russia and Eurasia.

*Roman Osharov, Chatham House, UK*

## Middle East and North Africa

**Civil resistance in the Arab Spring: triumphs and disasters.** Edited by Adam Roberts, Michael J. Willis, Rory McCarthy and Timothy Garton Ash. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2016. 360pp. £22.22. ISBN 978 0 19874 902 8. Available as e-book.

The Arab Spring's uneven legacies attest to the ambiguous role of civil resistance in political life in the contemporary Middle East and North Africa. Seven years since Mohamed Bouazizi's self-immolation sent a wave of protest across the region, regime figureheads have fallen in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen; political or economic concessions have been made in Jordan, Morocco, Algeria and Oman; and Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Syria experienced sharp, violent repression. Such diversity of outcomes demonstrates that civil resistance movements have varying levels of success in achieving their goals. What, then, determines the success or failure of civil resistance movements?

In response to this question, *Civil resistance in the Arab Spring* contends that the successes of civil resistance movements are determined by 'a society's prevailing conditions' which serve to support or hamper activities, strategies and tactics. Two adverse conditions stand out: repression by the regime and the absence of the preconditions for peaceful transition to a stable and pluralist order (p. 319). Adam Roberts and his collaborators (including Michael Willis, Rory McCarthy and Timothy Garton Ash) contend that this approach modifies prevailing wisdom, which traditionally emphasizes the importance of the 'method of struggle' in determining outcomes for civil resistance movements. For example, Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan's influential mixed-methods study of civil resistance campaigns in Iran, Palestine, Burma and the Philippines associates positive outcomes with non-violent methods of struggle (*Why civil resistance works: the strategic logic of nonviolent conflict*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2011). They stress that non-violent resistance campaigns are 'nearly twice as likely to achieve full or partial success as their violent counterparts' (p. 7). In making the distinction between non-violent and violent methods of struggle, they equate violence with failure and non-violence with success. Roberts et al. counter that the experience of the Arab Spring begs the question: when facing the prospect of needing to reconstruct constitutional order, does either approach have a chance for success?

Ten empirically rich chapters, written by contributors from the worlds of academia, policy and journalism, note how prevailing conditions shaped outcomes in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Bahrain, Jordan, Morocco, Yemen, Syria and Palestine since 2011. For example, the descent of Syria's uprising into violence and civil war can be explained in part by the country's own experience of sectarian violence since the 1980s (p. 237). The regime's willingness to use lethal force to break them up left Syrians unable to mount protests on the scale of those seen in Egypt (p. 229). In sharp contrast, security officials in Jordan opted to avoid the use of lethal force, preferring instead a 'skilful combination of permissive and punitive responses' to the mass rallies and sit-ins (p. 189). The ensuing parliamentary elections, in 2013, unsurprisingly endorsed the palace-led approach to surface reforms, but Jordanian protesters successfully pushed at the widely accepted boundaries of public space. State responses to peaceful protesters trying to expand public space in Bahrain, for example, were less restrained as they opted for security crackdowns in the early stages of gatherings at the Pearl Roundabout. As their rights and freedoms have been reversed rather than extended, engaging in peaceful civil resistance has proved costly for many Bahrainis (p. 115).

The final word on the fate of the Arab Spring falls to the concluding chapter, which offers a succinct account of external and international influences from the United States,

the United Nations Security Council, NATO and Russia. This chapter will likely appeal to those interested in issues surrounding intervention in general and the resilience of the Responsibility to Protect doctrine in particular. Ultimately, though, outside support may be necessary to ‘help level the playing field between government and opposition’ (p. 323). Roberts et al. assert that the fate of the Arab Spring was determined by failure of civil resisters to acknowledge the risk and danger involved in building a new constitutional order and they stress that ‘when civil resisters call for the fall of the regime, but fail to address these issues, they become part of the problem’ (p. 324).

Written in an engaging and accessible style, *Civil resistance in the Arab Spring* should be of interest to a wide readership including scholars, practitioners and students of the Middle East working in a range of fields.

*Lucy M. Abbott, University of Oxford, UK*

## **Sub-Saharan Africa**

**Why comrades go to war: liberation politics and the outbreak of Africa’s deadliest conflict.** By Philip Roessler and Harry Verhoeven. London: Hurst. 2016. 320pp. £35.00. ISBN 978 1 84904 652 7.

*Why comrades go to war* is the latest in a series of books that attempt to recount the events of the Congo wars since the fall of President Mobutu Sese Seko in 1997. Like most other recent accounts, the book treats the conflict as a monolithic civil war, even though there is no neat dividing line between its external and internal dimension.

Unlike many other accounts, however, Philip Roessler and Harry Verhoeven argue that the origins of ‘Africa’s Great War lay in the struggle against Mobutu—the way the revolution came together, the way it was organized, and paradoxically the very way it succeeded’ (p. 7). The *structure* of the small coalition that Laurent-Désiré Kabila led in 1996 with Rwandan and Ugandan backing—the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (AFDL)—is, according to Roessler and Verhoeven, what ultimately mattered in the outcome of the war. They argue that the AFDL was a pan-African ‘coalition of liberation’ which was organized ‘principally through informal and personalized channels’ (p. 9) and that this caused its downfall. Moreover, they argue that, had this ‘revolution’ been organized differently, the war could have been avoided.

Indeed, this book offers what the authors claim is a novel lens through which to understand the First Congo War. They argue that the liberation of Zaire represented the triumph of the revolutionary forces in Central Africa. However, while in both the first and second wars, neighbouring states established a network of local proxy movements in an attempt to put a local stamp on their activities, it is problematic to label the First Congo War a genuine revolution. The bulk of Kabila’s fighting forces were foreign (mostly Rwandan), and only one of the four largely obscure Congolese groups which made up the AFDL coalition had any fighting forces—and those only numbered a few hundred. During the second war, on the other hand, the Movement for the Liberation on the Congo (MLC) forces were largely Congolese, trained by Ugandan officers, while the Rally for Congolese Democracy (RCD) forces were integrated within a network of Rwandan troops and commanders. The paradox here is that despite the fact that most of the troops fighting in the first war were foreign, most Congolese initially referred to it as a Congolese rebellion, and most Congolese see the second war as an invasion even though there were more Congolese fighting in this war than there were foreign troops.

The AFDL could not have overthrown the Mobutu regime by itself. This was hardly a revolutionary coalition and the AFDL was merely an attempt to put a local face on what was in fact a coalition of neighbouring states. According to one observer, the new leaders who emerged out of violent armed struggle in Ethiopia, Eritrea, Uganda and Rwanda had, by 1996, 'formed an axis that looked as though it would reshape half the African continent' (Alex de Waal, ed., *Islamism and its enemies in the Horn of Africa*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004, p. 183). This *network* of states, as well as the second Bill Clinton administration, whose new Africa policy was centred on strengthening ties with a handful of African rebel leaders-turned-presidents, was fed up with Mobutu's accommodation of foreign groups opposed to neighbouring governments and took the opportunity presented by the end of the Cold War to get rid of him. The wars, thus, simply represented the geopolitical dynamics of the region at the time. Roessler and Verhoeven themselves assert that it is difficult to understand the alliances and choices in the First Congo War without understanding broader regional relationships, but they ascribe to these relationships a revolutionary character which is misplaced.

Roessler and Verhoeven's narrative of the Congo wars has its shortcomings. But by providing a different reading of the well-trodden historical documentation, *Why comrades go to war* is sure to provoke renewed discussion about the motivations of the principal actors in those wars—actors who remain, in one form or another, dominant in the geopolitics of the region to this day.

*Tatiana Carayannis, Social Science Research Council, USA*

**Consistent or confused: the politics of Mbeki's foreign policy 1995–2007.** By Oscar van Heerden. Johannesburg: Staging Post. 2017. 217pp. ISBN 978 0 99470 178 7.

Since 1994, the African National Congress (ANC) has pursued a foreign policy driven by the party's own experiences and ideological beliefs, born out of the struggle in South Africa and then exported to the world. But the country's foreign policy has also often been seemingly contradictory and highly complex. Oscar van Heerden's book grapples with these complexities, and concludes that within the confusion there is consistency.

The ideological framework of the ANC's foreign policy is shaped by the party's struggle for democracy, which it sees as being a unique experience of decolonization. Human rights, racial equality and African recognition are at the forefront of its foreign policy. In the fight for national liberation, the party built connections and relationships across the continent which have often left the economic superpower of the region politically subservient to other regimes of liberation. Furthermore, solidarity has pushed South Africa to promote the continent on the world stage. This promotion of Africa and Africans has been driven by the psyche of the ANC and the desire to demonstrate, in the post-apartheid era, that a black government can perform as well as its white predecessors. It has, however, resulted in criticism from regional actors. Furthermore, there is a strong belief in the party that South Africa should not be dictated to by the West. This is seen in former President Mbeki's rhetoric on the West, but also in the strong emotions regarding credit ratings—viewed as an international vote of confidence in the capabilities of the new regime.

Van Heerden analyses how these complexities shaped three significant international engagements under the presidency of Thabo Mbeki: negotiations with the EU, membership of the United Nations Security Council, and mediation and negotiation in the Zimbabwe crisis. Sadly, none of the case-studies directly deals with the South African military. Given the centrality of the military to regional relations pre-1994, an analysis of

the South African National Defence Force as a tool of foreign policy under Mbeki would have enriched the book. Perhaps because of its primacy within South African policy, the chapter on Zimbabwe provides the richest insights on policy-making during this period.

President Mbeki's 'quiet diplomacy' on Zimbabwe exemplified many of the ideals outlined above. In his negotiations with President Robert Mugabe, his elder and an icon of African liberation, he was determined not to be the puppet of the West, but to find an African solution to the problem. Van Heerden's work is firmly rooted in the existing literature on the subject, and he adds to this a depth of insight garnered from interviews with key actors, including President Mbeki. At times, van Heerden's analysis is overly sympathetic to President Mbeki's approach. Balancing his interviews with key South African foreign policy actors with interviews with key Zimbabwean figures would have strengthened this study. Notably, although much has been written about President Mbeki's mediation efforts, little of this is from a Zimbabwean perspective. Lastly, at a launch event of the book at Chatham House, James Hamill of Leicester University challenged the book's classification of South Africa as a hegemon. A summary of the discussion may be found on the Chatham House website.

For regular readers of the author's commentary in the South African press, the academic framework and rigour that this book adopts will be unfamiliar. However, lengthy quotations from interview transcripts provide colour and insight, although these can, on occasion, crowd out the author's voice and own analysis. Furthermore, a second edition of the book would benefit from closer editing—a number of names of key regional actors are regularly misspelled.

I was in Harare on the night of 14 November and van Heerden's book was my reading in between watching military broadcasts and newsreels updating the city on the unfolding coup against President Mugabe. Zimbabwe's transition sits in the context of broader democratic change within the region. The perspectives on South African foreign policy offered in this book, and the author's sympathetic coverage of the complexity of the relationships between liberation leaders and actors in southern Africa, are of great importance to understanding changing regional relations.

*Christopher Vandome, Chatham House, UK*

**Rwandan women rising.** By **Swanee Hunt**. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. 2017. 448pp. £28.99. ISBN 978 0 82236 257 9. Available as e-book.

Swanee Hunt's *Rwandan women rising* is a unique and very important work. It gives readers access to exceptionally broad and deep testimonies from Rwandan women who have contributed to the construction of post-genocide Rwandan society, government and culture. The book is beautifully presented, poignant and personal—providing a window on Rwanda that has not been available until now. It is also meticulously and sensitively crafted and a work that I would highly recommend to scholars and students of social sciences. For students in particular, this book will individualize and humanize a range of theories and concepts related to international studies, women's studies, gender studies and human rights, liberating these topics from distance and abstraction and thereby rendering them palpable.

The book is clearly a labour of love, dedication, empathy and sincere engagement—a reflection of Hunt's personal commitment to Rwandan women over many years. The author's self-awareness and capacity for self-criticism, as well as her willingness to ask difficult questions of herself and others, to embrace complexity and present nuanced and diverse perspectives, make her work stand out in terms of quality and significance. Photos

## *Book reviews*

of the individuals interviewed and of community development projects that women have led and benefitted from also enrich the book. They anchor the testimonies of female Rwandan leaders advancing the rights and welfare of women, and improving human rights for Rwandans as a whole. Though the book is primarily a compilation of ethnographic accounts, students of history will benefit greatly from the individual perspectives of female Rwandan leaders which shed light on broader historical, social and political issues.

*Rwandan women rising* is critical in some areas and Hunt is careful to note negative and minority opinions on a range of issues, such as the Rwandan government's policies, ethics and efficacy. However, in other areas, it is unfortunately silent. It never examines, for example, why survivors of the genocide—including women—are currently severely marginalized politically, economically and socially. Hunt discusses the extraordinary work of women survivors' organizations, including the Association of the Widows of Genocide (AVEGA). However, the Rwandan government's side-lining of AVEGA and other survivor organizations seeking to secure reparative justice for genocide survivors—as well as their neglect by the development and humanitarian aid sectors and prominent donor countries contributing to Rwanda's post-genocide development—is ignored. This is a significant gap and incorporating the voices of women who do not share the conviction that their rights and welfare are being effectively secured and respected would have contributed substantially to the book. Moreover, Hunt's approach to the subject of reconciliation is based on Christological ideology, which is endorsed by Jimmy Carter in his foreword and is embraced by most of the women profiled in the book—and which reflects Rwandan government policy. There is little acknowledgement of the fact that this ideology has been described by many genocide survivors—women and men—as traumatizing and as enabling continued abuses of power by genocide perpetrators. It is also challenged for being an affront to the desire for justice of genocide survivors and to their right to it under international human rights law.

The book is sometimes coy around its use of terms like Hutu and Tutsi, which the author acknowledges. This is perhaps in deference to the Rwandan government's policy to minimize the use of these social categories, in favour of a unifying emphasis on shared Rwandan identity. While clearly well intentioned and understandable—and in many cases commendable—for some readers the elision may be confusing as it leaves too much implied about contexts of discrimination, persecution and genocide. Thus it is not always straightforward who was perpetrator or victim, nor does the book clearly show the social and political realities which fuelled persecution and genocide.

This book is a testimony to and a work of honesty and hope, and reflects horror, heart-ache and healing. Its contribution to literature on Rwanda, women's rights and welfare, development, social change and transitional justice is substantial. It is humane, searing and invaluable and should be read widely and carefully. Its lessons and wisdom, which are characterized by humility and careful self-reflection on the part of author and interviewees alike, make it an exceptional work of enduring consequence with a potential for positive, transformative impact.

*Noam Schimmel, McGill University, Canada*

## South Asia

**Unwinnable: Britain's war in Afghanistan 2001–2014.** By Theo Farrell. London: Bodley Head. 2017. 576pp. Index. £16.73. ISBN 978 1 84792 346 2. Available as e-book.

Theo Farrell has written the best book so far on Britain's recent war in Afghanistan. He provides a detailed analysis, in narrative form, of the campaign in Helmand from 2006 to its conclusion eight years later. His book is also beautifully written, not easy when the subject-matter, military campaigns, is littered with acronyms and impenetrable doctrine—I glided through the pages in one day. But it does not make for comfortable reading. I was only personally involved for the first six years of the war, but memories of the complexity of the issues came flooding back, along with the evident political and military shortcomings.

Initially the intervention was a success. People forget that from 2001 to 2006, Britain lost just three soldiers to hostile action and we were seen as liberators. Farrell argues that Britain should have left Afghanistan 'when it was ahead' (p. 1). However, there was a real feeling that Afghanistan could be transformed. The Germans hatched a plan to roll out security throughout the country. Britain was slow to bid for a province and ended up with the most dangerous locality of all and the centre of the opium industry, Helmand. In 2006 we knew that the Taliban were showing signs of resurgence and Defence Secretary John Reid—the one minister who did show real political leadership—deployed a Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) to Helmand with what was believed to be sufficient military protection.

Farrell rightly points to the decision to send troops to the four district centres as the crucial mistake. It all happened over a few days in June and was apparently decided between the Helmand Governor Mohammad Daoud and the Commander of British forces. I am still unclear whether Permanent Joint Headquarters in Northwood, London, were consulted, but the Afghan Strategy Group (ASG) in the Cabinet Office was taken by surprise when the news filtered through that we had gone on the offensive to the north of the capital, in contravention of the plan. Over the next few weeks, hundreds of Afghans were killed. Some may have been Taliban, but General Richard Dannatt is quoted as saying that we ended up 'killing lots of farmers' (p. 205).

The new material which Farrell has unearthed is remarkable. Readers learn that 16 Air Assault Brigade (16 Brigade) 'had never taken ownership of the plan' (p. 171) and that merely defending the PRT in Lashkar Gah was not their idea of their role. Farrell tells us that 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, Parachute Regiment (3Para), the main fighting unit of 16 Brigade, felt that 1 Para and 2 Para had had more combat opportunities in Sierra Leone and Afghanistan. As the 'poor cousins', 3 Para were not going to shy away from a fight (p. 169). They got their fight and expended 427,236 rounds of ammunition in the process (p. 205).

The remaining eight years comprised attempts by each brigadier to reduce the ferocity of the fighting: 3 Commando Brigade thought the Paras had been 'overly aggressive' (p. 192) but still fired over a million rounds; 12 Brigade fired over 2 million. Brigadier Andrew Mackay of the 52nd Infantry Brigade was horrified to find 'half of [Helmand] trashed' (p. 209). He and later brigadiers started to speak the language of counter-insurgency (COIN). Brigadier Walker wanted a 'consent-based' strategy (p. 296) and Brigadier Richard Felton of 4 Mechanized Brigade preached 'courageous restraint' (p. 326). Even though British troops got smarter at COIN, the die had been cast in 2006 and the Taliban could mostly count on popular support from that moment.

The tragedy is that none of this had been intended. Prime Minister Tony Blair had wanted to reconstruct Afghanistan. In retrospect, his vision was utopian and Farrell meticulously

ticks off the considerable challenges Britain faced: whether to conduct counter-narcotics operations in Helmand; how to cope with the Karzai administration, which was increasingly corrupt and paranoid; and, above all, how to handle Pakistan, which was complicit with the Afghan Taliban. Meanwhile, rather than bringing security, the British too often brought destruction. Farrell quotes a mullah: 'All you have brought are the things of death' (p. 360).

What I recall from those years in Afghanistan is the discipline, commitment and bravery of our soldiers, our helicopter pilots and our civilians. Farrell shows how they were let down by the absence of strategy. Above all, readers will be baffled by how the campaign was run: it was redesigned every six months as a new brigade arrived with minimal opportunities for learning from its predecessor's experience. Each brigadier had just a short period to make a career-defining impact. The COIN strategy should have been in the hands of civilian authorities (with far more involvement from the Afghan government), with the military providing support. Similarly, far more weight should have been accorded to training the predatory and corrupt Afghan police rather than producing an overly bloated Afghan Army.

If there is one criticism of this excellent book, it is that Farrell allows himself only eight pages of summary (pp. 417–25). But his judgements are brisk and searing. What none of us can know, of course, are the counterfactuals: what would have happened had the British government acted differently? Nonetheless I am not convinced that Britain's fourth Afghan war was 'unwinnable'.

*Tim Willasey-Wilsey, King's College London and formerly of the FCO, UK*

**India's war: the making of modern south Asia 1939–1945.** By Srinath Raghavan. London: Penguin Books. 2016. 576pp. £30.00. ISBN 978 1 84614 541 4. Available as e-book.

*India's war*, by Srinath Raghavan, is a brilliant attempt at exploring the impact of the Second World War on modern south Asia. It builds on earlier work by Yasmin Khan in *The Raj at war* (London: Bodley Head, 2015) and *Forgotten armies* by Christopher Bayly and Tim Harper (London: Allen Lane, 2004). Raghavan writes that 'this book is not just about what India did for the war. I also look at what the war did to India' (p. 6). His narrative is built on five intertwined strands on the Second World War and south Asia. First, Raghavan relates the strategic dimension of the war to the fact that India was much more than a tool of the British empire. His second strand discusses the international dimension. India's choices in the war were influenced by all the major actors, including Japan, the United States, China, Germany, Italy and the Soviet Union (p. 5). The book's third dimension looks at the impact of the Second World War on domestic politics in India and the fourth at its social and economic impact on Indian society. The war led to extensive exploitation of resources, migration to the eastern coast, inflation controls and central planning, and created opportunities for marginalized groups. The fifth dimension deals with the war front. By describing life and day-to-day activities in various theatres of war, Raghavan illustrates the transformation of the Indian Army from a backward, constabulary outfit into an effective fighting force. He argues that today's south Asia—the emergence of Pakistan as a military power, the establishment of democracy in India, socio-economic planning and popular movements—is in many ways the product of India's experience in the Second World War (p. 6) and should all be understood in relation to it. Through this line of argument, Raghavan helps readers reimagine the history and future of south Asia.

Many of the initial chapters deal with the Raj's entry into the Second World War and its impact on the domestic politics of India. These chapters look at the differences between members of Congress and other parties on supporting the Raj in the war; the process of

growing the Indian Army from 200,000 to 2.5 million men in the face of multiple threats from many directions; and negotiations between British and Indian leaders on independence. The parts on the Indian Army's contributions in the Middle East and Africa—chapters five, six, seven and fifteen—are very heavy in detail and seem to have less relevance to the core aim of the book. However, on closer inspection, readers will find that these chapters do introduce them to many unnamed people whose lives changed in these theatres of war. Furthermore, they help highlight the manner in which the Indian battalions helped the British Army defeat the Axis forces, a fact which is often overshadowed by the role of Britain and the US in winning the war. Personal stories from Sardara Singh (p. 120) and others make these chapters more interesting and an easy read.

The final chapters are a reminder of India's dangerous fate, had Japan been successful. They describe the destructive capabilities of Japanese forces in Singapore, Malaya (today's Malaysia) and Burma (today's Myanmar), and their entry into the Indian states Nagaland and Manipur. Raghavan blames neither the Indian National Army nor its leader Subhas Chandra Bose for planning to overthrow the British empire with the help of the Japanese. However, readers will develop a sense that if Bose had succeeded in his plan, India would have ended up in a different place. The book's description of the Japanese entry into Nagaland, and its capital Imphal, would have been improved by looking at the role of local politicians.

This book is not an easy read and it includes a significant amount of factual information and confusing descriptions of continuously changing theatres of war, but it is a very important work, as much of this information is new.

*Pavan Kumar, Jawaharlal Nehru University, India*

## **East Asia and Pacific**

**The Rohingyas: inside Myanmar's hidden genocide.** By **Azeem Ibrahim**. London: Hurst. 2016. 200pp. Pb.: £10.78. ISBN 978 1 84904 623 7. Available as e-book.

**Myanmar's enemy within: Buddhist violence and the making of a Muslim 'other'.** By **Francis Wade**. London: Zed Books. 2017. 304pp. £60.84. ISBN 978 1 78360 528 6. Available as e-book.

There is a certain logic to reading Azeem Ibrahim's and Francis Wade's books together. Both seek to understand the history of the Rohingya and, in particular, why they experience such persecution and discrimination in modern day Myanmar (Burma). They do this by tracing their history back to the British in colonial Burma, not only to provide evidence that a population defined as Rohingya already lived in what was then the Arakan Kingdom, but also to show how British colonial 'divide and rule' policies underpin the current situation in the country. The authors, however, have differing goals in mind: Ibrahim makes the case that a genocide is potentially imminent and requires an international response; whereas Wade seeks to understand how the Rohingya have come to be 'othered' to such a degree and to explain the hostility towards the Rohingya from the majority Buddhist population of Myanmar. He also reflects on what could be done to address such entrenched levels of discrimination. Both books, in some respect, have been overtaken by real-world events, as the August 2017 attacks by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army on border and security posts unleashed a disproportionate response from the Burmese Army, resulting in the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Rohingya. Nonetheless, both are important and necessary reads.

In *The Rohingyas* more in-depth legal analysis would have added to the argument, especially when it comes to Ibrahim's discussion of genocide and international law. Taking into account relevant international laws, such as those related to crimes against humanity, would have given more support to the author's argument that it is important to recognize that what is happening in Myanmar is a genocide. Furthermore, one of the biggest challenges with identifying acts of violence as genocide is the difficulty in establishing intent. Therefore, Ibrahim could have provided more information showing that the authorities, whether at national or local levels, were deliberately and systematically establishing discriminatory structures through laws, regulations, policies and practices. Another way in which these discriminatory structures could have been highlighted would have been to compare the situation of the Rohingya to other ethnic or religiously fuelled conflicts in the country and to show why their situation is different—Kachin, Mon and Karen groups, for example, have been engaged in internal armed struggle since independence in 1948. Such an approach would have provided a useful comparative analysis of the diverse Muslim and minority groups in Myanmar and their varied experiences of discrimination and persecution. Wade, on the other hand, draws on considerable, first-hand testimony. The interviews that form the basis of his book were primarily conducted between 2011 and 2016, when the author was working as a journalist in Thailand and Myanmar. The evocative, and often moving, testimonies bring to life, in their own words, the poverty, violence and systemic discrimination faced by the Rohingya. But, importantly, the book also allows other groups from Rakhine to speak about their experiences and prejudices, which—while often objectionable—are important to understand; if we don't, then there is little hope of reversing this tide of cultural discrimination. In this respect, the book's stand-out sections are the detailed accounts of the 2013 violence in Meiktila and the controversial Na Ta La village programme in northern Rakhine state, where prisoners from other parts of Myanmar have been resettled, changing the area's demographic balance.

The strength of *Myanmar's enemy within* lies in Wade's attempt to understand and explain the complex ways in which discrimination has been perpetuated and entrenched, by looking at the human experience—on all sides—of this ongoing situation. But as with Ibrahim, he could have explored more the comparative experiences of other minority or ethnic groups in his account—particularly other Muslim minorities. More importantly, perhaps, both books could have emphasized that, while an understanding of the origins of the current situation is critical, it is equally important to stress that in international law everyone has the right to a nationality, with only very few exceptions. In this respect, anyone born in Myanmar has the right to a nationality and it is highly unlikely they would meet the legal test of where this could be denied.

In conclusion, both books provide a good introduction to Myanmar's complex history and current situation and are excellent starting-points for those wanting to understand more about the situation of the Rohingya in Myanmar.

*Champa Patel, Chatham House, UK*

**Shifting power in Asia-Pacific? The rise of China, Sino-US competition and regional middle power allegiance.** By Enrico Fels. Cham, Switzerland: Springer. 2016. 788pp. £200.00. ISBN 978 3 31945 688 1. Available as e-book.

One of the most prominent debates in International Relations (IR) in recent years has been around the rise of China and the nature of the country's power. It is surprising, therefore, that while there are many books whose titles combine 'China' with the words 'power'

or 'rise', in reality almost none address the issue of China's power as a central theme. Moreover, those few which do—for example, David Shambaugh's *China goes global: the partial power* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013; reviewed in *International Affairs* 89: 6, November 2013) or David M. Lampton's *The three faces of Chinese power: might, money, and minds* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008)—lack the methodologically sound and comprehensive approach of Enrico Fels's *Shifting power in Asia–Pacific?*

Fels's book can easily be seen as the most comprehensive and conceptually rigorous academic work currently available assessing China's power. That said, it is not without its shortcomings, but they do not detract from the book's significance.

*Shifting power in Asia–Pacific?* gives readers deeper insight into China's power, particularly in a regional context. Fels conducts his analysis based on a well-defined and comprehensively developed model of power. He distinguishes three understandings of power: aggregate, relational and structural. Fels concludes that there is 'power shift' taking place in the Asia–Pacific in terms of aggregate power, but less so in terms of relational power.

As for the book's shortcomings, first, Fels discusses three 'understandings' of power, but neglects to address the relationships between them. It is not entirely obvious how Fels uses the third understanding—structural power—in the analysis. Second, while in some places Fels mentions the linkage between power and policy, he does not go much deeper than that. He notes that the different sources of power can create a 'challenge' when producing qualitative measurements in a policy context (pp. 181–7), but he does so without offering any clear solutions.

Moreover, while this is not a criticism, the scope of the book does seem to me to be unnecessarily broad. Over more than 700 pages, the author goes much further than simply analysing the regional power context. His discussion of individual theories of power is so comprehensive that it could work as a stand-alone book. Similarly, chapters on regional middle powers are extensive and provide excellent insights into these countries' perspectives on China and the United States.

To conclude, this is indeed the 'most extensive assessment of the alleged power shift in Asia–Pacific so far' (p. 749). At the same time, the crucial topic of China's power is by no means exhausted and future research on it should be encouraged. Undoubtedly, *Shifting power in Asia–Pacific?* will be highly beneficial to such endeavours.

*Richard Q. Turcsanyi, Mendel University, Czech Republic*

**Incorrigible optimist: a political memoir.** By Gareth Evans. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press. 2017. 277pp. Index. £30.91. ISBN 978 0 52286 644 5. Available as e-book.

Foreign ministers fall into various categories: the faceless workers behind the scenes; the hyped-up versions of a smooth, professional diplomat; the prime ministers-in-waiting; and the mere stop-gaps, there until somebody better can be found to do the job (there is also the occasional buffoon, about whom the less said the better). Gareth Evans, foreign minister of Australia between 1988 and 1996, does not fit into any of these categories. He is what James Joll called 'an intellectual in politics', a driven and restless spirit committed to changing the world, whether in or out of office. In fact, as the president and CEO of the International Crisis Group (ICG) from 2000 to 2009, he became a kind of stateless foreign minister, confidently roaming the world and representing the global need for conflict prevention and resolution. Evans was appointed to almost every high-level panel set up in and around the United Nations over the last twenty years, and was thus a prime mover in what he terms 'commission diplomacy' or what populists would call the 'transnational elite'.

This absorbing (and often funny) memoir should be compulsory reading for practitioners, and would add wisdom to university reading lists on foreign policy and world politics. While it covers Evans's long career, it is of particular interest for its account of his time as foreign minister, which ignited his subsequent commitment to various international causes. The story shows that, for all his personal enthusiasm, Evans has also been a shrewd political operator, never content to pursue the quietist diplomacy of the average middle power. Motivated by the lack of privilege in his background and by his strong views about social injustice, he became convinced that it was possible to 'make a difference' in international affairs. In particular, he developed the idea that states should aspire to be 'good international citizens'—which is easily seen as a contradiction in terms. In sticking his head above the parapet in this way, he was bound to find consistency difficult and to be accused of hypocrisy (like Robin Cook in the United Kingdom). This was especially true given that his realist appreciation of Australia's security needs led him to eschew the routine US bashing of the post-Vietnam generation. Nor did his unapologetic appreciation of the good life of international diplomacy, whether playing golf with prime ministers or eating in 'high-end Ginza sushi and sake bars', do him any favours with his critics.

Any memoir is to some degree an *apologia pro vita sua*, and Evans is disarmingly willing to own up to his failures. In particular, and interestingly given his book's title, he acknowledges that in relation to the tragic series of events in East Timor, his (and others') biggest mistake was probably 'our congenitally over-optimistic belief in the Indonesian military's capacity for redemption' (p. 147). This strikes an uncharacteristically naive note, given the tendency of authoritarian regimes to be less interested in their spiritual needs than in getting their own way regardless of cost. Clearly, Evans's ability to form effective cross-cultural relationships with other foreign ministers—in this case Indonesian Foreign Minister Ali Alatas—had its downside.

He is, however, a man of sensibility, whose version of realism is far from those which stress the timeless truths of *realpolitik*. Rather, it is an attempt to move the world forward so that destructive and violent behaviour—to say nothing of the catastrophes of nuclear war or climate change—gradually come to seem ever more bizarre and pathological. On this score, he has an honourable record of tireless effort across a broad front: from work on the Cambodian peace accord and the doctrine of the Responsibility to Protect, to the Japanese–Australian Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, which attempted to provide 'achievable, action agendas' and to keep up the pressure not just on potential proliferators but on the recalcitrant nuclear weapon states themselves.

It is with the Responsibility to Protect that Gareth Evans is most closely associated. Even if this doctrine does not represent, as Martin Gilbert thought, 'the most significant adjustment to sovereignty in 360 years', it certainly constitutes a remarkable development in the norms of international society. Evans, now the Chancellor of the Australian National University, devoted much of the decade after leaving his post as foreign minister to articulating, developing and insisting on the need for this change. It would not have been an injustice had he received the Nobel Peace Prize for his work, something which (despite his disclaimers) would clearly have delighted him.

Another prize which eluded Evans was that of UN High Commissioner for Refugees, a post to which he was pipped by the current UN Secretary-General António Guterres, apparently because Evans was more colourful than 'the system' would have been comfortable with.

Perhaps the ICG was the best home for Evans in the end, giving him the platform but also the continued access he needed in order to engage in track 1.5 diplomacy, and to make

a difference. As a foreign minister he had been unusually analytical, proactive and open to ideas. For someone of his buccaneering temperament he was also, in practice, quite balanced in assessing the constraints and opportunities of his trade. If his style was a cross between Ernest Bevin's and Hans Blix's, it was an underlying shrewdness he shared with them which made possible his many concrete achievements. The world is full of both moralists and cynics, but it badly needs more people with Gareth Evans's ability, openness and commitment to international public goods.

*Christopher Hill, University of Cambridge, UK*

**The politics of EU–China economic relations: an uneasy partnership.** By **John Farnell and Paul Irwin Crookes.** London: Palgrave Macmillan. 2016. 268pp. Index. £86.00. ISBN 978 1 13749 117 6. Available as e-book.

**China, the European Union, and the international politics of global governance.** Edited by **Jianwei Wang and Weiqing Song.** London: Palgrave Macmillan. 2015. 304pp. Index. £68.00. ISBN 978 1 13752 222 1. Available as e-book.

Two new books respond to the growing importance and broadening of EU–China relations in a world where the United States' policy is in flux and China's power and influence continue to increase.

*The politics of EU–China economic relations* does what it says in the title. It offers a comprehensive and well-balanced account of economic relations across trade, investment, innovation, finance and global governance, with a particular focus on their politics. John Farnell and Paul Irwin Crookes argue that political factors—on both sides—are a major reason why economic relations have not developed further. This has been especially unexpected given the complementarities between the EU and China, and the economic influence they both have regionally and globally—the EU and China together account for around a third of global GDP. The authors identify a greater number of political impediments on the Chinese side, from limited rule of law and a tendency to economic nationalism and political control of the economy to uncertainty over future reforms. On the European side, they point to the lack of a joined-up approach to China policy, something which is a seemingly constant complaint among many European policy-makers. Other impediments are relational, such as the difference between EU visions of effective multilateralism and a more assertive vision of China 'as a major power with its own normative agenda' (p. 46).

The volume also identifies scope for greater collaboration, in particular on global governance and monetary issues. An excellent chapter analysing the effectiveness of EU–China policy dialogues on environment, climate change, energy and sustainable urbanization begins to fill a big gap in the literature—to date there are many more dialogues than studies of their effectiveness. Given the political focus, there is less discussion of whether other issues such as language, distance or business culture may also play a role in limiting the scope of economic interactions. Furthermore, policy-makers might want some discussion of whether political difficulties can be addressed in the future. But, overall, this is an excellent account of EU–China relations which should appeal to specialist and generalist readers alike.

Political factors are also the focus of Jianwei Wang and Weiqing Song's *China, the European Union, and the international politics of global governance*. This edited volume offers in-depth discussion of the EU–China dynamic across a range of crucial issues, from their interactions in international institutions (separate chapters deal with the UN, G20, WTO, international financial institutions and the Asia–Europe Meeting) to traditional and

non-traditional security issues, climate, human rights and development. This is still quite new ground, though a few of these topics have been covered recently elsewhere—such as in *Security relations between China and the European Union*, edited by Emil J. Kirchner, Thomas Christiansen and Han Dorussen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016; reviewed in *International Affairs* 93: 1, January 2017).

The overarching theme of many of the accounts in Wang and Song's edited volume is similar to that in the first book under review: although it seems as though the EU and China have common interests and goals in many areas (though not all), in each of them there are important limits to their ability to work together. For example, with regard to the G20, Hongsong Liu and Shaun Breslin (chapter five) show how common ideas on global governance do not translate into the EU and China working together to shape the G20 agenda—due partly to a lack of EU cohesion, but also to differences in the pressing concerns facing both sides.

This volume is enriched by three opening chapters which offer differing analyses of EU–China relations using three theoretical perspectives in International Relations: realist from Mingjiang Li in chapter one, liberal institutionalist from Thomas Christiansen in chapter two and social constructivist from Knud Erik Jørgensen and Reuben Wong in chapter three. The book offers great material for teachers of International Relations as well as for those interested in EU–China relations.

*Tim Summers, The Chinese University of Hong Kong and Chatham House, Hong Kong*

**Postwar Japan: growth, security, and uncertainty since 1945. Edited by Michael J. Green and Zack Cooper.** Lanham, MD, and London: Rowman & Littlefield. 2017. 240pp. Index. £47.95. ISBN 978 1 44227 973 5. Available as e-book.

The economic performance of Japan stunned the world in the 1970s and the 1980s. Many pundits, and more than a few academics, felt that the country was poised to replace the United States as the world's leading economic power. After a quarter-century of alternating stagnation and low growth, nobody has said that for a long time. Despite this, Japan is exerting its military power more forcefully than at any time since the Second World War and it remains the world's third largest economy. From this marvellously accessible and digestible edited volume on Japan's economic and security developments—entirely written by Japanese scholars—readers will gain insights into these issues.

The book's first section confronts Japan's recent security policy. Kazuya Sakamoto suggests that Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's effort to upgrade the Japanese–American alliance is the latest stage in increasing 'mutuality' (p. 4). Abe's controversial security legislation, enacted in 2015, emphasizes the alliance's global reach and allows for military cooperation outside Japan. Tokyo may use the Self-Defence Force (SDF) to protect US forces in areas outside Japan, and may resort to 'collective defence' as a justification for assistance to US forces, though this right is still limited (p. 11). Yoshihide Soeya asserts that China's programme to extend its power in east Asia under President Xi Jinping will only be successful in a context of equal relations within the region. Thus, he recommends that Japan strengthens its relations with South Korea, Australia and the member states of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN). He also argues that recent interpretations about the right of collective defence continue to rely on the postwar paradigm of regional relations.

The second section looks at the Japanese economy's interaction with the US and global economies. Jun Saito sketches the development of the postwar Japanese economy in a fairly

conventional manner: from the occupation and reconstruction period in the late 1940s to mid-1950s, to the high-growth period up to 1970 and the bubble economy of the 1980s, the lost decade of the 1990s and the expansionary period that followed it (p. 42). He also feels that Japan's biggest challenges include its declining population and its status as a net receiver of goods and services. Saito believes that the Japanese–American economic relationship has been mostly positive and that occasional trade tensions merely reflect differences in economic trajectories. His conclusions gloss over the frequent complaints of unfair practices on both sides. Yoko Takeda explains in simple terms why Japan 'lost its strength over the last two decades' (p. 81), pointing to low numbers of start-up firms, 'deterioration of human capital' through a decline of educational quality, lack of investment in employee development by firms and the inflexibility of labour markets (p. 87). She lays out five key growth strategies: labour market dynamism, (gender) diversity, 'destructive innovation' through economic openness, decentralization away from Tokyo and the reduction of fiscal debt (pp. 104, 114, 120). While these are sensible steps, Japanese corporate and political leaders have shown little willingness to take them.

Japan's role in multilateral institutions and its foreign aid policies feature in the third section. Akiko Fukushima believes that, contrary to international opinion in the 1980s and early 1990s, Japan played a positive and supportive role in international organizations. While Japan never expected to be a leader, it nonetheless assisted a variety of global institutions, through its 'UN-centered diplomacy' and, since the 1990s, UN peacekeeping operations (p. 136). Tokyo also actively encouraged Asian regional organizations, such as ASEAN and the ASEAN Regional Forum. It led 'from behind', encouraging other regional players to be more active while offering financial assistance (p. 144).

The brevity of the book is both its strength and its weakness. More chapters on specific aspects of Japan's contemporary political economy or changed security calculus—such as its relations with other Asian countries, its efforts to build a world-class military or nationalism under Prime Minister Abe—would have added immeasurably to the volume; as would have a focus on Japanese society, such as the ongoing demographic meltdown and the need for greater gender equality. It would have been useful, too, for the editors to include other than conventional or conservative points of view on key issues, such as the value of the new security infrastructure and the rise of China. Nonetheless, the book is a good read.

*Joel Campbell, Troy University Global Campus, Japan–Korea*

## **North America**

**American grand strategy under Obama: competing discourses.** By Georg Löfflmann. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. 2017. 224pp. Index. £75.00. ISBN 978 1 47441 976 5.

Georg Löfflmann's book recasts grand strategy, using critical geopolitics 'as a knowledge practice, where the hegemonic definition of a world political role and corresponding national security performance constitute a discursive nexus of power/knowledge' (p. 17). *American grand strategy under Obama* interrogates the manifestations and representations of different visions of grand strategy in popular culture, discusses debates around and representations of grand strategy in academia and think-tanks, looks at how grand strategy is formulated and represented in national security and defence policy documents, and finally, in chapter seven, focuses on the Obama doctrine.

Löfflmann's main argument is that grand strategy is a 'set of identity performing discourses' and the Obama doctrine, with its rhetorical and practical contradictions, repre-

sents 'an unresolved, internal identity conflict over America's role in the world' (p. 10). He further argues that intertextual interdependence of identity-performing discourses from popular culture and the 'everyday' to academic discourses and politico-military documents, show that 'the role of grand strategy, then, is politically and culturally much more expansive than an equation of means and ends and goes beyond a coherent and consistent vision to produce security externally' (p. 10). In other words, grand strategy operates 'as a decidedly political worldview that divides world politics into legitimate and illegitimate concepts of security and power, identity and order' (p. 207). It 'functions both as a guideline for national security policy and as an internal, hegemonic discourse that reconfirms established notions of geopolitical identity' (p. 206).

Löffmann writes clearly and with minimal jargon, which will be welcomed by readers who are not embedded in the critical geopolitics literature or working with critical discourse analysis. The chapters on the production and reproduction of dominant grand strategy narratives in popular culture are perhaps the most interesting sections of the book. The author makes a reasonable case that Hollywood, working closely with the national security apparatus of the United States, 'reproduces a strategic vision [of] liberal hegemony as common-sense knowledge' (p. 37) and that such reproduction is crucial for the legitimization of such a vision for domestic and foreign audiences. The chapters on academic debates and think-tanks accurately portray, albeit in a simplified manner, the existing struggle to conceptualize grand strategy, both intellectually and institutionally. Löffmann's assessment of Obama as a doctrinal juggler, trying to incorporate 'a set of competing and mutually exclusive discourses' (p. 197) on grand strategy, while attempting to develop a strategic vision for an upcoming post-American world, is surprisingly in line with more mainstream analyses of Obama's doctrine, even if it is a little more favourable than average.

The book, however, has three major weaknesses. First, Löffmann explicitly 'reject[s] the epistemological and ontological conditions of positivism' (p. 19) and does not engage in any meaningful way with the substance of the vast literature on grand strategy that is largely based on 'analytical rationalism and ontological materialism' (p. 19)—beyond labelling it, for example, 'liberal hegemonic', 'off-shore balancing' and 'realist'. In doing so, he misses an important opportunity to open up an intellectual space for dialogue between critical geopolitics and traditional international security and grand strategy studies, which largely ignore each other. In this way, Löffmann reproduces the hegemonic practice in academia where everyone speaks to their own tribe. Second, *American grand strategy under Obama* criticizes, sometimes in a simplified and condescending way, the 'conventional wisdom' or the 'consensus' about American grand strategy—especially with regard to the centrality of American leadership in maintaining a liberal international order. However, Löffmann fails to demonstrate why the 'consensus' should be regarded as problematic, apart from an implicit moral judgement on the 'perpetuation of status quo' (p. 209). He also fails to offer, let alone defend, alternatives to the conventional wisdom. Lastly, Löffmann, in the final analysis, does not take 'grand strategy as statecraft' seriously. He trivializes and dismisses the notion that grand strategy is fundamentally about how a nation should use the totality of its power—military, political, economic and cultural—to achieve its desired ends, despite the fact that this is central to most scholars writing on grand strategy and to policy-makers who engage in the practice of grand strategy. Löffmann privileges a conception of grand strategies as performative discourses about national identity contestation, production and reproduction. However, in doing so, he ignores the existence of both actual and real threats to states' interests in international politics and the need for decision-makers to navigate and negotiate their way in international relations in the face of incommensurable preferences

and limited resources. Thus, readers are left with a volume that is well written but aimed at those who already buy into the premises of a Foucauldian, critical geopolitics perspective, and has little to say to—and probably will attract little attention from—those who see grand strategy as ‘the highest form of statecraft’ (p. 3).

*Balkan Devlen, Izmir University of Economics, Turkey, and University of Copenhagen, Denmark*

**See it/shoot it: the secret history of the CIA’s lethal drone program.** By Christopher J. Fuller. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. 2017. 320pp. £27.91. ISBN 978 0 30021 854 1. Available as e-book.

In this history of the Central Intelligence Agency’s (CIA) use of drones for targeted killing, Christopher J. Fuller provides a compelling—and somewhat revisionist—narrative, suggesting the presence of a high degree of consistency in US counterterrorism policy from the Reagan administration onwards. Fuller argues that the drafting of National Security Decision Directive 138 (NSDD 138) determined the core elements of US counterterrorism policy—namely the treatment of terrorism as a national security issue (rather than a matter for law enforcement), as well as a willingness to pursue terrorists pre-emptively across national borders and to act lethally—which provided the backbone for the CIA-led use of lethal drones under the George W. Bush and Obama administrations (p. 22). Fuller provides a powerful counterpoint to the common argument that the CIA’s activities were militarized following the September 11 attacks, highlighting that the creation of the agency’s Counterterrorism Center (CTC) in 1986 already carried the seeds of covert, lethal counterterrorism.

*See it/shoot it* charts the drafting of NSDD 138 under President Reagan (chapter one), the creation of the CTC (chapter three), and the selection of lethal drones as the pre-eminent tool for President Obama’s threefold strategy in Afghanistan and Pakistan (chapter six). Fuller focuses on the bureaucratic struggles which, he argues, delayed the enactment of the principles of NSDD 138, yet ultimately led to the fulfilment of its vision. Chapter four introduces the book’s main theoretical device—the ‘covert action pendulum’ (p. 130)—which describes how the CIA regularly swings from increased covertness to more risk-averse policy and greater oversight. However, this formulation is somewhat analytically limited and fails to unite all parts of the book. Despite this, Fuller’s conclusion that the CIA operates most effectively within clear legal and ethical limits is certainly pertinent (p. 175). The pendulum, in Fuller’s view, explains many of the weaknesses of US counterterrorism in the 1990s, as the fierce backlash from the Iran–Contra scandal introduced a risk-averse culture throughout the Agency which—combined with a lack of clear directives from the Clinton administration—prevented the formation of a coherent counterterrorism strategy.

Two central features stand out in Fuller’s account of the development of US counterterrorist policy. First, his narrative rejects ‘structural’ factors (p. 151) in counterterrorism policy-making, emphasizing instead the role of ‘the personal preferences of senior government officials’ (p. 72). Thus the first chapter is organized around portraits of key actors in Reagan’s National Security Council. Most prominent are the authors of NSDD 138: Secretary of State George P. Shultz, ‘arguably the forefather of the concept of the War on Terror’ (p. 28), Director of Central Intelligence William J. Casey and Oliver North, who characterized himself as the National Security Council’s ‘de facto counterterrorism coordinator’ (p. 37). Later chapters focus on Duane Clarridge, first director of the CTC, Richard A. Clarke, President Clinton’s counterterrorism adviser, and John O. Brennan, who was President Obama’s counterterrorism adviser, later CIA director, and who is considered the ‘architect of the Obama Administration’s drone campaign’ (p. 210). Second, the history of

## *Book reviews*

the CIA's drone programme is marked by bureaucratic stalemates. *See it/shoot it* highlights the traumatic role of terrorist attacks in addressing ethical, legal and political controversies and in forcing changes in policy. Dilemmas—such as the conflict between law enforcement and military approaches to counterterrorism (prior to NSDD 138), and the legality of killing terrorists in light of the presidential ban on assassinations—are not so much resolved as bypassed in the aftermath of major events such as the 1983 Beirut barracks bombings, the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, and of course the September 11 attacks.

This narrative, according to which policy dilemmas were not so much resolved through deliberate decisions as ignored following major attacks, also highlights the obvious absences of this book. Fuller devotes very little attention to tracing the substantial debates surrounding the most controversial elements of current US counterterrorism policy. For instance, he takes 'pre-emption' at face value as a central tenet of US policy, but does not discuss the debates surrounding the distinction (and conflation) of pre-emptive action and preventive action (p. 30). Similarly, while he outlines the concerns which led to President Obama abandoning the Bush-era extraordinary rendition programme, readers may wish for more detail on the legal foundations which justified a policy which favoured killing terrorists over attempting to capture them. These are essential features of drone-led counterterrorism and they are not fully explained in this book.

Fuller's thesis—that the extensive use of lethal drones by the CIA during the 'war on terror' represents the execution of principles drawn up under the Reagan administration—is well argued and provides a clear thread to his book. Fuller gives a vital history of the development of drone warfare, which should be essential reading to scholars of intelligence studies, counterterrorism and contemporary war studies among others.

*Emil Archambault, University of Durham, UK*

## **Latin America and Caribbean**

### **The hidden history of international law in the Americas: empire and legal networks.**

**By Juan Pablo Scarfi.** New York: Oxford University Press. 2017. 280pp. £64.00. ISBN 978 0 19062 234 3. Available as e-book.

In the records of United States–Latin American diplomacy, the centuries-old Monroe Doctrine and Platt Amendment remain powerful symbols of the US's high-handed, unilateral and interventionist tendencies—as well as of its propensity to justify those actions with lofty rhetoric. When US Secretary of State John Kerry declared in 2013 that 'the era of the Monroe Doctrine is over', his audience at the Organization of American States understood his point—whether or not they were inclined to believe him.

In a remarkable and thoughtful book, Juan Pablo Scarfi examines what he calls the 'hidden history' of international law in the Americas in the early twentieth century. International law was a field where power was exercised and contested. Although, the US's meteoric international rise was marked by armed interventions and gunboat diplomacy in the circum-Caribbean, it also used international law to 'support and legitimize imperial and missionary projects'.

Scarfi's account—which combines international and intellectual history—focuses on the ideas, careers and interactions of several prominent international lawyers and diplomats, as well as the institution that brought them together. The American Institute of International Law (AIIL) emerged from the initiative of Elihu Root and James Scott, but it thrived in great part thanks to backing from the Carnegie Endowment for International

Peace. Perhaps due to the contrast between the AAIL and military interventions, the institute enjoyed Latin American support for much of its history. While Scarfi sees the AAIL as hampered by US-centrism, calling it a 'Pan American legal network of hegemonic interactions, a US-led space' (p. 47), it laid the groundwork for increasing Latin American contestation in the legal sphere.

The US international legal project, often connected to a multi-faceted pan-Americanism, gained the support of many Latin American jurists, especially up until the mid-1920s, but not without some disagreements. Latin Americans reinterpreted the Monroe Doctrine as a multilateral and hemispheric legal principle, contrary to US President Theodore Roosevelt's defensive, unilateral and political conception of it. While numerous historians have, for decades, noted Latin American ambivalence about the Monroe Doctrine, Scarfi makes a particular contribution through his exploration of its intersection with American international law. He divides contesting interpretations along four dimensions: intervention vs non-intervention; unilateral vs multilateral; political vs international legal; and national vs hemispheric (p. 59). Prominent jurists including the Chilean Alejandro Alvarez even defended the pro-intervention Platt Amendment for its supposed progressive and civilizing influence on Cuba. Later, Alvarez would advance the inclusion of early articulations of human rights and humanitarian intervention in the creation of a distinct body of international law for the Americas.

Latin American diplomacy is known for its legal emphasis, and particularly for its adherence to principles of sovereign equality and non-intervention. Scholars including Kathryn Sikkink and Mary Ann Glendon have illustrated Latin Americans' central roles in the formation of regional and global human rights norms and institutions. Provocatively, Scarfi argues that this Latin American legal tradition was built on top of a US-led 'missionary' network and thus incorporates US influence—even when it was ostensibly opposing the US. Scarfi especially credits the weakening of US unilateral interventionism to Argentine jurist and foreign minister Carlos Saavedra Lamas. Though a member of the AAIL board, Saavedra Lamas felt no compunctions about working outside its framework to promote a South America-led solution to South American conflicts. This took the shape of the 1933 Anti-War Treaty, which connected the promotion of peace with absolute non-intervention and sovereign equality. Support for the treaty and its principles helped shift the balance from US-led pan-Americanism in favour of a multilateral and nominally egalitarian basis for international relations in the Americas. In a sense, Saavedra Lamas was pushing on an open door, as the US had already started moving away from armed intervention under President Herbert Hoover due to the rising diplomatic and military costs of protracted occupations.

From the vantage point of some of the Latin American jurists whom Scarfi profiles, John Kerry's denunciation of the Monroe Doctrine would have had a touch of irony. The speech was given in the Carnegie-funded Pan American Union building, to an audience from a multilateral body that some of those diplomats aspired to shape through their reinterpretations of Monroe. Ultimately, it was not the end of intervention which signalled the demise of the Monroe Doctrine—as Kerry intended to convey—but the US turn to globalism, which undermined support for the distinct basis of US–Latin American international relations and American international law that Alvarez and others favoured.

*Tom Long, University of Warwick, UK*

