
The question of embodiment—how it is articulated and made to function discursively and materially in International Relations (IR) theory and practice—is central to interrogating political power and violence. If IR continues either to erase bodies and embodiment from its theories of violence and security or to understand bodies as natural agents, it makes two vital missteps. First, it incorrectly theorizes bodies, because it neglects their social agency. As a result, it fails to fully theorize political violence, which acts on, mobilizes and is resisted by bodies as social agents. This is the thesis of Lauren Wilcox’s provocative new book.

Wilcox draws on feminist theories of violence—particularly Judith Butler’s concept of socially constructed sexed and gendered bodies as ontologically vulnerable (precarious) targets for sovereign power and biopolitical intervention—to complicate and correct IR’s theorizations (or lack thereof) of embodiment and of violence more broadly. Her primary theoretical targets are traditional realist and liberal treatments of sovereignty and security, and insufficiently critical IR theories of biopolitics and security. Wilcox analyses four forms of contemporary political violence and its management: torture and force-feeding, suicide bombing, airport security procedures and precision warfare.

Chapter two examines how practices of torture, hunger striking and force-feeding of detainees held at the US Guantánamo Bay Naval Base undermine IR’s implicit assumption that bodies are strictly material organisms. It demonstrates how these violences put sovereign power (which claims the right to harm bodies) and biopolitical power (which claims the right to make bodies live) in tension, undermining IR theories that attempt to privilege one or the other of these forms of violence. Chapter three contests the assumption that bodies are self-contained and that the political practices of violent bodies are reducible to their intentions. Wilcox makes this argument through her analysis of the ‘explosive bodies’ of suicide bombers, which she reads through the politics of abjection.

By looking at airport security systems, chapter four investigates how contemporary preventive airport security practices—for example making passengers pass through full-body scanners—dematerialize bodies into digital information which experts use to detect the ‘truth’ about bodies, while at the same time producing some bodies as safe (normative) and others as unsafe (often deviant trans- and genderqueer bodies). Wilcox argues that trans- and genderqueer bodies are ‘produced as deviant … not just because they do not conform to gender expectations, but because they do not conform to the state’s desire to regulate bodies as fixed and unchanging’ (p. 106). This is among the ways in which bodies that act in and experience the world challenge their dematerialization as ‘a sign to be read’.
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(p. 130). The final empirical chapter continues with the themes of (de)materialization and (not) knowing, as it considers how precision warfare constitutes the bodies of those who bomb (virtual pilots) and the bodies of those who are bombed (‘known terrorists’ and civilians) as unnatural, post-human bodies that are the effects of sovereign and biopolitical knowledge calculations by this ‘killing machine’ (p. 164).

Some of the theoretically driven, empirically nuanced arguments these individual chapters tell will be familiar to IR scholars and practitioners. Yet the cumulative effect of the book is much more than the sum of its parts. By insisting on rereading IR theory and practice through feminist theories of embodiment, Wilcox not only underscores the feminist IR point that ‘it is inadequate to separate something called “the body” from the broader social, political and environmental milieu’ (p. 166). She also insists that ethical accounts of political violence must, in addition to the injuring and killing of ‘natural bodies’, also consider the production of social bodies, through the various forms of embodiment outlined in her empirical chapters. Acting on this insistence, Wilcox brings her analysis to a crescendo with her powerful critique of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P), a doctrine which refigures sovereignty as a state’s responsibility to protect some bodies but not others. Following Butler’s placement of materially and socially precarious bodies at the centre of her analysis, Wilcox both challenges the terms of responsibility in this doctrine and decentres its normative value as a new doctrine of sovereignty, to be embraced in practice and in theory.

While there are a few rough edges in the book (the introduction and chapter one could be combined and condensed), overall, Bodies of violence not only reaffirms the value of feminist scholarship for IR theory and practice, but aligns itself with a growing literature that refuses to take sovereignty and security as they are regularly theorized (either traditionally or critically) as its point of departure. The book sets a high standard for innovative scholarship and policy-thinking on violence and security.

Cynthia Weber, University of Sussex, UK


Lorenzo Cladi and Andrea Locatelli, in their introduction, state that their book’s goal is ‘to extrapolate which mechanisms are at play in the making of EU foreign and defence policy integration’ by resorting to analytic eclecticism (pp. 2–3). The book is divided into two parts: one reviews the main International Relations (IR) theories (realisms, liberalisms and constructivism) and their arguments relating to ‘the drivers of CSDP [the Common Security and Defence Policy]’ and the second ‘questions the validity of theories’ by focusing on specific empirical observations.

Within a neo-realist perspective, Cladi and Locatelli first argue that the development of CSDP represents not balancing against the US hegemon, but instead bandwagoning on the part of European states. In chapter two, Tom Dyson reminds us that differences in threat perception dictate diverging national policy responses. Dyson reviews the case of energy supply, explaining national policies according to their degree and the origin of their external energy dependence. In chapter three, Friederike Richter proposes an understanding of the development of CSDP combining two branches of liberal theory: neo-liberal institutionalism and liberal intergovernmentalism. By looking at both domestic politics and international institutions, she convincingly argues that states’ utilitarianism and the non-binding nature of CSDP explain the uneven development of that European policy. Benjamin Pohl
et al. then look at liberal theory with a focus on ‘governmental interest’, arguing that states conduct the European defence policy that domestic public opinion and experts’ preferences encourage. In chapter five, Carla Monteleone brings in the ideational dimension, made of shared identity and culture. She analyses the presence of these elements by looking at European states’ coordination at the UN Assembly. In the last chapter of part one, Kamil Zwolski studies Europe’s management of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear risk in the light of a combination of the sociology of bureaucracies and of global security governance approaches. The author thus identifies the multiplicity of actors, dimensions of formal and informal institutionalization and ‘ideational relations’ between actors as key factors. In part two, Olivier Schmitt first forcefully argues in favour of strategic studies, which explain why the EU, in the absence of a political project, is incapable of coming up with a security strategy. In chapter eight, Luis Simón makes a convincing point by applying classical realism to the regional scale and analysing the conduct of the big European states’ power politics within the CSDP and NATO. David G. Haglund then mixes diplomatic doctrine and structural factors to try and make sense of the cyclical nature of Franco-American relations. In chapter ten, Serena Giusti looks at EU–Russia relations through the lens of multiple national interests and diverging values. Finally, Cladi reviews the EU’s policy towards the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.

The book stems from a willingness to provide an overview of and create dialogue between different ‘generations’ of IR theory, from Waltz’s systemic theory to Adler and Pouliot’s ‘practices’. In doing so, it convincingly proposes approaching European affairs with regular IR tools rather than EU-specific concepts and theories. At the same time, as Zwolski notes (p. 104), the book underlines the fact that different empirical objects may require different approaches in order for these approaches to reveal their ‘conceptual benefits’. Now, regardless of the quality of some of the individual chapters, I believe the book has three limitations. The first criticism concerns the general organization of the book. Rather than a demonstration of eclecticism as announced in the introduction, the book constitutes a list of theories and there is no attempt at building bridges between approaches within the chapters (except for in Richter’s and Zwolski’s chapters)—and this is only partly accomplished in the book’s conclusion. Furthermore, the distinction between part one and part two appears artificial, as in both parts the chapters present a theoretical approach coupled with a case-study (only chapter eleven is purely empirical). The chapters are too short to present comprehensive theoretical overviews and case-studies, so both remain sketchy. The second point relates to the choice of the theories being discussed. In order to be fully consistent with the eclectic approach announced in the introduction, it would have added value to engage more with recent approaches to IR, for example ‘international practices’ (briefly covered by Zwolski), or synthetic approaches such as ‘solidified constructivism’ (see Meyer and Strickmann’s 2011 article ‘Solidifying constructivism: how material and ideational factors interact in European defence’, Journal of Common Market Studies 49: 1, only mentioned by Dyson) or new variants of realism (such as Barkin’s ‘realist constructivism’; see Realist constructivism: rethinking IR theory, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). Finally, an underlying problem is that the book is unclear as regards the definition of its research object. Despite a title announcing a study of ‘European security’, the introduction and book outline specify that the focus is on CSDP. However, the two are not equivalent; the CSDP’s development and functioning are never clearly presented and several case-studies are in fact not related to CSDP at all. As the book consists of a combination of both different theories and different empirical objects, the reader is left with some confusion about what ‘European security’ is, in what state the international system and international security are today, and what is the
added value of IR theories for making sense of these. To avoid this confusion, it would have been useful for the book to include a more extensive introductory chapter providing some background information as well as a common context and empirical reality in which each chapter could then be set.

Alice Pannier, Sciences Po Paris, France

International history*


In 2000, Indian public intellectual Shiv Visvanathan wondered in an editorial: ‘How does one look at the twentieth century?’ (p. 775). American–German historian Konrad Jarausch gives a wonderfully eloquent and comprehensive answer to this question in Out of ashes. His book tells the story of Europe’s tortuous journey through modernity, from catastrophe to restoring civility. Like authors before him, Jarausch details Europeans’ infatuation with ideology and their reluctant renunciation of imperial views of the world. The book, however, innovatively focuses on the ambivalence of Europe’s engagement with the modern. It ‘explores the tension between a problematic past and a promising present in order to decode the particular version of liberal modernity that is European’ (p. 13). It is a history of the transition from utopian social engineering to gradualist, non-linear change, disenchanted with triumphalist enthusiasm for progress. Another stand-out feature of Out of ashes is its global analytical framework. Europe is compared with the United States and China, and continental transformations are tied to colonialism, decolonization, the Cold War and post-modernity.

Some of the most fascinating sections in Out of ashes deal with the post-1945 period. Western Europe’s resurrection ‘was a paradoxical form of conservative modernization that attempted to revive traditions while moving forward at the same time’ (p. 401). Democracy was rebuilt by expanding the welfare state, by creating international organizations and through European integration. In the East, the socialist bloc created by Stalin and preserved by his heirs was a conglomerate of party dictatorships where ‘the idea of a liberal communism remained a contradiction in terms’ (p. 445). The author shies away from idealizing interwar eastern Europe. He cautions that, because of the failure of pre-1945 democracies, ‘the Soviet Union initially had more success in transforming eastern Europe than is acknowledged in retrospect’ (p. 449). State socialism remained reform-resistant, so ‘the communist path toward modernity turned into a “civilizational mirage”’ (p. 451). A mirage proved to be ‘the good life promise of modernity’ in most of the decolonized world. The legacy of European colonialism, the failures of post-independence elites (especially in Africa), and the superpowers’ meddling in local conflicts generated a high number of false starts in these recently liberated regions.

As postwar Europe regained its optimism in relation to change, Jarausch emphasizes an outlook shared across the Iron Curtain: ‘a euphoric sense of possibility that promised to reap the rewards of a benign modernization, if only the necessary changes were planned systematically’ (p. 566). In the West, it materialized in the process of European integration and the creation of the Common Market. Prosperity, coupled with diminishing inequality

* See also Graham Spencer, ed., The British and peace in Northern Ireland, pp. 479–80.
and improved social mobility, transformed modernity into a boom (p. 540). The end of the 1960s witnessed the challenge to the status quo. The ‘sixty-eighthers’ failed to incite a ‘new class’ revolution in the West or to bring about ‘socialism with a human face’ in the East, but they succeeded in changing lifestyles and values, while advancing politics based on civil society actions. Jarausch astutely remarks that the divergent paths of 1968 in the East and West inhibited ‘communication across the Iron Curtain, creating an unresolved tension until 1989’ (p. 602). The emphasis on strivings for humane political forms beyond high modernity fuels the definition of 1989’s uniqueness. State socialism collapsed because ‘a popular movement from below used the space generated by reforms from above and by international detente to reclaim human rights and force a transition to democracy’ (p. 686).

Going beyond the Cold War, Jarausch defines the distinctiveness and prospects of the Old World’s version of globalized modernity. He insists on Europe’s love–hate relationship with globalization, heightened by the 1970s oil shocks and reignited by the crisis of the 2000s. The story of the European Union is a cautionary one; it encompasses gradualist steps reconciling conflicting interests, it isn’t a tale of automatic spillover from prior decisions (p. 521). The transformation of the East is a struggle with dilemmas of simultaneity: ‘multiple transitions from dictatorship to democracy, from a planned to a market economy, and from a multiethnic empire to a national state’ (p. 696). Furthermore, as the ongoing refugee crisis shows, Europe remains ‘a reluctant immigration continent’ (p. 734) despite its praise of cosmopolitan modernity.

Europeans, in Jarausch’s opinion, opted for a form of globalization that differs significantly from its US or Chinese counterparts. The final element of Europe’s alchemy was forged by a Faustian history. According to the author, ‘only when controlled by humanist ethics can the dynamic power of modernity truly become a force for good’. Europe’s globalization is a chastened modernity. Out of ashes might sometimes strike readers as overoptimistic, especially in the context of last year’s terrorist attacks or the commonly remarked fatigue with democracy, and the constant criticism of the EU’s democratic deficits. Nevertheless, this admirable book never fails to remind us that Europe’s reconciliation with liberal modernity is the embattled outcome of a bloody and agonizing century.

Bogdan C. Iacob, New Europe College, Romania


Writing about the history of the Cold War is becoming difficult, because so much has been written about it already. The regional Cold Wars looks at this era from an unusual angle. The editor and co-author, together with the 16 authors of individual chapters, divided the book into four main parts: 1953–6, 1965–9, 1978–83 and the late 1980s, allowing them to skip many important events, such as the Korean War, the construction of the Berlin Wall, the Soviet politburo coup of October 1964 or the Yom Kippur War.

The first part of the book covers the period between Stalin’s death and the three major events of 1956: the Hungarian uprising, the events in Poland and the Suez Crisis. The second deals with the crisis of NATO in 1966—treated very academically—some aspects of the Vietnam War, the Six-Day War, the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia and the slow emergence of China as a significant international player. The third section covers the improvement of Israeli–Egyptian relations, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the end of detente, the Iranian Revolution and the China–Vietnam military conflict.
This unusual packaging, which also limits the book to Europe, China and the Middle East, should have allowed the authors to provide a general overview of the situation in these regions, in the chosen periods, and to focus on specific events which marked the era. This, however, is not always the case. Having selected the periods which they found most important, several authors show little interest in some of the significant events of the time, such as the Damanskii/Zhenbao Island incident, the imposition of martial law in Poland in December 1981, and its impact on East–West relations and the early years of Gorbachev’s rule. The editor prudently warns us which parts of the globe are not covered, but that leeway offered to the contributors ‘to formulate their own agenda’ doesn’t always work. Some of them occasionally forget about the Cold War, focusing on their own preferred aspects of the national interests of the main actors of their chapters. It is always difficult to enforce editorial discipline among colleagues and friends and this seems to be the case in this book.

Some of the editor’s views—that the Soviet Union was able to restore socialist order (p. 6), that Gorbachev was unable to achieve his goals (p. 8) or that Nasser’s ‘positive neutralism’—contradicted by the excellent chapter on ‘The Cold War in the Arab World’—would be helped by brief clarifications as to what the author had in mind. The argument that ‘imaginary reformer’ Gorbachev inspired the east European revolution (p. 14)—as opposed to his well-meant but chaotic policies allowing them to slip the Soviet leash—would certainly surprise many in today’s central Europe.

The editor, the author of the chapter ‘Window of opportunity in Europe’, claims, quoting only himself, that when in 1963 the Soviet Union tried to incorporate Outer Mongolia—or simply the Mongolian People’s Republic, as it was known between 1924 and 1992—into the Warsaw Pact, the opposition from China, Poland and Romania forced Moscow to abandon its plan (p. 56). True, both European members of the Pact were against Moscow’s plan, but there is no evidence that the Soviet final decision was in any way influenced by their misgivings or even that they were officially presented to the Soviet leadership. The descriptions by one of the authors of France’s independent foreign policy, and the Polish and German—most probably East German—quest for more sovereignty as ‘challenges to bipolarity’ and ‘proposed alternative of European geopolitical independence’ (p. 114), are not convincing because the chapter in question ends in 1969 and it is difficult to imagine that the unhappy Poles and East Germans were interested, at that stage, in challenging anything but the Soviet domination of their countries.

Co-authored by so many academics, the book is an interesting historical puzzle, with many pieces missing, sporadic repetitions and a fuzzy general picture. Some of the chapters suffer from unfamiliar—to lesser mortals—academic verbiage and one mentions Walmart, McDonald’s and Karl Marx for no evident reason (p. 26).

This must be why the editor provides a ‘user’s manual’ in the introduction, four separate mini-chapters on the setting of the book, its structure, major insights and the plan of the book—a very academic but not always quite relevant tool. The book is packed with interesting, well-documented events, but its selective targeting, unnecessary introductions to each section and the general lack of cohesion makes it a difficult read.

Henry Plater-Zyberk, Prague Security Studies Institute, Czech Republic

In Churchill and the Islamic world, Warren Dockter sets out to challenge the notion that Churchill was an imperialist with an indifferent, even contemptuous, attitude to the Middle East. He argues that ‘Churchill’s engagement with and understanding of the Muslim world stands in stark contrast to the purely imperialistic and orientalist perspectives of his contemporaries’ (p. 3) and that he was to some extent a friend of the Muslim world.

During his long career, Winston Churchill oversaw several decisions that had considerable impact on the Middle East: the Royal Navy’s conversion from coal to oil, the unsuccessful Dardanelles offensive, the Cairo Conference of 1921 (which established the British policy towards the Middle East after the First World War) and the Iranian coup of 1953. Dockter’s book covers the period from 1895 to 1955, i.e. from Churchill’s first assignment in the military in present-day Pakistan up to the end of his second term as prime minister. Geographically, the book focuses on the countries and peoples that preoccupied Churchill as a politician: Palestine, the Arabian peninsula, India (especially its Muslim population) and to a lesser extent Iran and Sudan.

Dockter offers an insight into Churchill’s interest in and the extent of his knowledge of the Middle East, and their impact on his policies towards the region. He presents Churchill’s views of Islam, Islamic culture and Muslim peoples as an amalgam of ‘orientalist and magnanimous’ (p. 35). This study also shows that whatever sympathy Churchill may have had towards Islam and Islamic societies was often overshadowed by his view of the British Empire as a civilizing force and always subordinate to British strategic interests as dictated by his official duties.

Yet Dockter also convincingly argues that Churchill’s personal experiences as a young officer working with local soldiers in present-day Pakistan, as well as his friendships with Wilfrid Blunt and T. E. Lawrence, did spark a genuine interest in Islam and Islamic societies. Churchill’s ability to quote Omar Khayyam’s Rubaiyat at his first meeting with the Aga Khan points to his appreciation of Islamic culture, even though it was based on ‘heavily romanticized’ notions of Middle Eastern societies and lifestyle (p. 55). Dockter also mentions Churchill’s criticism of Kitchener’s desecration of the Mahdi’s tomb during his campaign in Sudan as an example of his cultural awareness (p. 37).

However, the author takes pains to show that this interest did not translate into a nuanced understanding of the politics of the region. For example, the book points out that Churchill had to enquire about the differences between the Sunni and Shi’i sects of Islam when designing his policies for the Middle East after the First World War (p. 135). Some of Churchill’s notions remained fixed throughout his career, such as his view of the Islamic countries as a monolith, which led both to his wish to establish an Arab federation and to his fear of pan-Islamic movements. Moreover, Churchill had little actual contact with the regions in question: he did not visit any part of the British empire except Canada after 1908 (and a brief visit to Cairo for the conference in 1921).

Dockter’s in-depth study draws on a wealth of sources including Churchill’s personal papers, correspondence and published works. The secondary sources comprise mostly scholarship on British politics, with a small nod to works on Middle Eastern history. It should be noted that some sections of the book make for uncomfortable reading: Churchill died twelve years before Edward Said’s Orientalism sparked widespread reassessment of the representations of the eastern world in western culture, and as Dockter shows, Churchill
was ‘a man of his times’ (p. 43). However, overall the book offers a valuable glimpse into the thinking that informed British policy-making towards the Middle East and south Asia in the first half of the twentieth century.

*L’ubica Polláková, Chatham House, UK*

**Governance, law and ethics**

**The fog of peace: a memoir of international peacekeeping in the 21st century.**  

Appointed by Secretary-General Kofi Annan in 2000, Jean-Marie Guéhenno went on to serve as under secretary-general for United Nations Peacekeeping Operations for nearly eight years. This fact alone would have ensured that *The fog of peace*—his memoirs as head of UN peacekeeping at a time of great geopolitical turbulence and rapidly growing demands on UN field operations—was always going to be eagerly anticipated by those with a special interest in the history of peacekeeping. In the event, Guéhenno has produced a book that deserves a readership far wider than one encompassed only by those with a special interest in the subject, be they practitioners, academics or professional UN watchers. *The fog of peace* is not only one of the very best books to have been written about UN peacekeeping for a long time; it is one that also offers profound insights into the political, practical and moral dilemmas and challenges presented by international efforts, through the UN, to address the causes and consequences of violent conflict in the early twenty-first century. Unencumbered by academic jargon and mercifully devoid of a ‘theoretical framework’ through which to analyse UN activities, the book is written with understated passion and great humanity.

What, more precisely, is it that makes this such a good and, indeed, important book? The particular strengths and lasting value of *The fog of peace* derive in part, of course, from the fact that it contains the ‘insider’ perspectives of a central actor involved in decision-making at the highest level of the UN secretariat. From the tortuous efforts to reach agreement on deploying peacekeepers to Darfur (‘a lot of time was wasted in the endless pursuit of false solutions for Darfur’, p. 185) to the use of force in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) (‘robust peacekeeping is an empty concept if it is not supported by a robust political posture’, p. 147) and the multiple tragedies of Haiti (‘a frightening example of the immensely difficult task outsiders face in helping another country’, p. 257), *The fog of peace* contains a wealth of detail, critical commentary and empirically grounded judgements that are bound to be of interest to any student of the UN. There is more to this book, however, than just the intrinsic value of acquiring the perspective of a key actor at the heart of UN decision-making. Just as valuable, if not more so, is the way in which *The fog of peace* succeeds, through the detailed discussion of individual cases, in bringing out how the day-to-day realities of managing and leading UN operations are inescapably shaped by political and resource constraints, and how these constraints in turn present peacekeepers (in the field and at headquarters) with choices and dilemmas that are morally complex, politically fraught and anything but simple or clear-cut.

Guéhenno makes the point at the outset that works of political science that focus on the ‘how to’—that is, books offering ‘detailed, specific solutions, or recipes’ for complex and deep-seated problems—are ‘useless to operators’ because, apart from anything else, they fail to capture the ‘texture of life’. The observation provides a key to the approach taken in *The fog of peace*, a book that may well be viewed as an attempt to capture the true ‘texture’
of peacekeeping. In Guéhenno’s own words: ‘I do not want … to be a commentator on peacekeeping but rather to convey all the uncertainties, the flaws, the false hopes, the wrong assumptions, the unnecessary fears, the fog of real action’ (p. xvi).

There is a further consideration here, however. The emphasis on ‘uncertainties, false hopes, flaws and wrong assumptions’ may easily lead to cynicism about the real purposes and practices of peacekeeping. And indeed such cynicism is widespread—and not without good reason. However, as Guéhenno persuasively goes on to show—again through the detailed analysis of specific situations facing both peacekeepers on the ground and decision-makers such as himself, rather than through mere prescription or abstract reasoning—peacekeeping, ‘far from being a cynical enterprise aimed at preserving peace at any price, can be successful only if it is understood as a highly moral enterprise’ (p. xvii). And, he adds, an enterprise ‘becomes moral not because it is a fight against evil, but because it has to consider conflicting goods, and lesser evils, and make choices. It is those dilemmas that make peacekeeping an ethical enterprise’ (p. xvii). This is the overarching and compelling framework through which Guéhenno explores the history of UN peacekeeping, and his own role in that history, in the early twenty-first century.

Although The fog of peace is organized around the discussion of individual operations and areas of UN involvement, a number of underlying themes cut across different cases and provide overall coherence to the narrative. Arguably, the most important of these is one that is still very much at the heart of debates about the future direction of UN field operations: the role, utility and use of military force in peacekeeping.

A notable feature of Guéhenno’s period in charge of UN peacekeeping was the increased emphasis—evident in operations as well as in ‘doctrinal’ discussions—on so-called ‘robust peacekeeping’. Guéhenno identifies and discusses several instances ‘when military force has made a difference’. These were moments when properly equipped and properly commanded forces scored tactical victories in response to immediate crises and emergencies. Examples include the ‘robust’ use of force to prevent the collapse of the UN mission in Sierra Leone in 2000 (undertaken before he assumed office); the Brazilian-led operation to dismantle the gang structures in Haiti in 2006–2007; and the French-led mission to secure Bunia in eastern DRC in 2003 (Operation Artemis). While Guéhenno thus recognizes the role that military force, in the right circumstances, can play in UN operations, in the end what emerges still more strongly from The fog of peace is an emphasis on the ‘limits of the use of force’—or, to be more precise, an emphasis on the vital importance of ensuring that the use of force is always closely aligned with a clear political purpose, and that sight is never lost of the overriding need for a political settlement to end violent conflict.

The chapters devoted to the UN missions in Congo and Haiti suggest that Guéhenno’s own views on the use of force evolved while he was serving as head of peacekeeping, not radically from one position to its polar opposite, but rather towards greater scepticism about the potential for ‘robust peacekeeping’. The use of force in the DRC and Haiti certainly brought home—as The fog of peace makes plain—the difficulties of translating tactical success into long-term strategic gain. They also highlight the very real danger that ‘robustness’ will undermine the UN’s chief asset of impartiality in relation to disputants in any conflict. As Guéhenno concludes about the UN’s travails in Congo: ‘… in hindsight, I believe the main mistake was of a political nature: military operations became a convenient distraction, which allowed the Security Council to neglect the politics of Congo’ (p. 149).

Perhaps the clearest summary of Guéhenno’s views on this critical and difficult question is found in his assessment of UN military actions in Haiti: ‘The decisive use of force may help prevent marginal actors from derailing a peace process, and may contribute to the
credibility of an international deployment by creating leverage that can then be used to influence and even shape a political process. But in the end, the critical element is the political foundation of peace’ (p. 262). It is the kind of nuanced, thoughtful and empirically grounded conclusion that is typical of this deeply rewarding book.

**Mats Berdal, King’s College London, UK**


In this work, Daniela Huber attempts to make a substantial contribution to the still emerging literature that attempts to theorize democracy promotion as an International Relations phenomenon. Having set out her theoretical stall, she proceeds to test her arguments through three case-studies: on the United States and Latin America under Presidents Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan; on the European Union and the Mediterranean region after the Cold War; and on Turkey and the Mediterranean region since 2000. As a result, the author finds that two hypotheses concerning the centrality of threat perceptions and role identity for a country’s decision to adopt a policy of democracy promotion are confirmed. To sum this up, ‘threat perceptions constrain democracy promotion, while a democratic role identity—rooted internally and externally in international norms of democracy—enables and pushes for democracy promotion. A democratic role identity can limit the hindering effect of threat perceptions on democracy promotion if the other is successful in mobilizing it’ (p. 184). In all three cases, Huber argues, democracy promotion began only when threat perceptions were low, but threat perceptions subsequently lost their independent effect on policy once democracy promotion had started.

**Democracy promotion and foreign policy** certainly succeeds in its theoretical mission and moves the research agenda forward, not least by refusing to become constrained by devotion to any single theoretical paradigm. From the realist perspective, Huber confirms the importance of threats, at least in the initial phase when the move towards adopting democracy promotion is triggered. She also shows that such a policy is not a fig leaf for the true realpolitik aims of powerful actors on the international stage, as many claim. From the perspective of constructivist theory, she demonstrates that an internal democratic-type identity can have an effect on role identity through the different mechanisms of anchoring, imitation, substitution and spillover. Additionally, international norms influence complying states through the mechanisms she labels as strategic, moral and confidence pulls. Importantly, the role of the ‘other’ in relation to the aspiring democracy promoter state was also a decisive factor in all three cases.

The book’s case-studies, as well as providing empirical support to the author’s theory, also serve as very useful introductions to the democracy promotion policies of the US, the EU and the especially understudied Turkey. They will be of real benefit to anyone new to the subject. Two questions come to mind regarding the EU here. Despite its sui generis nature, it is usually taken in this literature as a comparative foil to the United States, and Huber, as others before, makes a good defence of that choice based on the EU’s actorness in democracy promotion. Nevertheless, one cannot help but wonder if, in view of how the author theorizes the sources of democracy promotion, it might have been more interesting, or even valid, to choose instead a European state—Germany being perhaps the obvious one—to compare with the United States and Turkey. The second issue is that there is probably a stronger case to be made for looking at EU policy towards central and eastern
Europe, rather than the Middle East and North Africa, if the question is one of the overall strategic importance of the countries targeted to the democracy promoter. This does not invalidate the book’s findings about the EU, but might have led to different ones.

When it comes to the US, a couple of Huber’s arguments are not entirely convincing. That the Reagan administration used a democracy rhetoric and identity to give a patina to its foreign policy and as a result became entrapped in an actual policy of democracy promotion, alongside being socialized by its Latin American other, may be partly true, but too much importance is given to this relative to other factors. Second, the argument that Reagan initially attempted a return to a realpolitik foreign policy but that Carter’s experience with human rights meant this was no longer an acceptable option does not convince. Leaving aside the important question of whether Reagan was a realpolitik practitioner or not, the extent of his supposed initial abandonment of democracy in Latin America here overestimates the democracy content in Carter’s foreign policy. It would be more accurate to say that the change between the two was more a case of different conceptions of the same goal.

Democracy promotion and foreign policy is an important addition to the literature on this subject. Huber’s conclusion that, as well as for the United States and the European Union, the identity factor was important for Turkey’s decision to move towards a policy of democracy promotion in the 2000s, is an important one. When it comes to considering the prospects for democracy promotion as a feature of international politics, this is a telling contribution to the ongoing debate as to whether non-western democracies would also be willing to adopt such a policy. This book suggests that this cannot be ruled out—but, crucially, that if they do so, it will be in their own particular ways.

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Unsurprisingly, digital technologies have altered the power balance in international affairs. These three books question this profound, increasing alteration, as well as explain how the internet is redefining diplomacy and our understanding of concepts like sovereignty and territoriality. Today, the internet and its uses have vaulted into the highest realm of ‘high politics’: the internet has become a venue of unprecedented opportunity, a source of vulnerability, a disturbance in the familiar international order, and it is often portrayed as a potential threat to national security. At the same time, the digital economy spreads a story ‘full of promise’ that often blinds policy-makers, which raises important questions about how much power should be left in the hands of internet multinationals.

In an accessible book for the general, non-academic reader, Taylor Owen assesses these mutations through a ‘disruptive power’ lens: empowered by digital technologies, many non-state actors are leveraging their ability to challenge traditional centres of power across a number of areas related to international relations. States now find themselves in a
convoluted position, as both enablers and targets of disruptive actors. The author provides multiple examples of this ‘twenty-first century foreign policy challenge’ which threatens the institutions that have preserved the balance of power since the end of the Second World War. First, a group like Anonymous is decentralized (there are no gatekeepers), collaborative (as an intrinsically social world based on partnerships, collaborations and interdependencies) and resilient. In a second example, Owen explores digital activism through the case of the hackers group Telecomix, who served in particular as a form of tech support during the Arab Spring in 2011. As conflict began in Syria, Telecomix agents in France, Germany and Sweden disseminated videos and pictures of atrocities committed by Assad’s police and military forces. The cluster anticipated an internet shutdown in Syria similar to what happened in Egypt. Instead, the Ba’athist regime monitored the internet and social media activity of rebel groups and activists. In the case of Anonymous, western governments such as the United States and the United Kingdom have launched criminal proceedings against individuals suspected of being connected to the organization. In zealously prosecuting activist hackers, the author argues, ‘the state is doing more than breaking its bargain with citizens’, concluding that the effort to control the internet could undermine the democratic state by intimidating its citizens and destroying its own character in the process.

Owen also provides readers with a stimulating discussion on the rise of Bitcoin, and what cryptocurrencies mean for the international financial system that states have long controlled. Bitcoin was imagined and conceived as a radical means of opposing state power. While increasing attention is being paid to its practical commercial utility, there is a growing divide in the cryptocurrency community between those who want to normalize its use and those who remain steadfast in their revolutionary beliefs.

Shawn Powers and Michael Jablonski’s book will be of particular use to International Relations scholars and readers eager to place global digital issues and debates into their geopolitical and geo-economic contexts. Its central argument rests on the idea that efforts to create a singular, universal internet built on western legal, political and social preferences, alongside the ‘freedom to connect’, is driven primarily by economic and geopolitical motivations rather than humanitarian and democratic ideals. Until recently, global internet governance was restricted to small silos of experts. The literature on the subject was suffering from an overly narrow, technocratic conception of internet governance and paid insufficient attention to governance dynamics within countries. In other words, the internet cannot be detached from the multiple regional and national contexts in which it operates. Besides, academic studies on internet governance have tended to address two ‘tribes’ that do not necessarily interact, or even understand each other: foreign policy scholars and internet and computer science experts. Bringing together these fields has proved particularly necessary since Edward Snowden’s revelations, which have shown that internet policy has far-reaching implications which go beyond merely technical issues. This is precisely what Powers and Jablonski intend to do in this meticulous book.

Unsurprisingly, US internet policy captures much of their attention; it is dissected in a more rousing way than by Daniel R. McCarthy in his recent The power and politics of US foreign policy and the internet (Palgrave, 2015; reviewed in International Affairs 91: 3). In short, the US internet industry has become a key priority for the White House, in terms of both economic redevelopment and the country’s security strategy. The internet is involved in the containment strategy against China and the isolation of Russia, through control of networks, the definition of international standards, protectionist measures against Chinese equipment, data capture and the conclusion of trans-Atlantic and trans-Pacific trade agreements which exclude these two countries. Moreover, the current institutional system
allows the US to maintain an unprecedented legal influence via the supremacy of its soft law and the English language. Debates over internet governance are—unlike in Europe—monitored at the highest levels in Washington; the careful maintenance of the status quo is necessary in order to avoid a *retournement du monde*. Despite much rhetoric about openness, participation, accountability and democracy, the current governance model—labelled as ‘multistakeholder’—is far more participatory than pluralistic, because it is dominated by representatives of commercial and political interests to the detriment of developing countries and the civil society, who are unaware of the stakes or unable to weigh into the debates. Like Owen, Powers and Jablonski raise the significance of understanding the private sector’s role in global internet policy. Today, major internet companies’ CEOs are welcomed abroad as heads of state; they recognize the borders of disputed territories on their online platforms. Some openly criticize the US government’s internet policy. In some way, the role of such private actors is reminiscent of the role played by the East India Company in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe: sometimes an ally, sometimes a rival of states, and indifferent to their laws.

In a comprehensive and sobering book, Brandon Valeriano and Ryan Maness expend the state-centric prism favoured in the other books under review. Many actors from governments, academia and the private sector have strenuously argued that states must agree on a set of international norms for conflict in cyberspace. Our current environment is characterized by a steep rise in the development of offensive cyber tools and tactics—as well as a general disagreement on when and where it is appropriate to use them. The overall result is a popular perception of a weakened international security environment that threatens to devolve into an anarchic Hobbesian world of ‘all against all’.

Evidently, the peculiar features of the cyber phenomenon present an intellectual difficulty: how to integrate its new dangers into existing political and strategic understandings. The problem faced by decision-makers is the reverse and graver question: how to adapt and apply outmoded axioms to reduce the risk. These problems of strategy are not unique to our cyber age; earlier generations of thinkers grappled with similar dilemmas during previous technological revolutions, but they are amplified by dangerous conditions of strategic instability in the ‘new domain’ of the internet: offence dominance, attribution difficulties, volatility in weapons systems and power dispersion.

In the end, cyber policy and global data flows are undoubtedly becoming a key instrument of power alongside oil and financial flows, as these three books skilfully demonstrate.

Julien Nocetti, Institut Français des Relations Internationales, France

**Conflict, security and defence**


At the heart of this book is the question of why there has been so little progress in knowledge about International Relations (IR). Specifically, Fred Chernoff is concerned with the lack of what he terms ‘approach-to-consensus’. By this he means the acceptance of some answers and theories as providing better explanations than their alternatives. He wonders

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* *See also Brandon Valeriano and Ryan C. Maness, *Cyber war versus cyber realities*, pp. 463–5; Scott Gates and Kaushik Roy, *Unconventional warfare in south Asia*, pp. 494–5; and Peter Hennessy and James Jinks, *The silent deep*, pp. 481–2.*
whether the lack of consensus may be ascribed to the fact that scholars use different criteria to evaluate their explanations. The book makes a case that this is indeed so. Consequently, Chernoff proposes that more careful specification of evaluative criteria would improve mutual engagement among scholars and lead to greater agreement about the best possible explanations.

Following a brief introduction which outlines the central research question and the possible ways of answering it, chapters one and two deal with the key moves in the philosophy of science underpinning the book. Particularly important is the argument derived from the work of Thomas Kuhn, namely that ‘classic scientific publications implicitly define methods and key concepts, including what is to count as a compelling scientific argument or good explanation’ (p. 14). The argument shapes decisively the book’s research design in chapters three to five. It also allows for the development of Chernoff’s larger thesis. Influential works in various areas of security studies do not reach consensus on what is a good explanation, because they either do not specify their criteria of a good explanation or such criteria differ.

The book is grounded in the naturalist position that the social sciences can be modelled on the methods of the natural sciences. Chernoff admits that some questions in IR and security studies cannot be answered from the naturalist position, but the specific areas which the book analyses are compatible with it. Whereas chapter one focuses on the notions of progress and explanation, chapter two explores more closely the differences between the natural and social sciences when it comes to conceptualizations of explanations and what makes them good.

The result is an exhaustive list of forms of explanation and criteria of their superiorit.

Less defensible is the uneven nature in which some of the material is surveyed. George Quester’s The politics of nuclear proliferation (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973) is covered in less than two pages; Kenneth Waltz’s position on nuclear proliferation is, rather curiously, mostly discussed with reference to his book Theory of international politics (Reading: AddisonWesley, 1979), which says practically nothing about proliferation; the section on Hedley Bull’s The anarchical society (London: Macmillan, 1977) omits the alliance question altogether. There are also some obvious mistakes. Contrary to what Chernoff writes (p. 64), there is no evidence that Iraq was a client state of A. Q. Khan’s proliferation network; Chernoff repeatedly refers (pp. 196–7) to a discussion of John Mearsheimer’s work in chapter three, when it is to be found in chapter four.

The chapters devoted to the substantive areas could have been introduced more clearly. The text jumps between various aspects of nuclear proliferation (chapter three) and alliance formation/the balance of power (chapter four) without giving a good sense of what follows and why. The situation is somewhat better with regard to the democratic peace debate (chapter five), but even there a strong focus on policy implications is puzzling when compared to the other two chapters. Partial conclusions expressed at the end of each chapter are likewise not articulated very well. The practice of referring to answers as
ANS-1, ANS-2 and ANS-3 in chapters three and four, but not used in chapter five, is simply annoying. Some conclusions are repetitive (compare pp. 179–80), and overall the conclusions are not particularly revealing. The democratic peace debate is found to have achieved more consensus and progress than the other two areas, because scholars in that particular debate share clearer criteria of a good explanation. This confirms the two hypotheses formulated at the beginning of the book.

Chernoff’s call for more clearly stated research questions and evaluative criteria of explanations is a sensible one. His analysis of the way in which scholars go about studying certain issues in security studies makes the book similar to such a classic as Hidemi Suganami’s On the causes of war (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996). Unfortunately, it is neither as well crafted nor as tightly argued.

Jan Ruzicka, Aberystwyth University, UK


Mattox and Grenier adopt a distinctively broad perspective. They analyse the politics of alliance at the strategic level, as well as the differing tactical approaches of selected International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) national contingents, including often forgotten partners in the Afghan venture, such as El Salvador, the Visegrad countries (the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia), Jordan, the United Arab Emirates and Japan, while considering Pakistan and Russia as well. With short, punchy chapters, the work provides an excellent insight into the Afghan campaign, for students and experts alike.

In one of the first chapters, Romain Malejacq dissects the contradiction at the very heart of the Afghan campaign. As specified in the Bonn Agreement of 2003, the unifying goal of the Afghan intervention was to replace the Taliban with a centralized, democratic and representative Afghan government of a modern type. An effective government, it was claimed, would unite the peoples of Afghanistan, ending decades of conflict and ensuring the country against any return by the Taliban or other extremist groups. In reality, however, intervening western forces—and, in fact, aid agencies as well—formed partnerships with local ‘warlords’ in order to facilitate their operations. Malejacq notes the contradiction: “Warlords are “by definition illegitimate and unrecognized”. It is therefore striking (and for some truly shocking) to see that coalition forces that are supposed to back and support the official democratically elected government of Afghanistan have been in business with warlords since the very beginning of the US military intervention’ (p. 32). In order to prosecute the mission of eradicating the Taliban, the West allied with malign political actors who generated the very grievances among the populace which brought the Taliban
to power in the first place and as a result of which they continue to receive support from many Pashtuns. The campaign was substantially self-defeating.

This political contradiction was compounded by alliance disunity. Although troop-contributing nations agreed to the central tenets of the Bonn Accords, each state had its own particular rationale for committing to the operation: ‘The primary motivation for the UK to fight in Afghanistan was to reinforce already strong defence ties with the US’ (p. 2). The same was true of Australia, Denmark and the Visegrad nations. By contrast, ‘the Afghanistan mission provided Canada, the Netherlands and Japan an opportunity to rehabilitate tarnished reputations’ (p. 3)—although, of course, the Netherlands was also concerned to maintain trans-Atlantic solidarity (p. 143). For Germany, El Salvador and New Zealand, domestic politics was the primary factor.

Nevertheless, whatever the particular strategic rationale for committing troops, domestic politics had a huge bearing on how each nation enacted the ISAF campaign in the provinces for which it was responsible. Nations typically put severe limits on the scale and character of their contribution, with obstructive caveats. Purely as a result of domestic politics, the Dutch withdrew from Oruzgan in 2010, following the collapse of the Verhagen government, the Canadians from Kandahar in 2011 while the Germans did not start fighting seriously in Kunduz till 2010. Only then did Lieutenant-Colonel Jared Sembritzki move ‘forces out of the compound’ (p. 99) for the first time because ‘the Germans needed to regain the initiative, which could not be done within the confining camps and without mobility or good intelligence about the area outside’ (p. 100). They also needed to demonstrate that they had made a valuable contribution, as Barack Obama had announced a clear end to the campaign.

In addition to divergent political interests, the institutional interests and distinctive military cultures of coalition forces had an exacerbating centrifugal effect on the campaign. The observations of Grenier, a career Special Operations Forces (SOF) officer, about the US SOF are particularly perceptive here. In stark contrast to the designated Green Beret mission of mentoring and developing official Afghan security forces, he noted how, for the first three years of the campaign or more, American SOFs typically preferred to engage in conventional offensive operations and, therefore, to work with local militias: ‘special operations leaders changed their minds because they did not like the image of the nation’s warrior elite teaching lacklustre recruits how to march and do other rudimentary tasks, especially when just a year earlier the world witnessed bearded Green Berets in local attire attacking Taliban positions on horseback’ (p. 52). Consequently, ‘US special operations forces—long touted as the military’s most culturally astute and effective combat advisors—had little interaction with ANA [Afghan National Army] troops, instead partnering almost exclusively with local militias’ (p. 53). Eventually, Special Operations Forces were compelled to mentor the ANA, but coped with this indignity by creating overly specialized Afghan Commando Battalions who were often inactive due to a lack of resources like helicopters and other unspecified—but guessable—factors. According to Grenier, the US SOF had sought to create an Afghan Army in its own image irrespective of the operational requirements and resourcing realities. In a quite different way, Andrew Dorman describes how British regimental culture similarly distorted the Helmand campaign, especially in the early years from 2006 to 2009.

This book is written as a valedictory analysis of Afghanistan and as such it succeeds admirably. Yet the true significance of the collection may lie in the fact that while the West has apparently chosen to end a war by withdrawing conventional combat troops, the struggle continues to this day. Indeed, the deteriorating situation has forced Barack Obama to deploy
5,000 US troops to Afghanistan once more, and as the fight in the south intensifies against the Taliban, there have been a number of US casualties. Ironically, the lessons for the future, with which Mattox concludes this volume, may in fact have to be applied to Afghanistan itself. Whether the West will be successful in this longer-term engagement in Afghanistan is, on the basis of the evidence presented in this illuminating book, very uncertain.

Anthony King, University of Exeter, UK


After a long period of decline following the end of the Cold War, the literature on nuclear strategy and its related areas appears to be on the increase once more. Three factors seem to be driving this. First, the continuing concern about the proliferation of nuclear technology and the potential for more states, and possibly non-state actors, to acquire new weapons. Second, and perhaps more importantly, with the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan in apparent abeyance both western policy-makers and academics are again devoting their attention to this area, moving away from defence transformation and counter-insurgency. In particular, the ‘rise of China’ and the less than harmonious relations between the West and Russia have raised the spectre of interstate conflict, with the associated issue of what, if any, role nuclear weapons may play in it. Finally, there is increasing recognition of the challenge posed by the bloc obsolescence of much of the existing nuclear forces and their attendant infrastructure. This is not the sole preserve of the United States, as is evident in the current debate over the replacement of the UK’s Trident ballistic missile submarines.

The two books under review sit within this new literature, but they have quite different focuses. In his book, Brad Roberts, the Director of the Center for Global Security Research at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, considers the role for US nuclear weapons in the twenty-first century. As an insider in the US nuclear programme, it is hardly surprising that Roberts is an advocate of the US renewing its nuclear forces and their associated infrastructure. Even if one is opposed to his basic arguments, the book usefully reminds us not only of the thinking that underpinned much of the Cold War nuclear strategy but, perhaps more importantly, of the major dilemma currently confronting the US government: what it should do about its increasingly ageing nuclear forces and their associated infrastructure. As he points out, the newest US intercontinental ballistic missile currently residing in one of the silos on the mainland was put there in 1971, the youngest B-52 bomber in the US fleet entered service in 1962 and is now being flown by the grandchildren of those who first flew it, while the newest warhead to enter US service was delivered in 1989 (p. 43). The support infrastructure is equally dated and this is of real concern judging by the number of problems that are currently being encountered. As Roberts argues, something clearly needs to be done and it is somewhat ironic that President Obama, who advocated the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons on entering office, is now considering committing a significant part of the US defence budget to the replacement of these increasingly outdated weapons.

Roberts’s book considers what should be done and is divided into nine main chapters plus an epilogue. Chapters two to seven examine three challenges that Roberts identifies as
being of principal concern to the US. First, the rise of nuclear-armed regional challengers, notably North Korea but with the likes of Iran in the background; second, Russia and the issue of extended deterrence and strategic stability in Europe; and third, China and the issue of extended deterrence and strategic stability in north-east Asia. The issue of non-state actors and nuclear weapons is touched upon, but the majority of the book focuses on the three challenges identified above. For those familiar with the nuclear orthodoxy, the arguments the volume puts forward for what nuclear capabilities the US will need if it is to develop a successful war-fighting strategy are no real surprise. Naturally enough, this would require significant investment in a range of capabilities. For this reviewer, the logic of the book is superficially appealing, but the actual arguments, including on the political context, need to be better developed.

By way of contrast, Vipin Narang’s book expressly excludes the United States and Russia and instead focuses on the nuclear postures of some of the other nuclear powers. It develops and then tests ‘a typology of regional power nuclear postures’ (p. 14), arguing that there are three categories of posture—catalytic (one that forces a third party to act), assured retaliation (maintaining an assured second strike capability) and asymmetric escalation (designed to deliver conventional deterrence through the threat of recourse to nuclear weapons).

To evaluate these, Narang then considers six case-studies: Pakistan, India, China, France, Israel and South Africa. Narang excludes those former Soviet states which inherited nuclear weapons and the United Kingdom. In the case of the former Soviet states, the rationale is that they subsequently disarmed and never developed their own nuclear posture. This is reasonable. However, the rationale for the exclusion of the United Kingdom—that its nuclear forces have been integrated with the US capability since 1958 and therefore it has never really had its own nuclear posture—is at best flawed. In a throwaway footnote, Narang contends that if the UK is to be categorized, then it is an extreme catalytic state. Yet even a superficial examination of the so-called ‘Moscow Criterion’, which dominated UK strategic thinking (see John Baylis and Kristan Stoddart, The British experience, Oxford University Press, 2015; reviewed in International Affairs 91: 6), demonstrates that the UK had a clear nuclear posture and fits within the assured retaliation category. Thus, the exclusion of the UK as a case-study is a shame and, ironically, its inclusion would have enriched this study still further.

Setting the UK aside, Narang undertakes both qualitative and quantitative analyses and, even for the quantitative Luddite Brits among us who have always rejected this side of classical nuclear strategy (this reviewer included) and will look at chapter nine in horror, this book has real value. Narang concludes that there are real weaknesses in our existing understanding of both the relative importance of the possession of nuclear weapons and their deterrent value. Much of the existing literature assumes that these are a constant value; Narang instead convincingly argues that it is actually the nuclear posture that defines the relative value of nuclear weapons and the extent to which they have a deterrent value.

Overall, both books are worth reading for different reasons. Roberts’s work provides a useful reminder of why the United States is currently in the position it is and is the traditional advocacy case one would expect. However, Narang’s book stands out and should be read by all those interested in nuclear strategy. It does what much of the Cold War literature failed to do, and that is to look at what the other party is seeking to achieve rather than to impose one’s own nuclear posture and its attendant logic on strategic calculations.

Andrew Dorman, King’s College London, UK
When one thinks about countries that represent a serious nuclear proliferation threat, Australia rarely comes to mind. Indeed, Australia is often heralded as a champion of nuclear disarmament, having played a central role in establishing both the Treaty of Rarotonga in the South Pacific in the 1980s, and the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) a decade later. But as Christine Leah explains in this well-written and engaging study, this hasn’t always been the case. Australia actively sought the bomb during the early Cold War years, relied and continues to rely on the US Extended Nuclear Deterrence (END) umbrella, and perhaps most interestingly, according to Leah, could well seek its own independent nuclear capability in the future. This well-researched study—which draws heavily on Australian archives—is an important addition to the strategic studies literature and to our broader thinking about how to manage and prevent nuclear proliferation.

Australia has had a mixed and tumultuous relationship with nuclear weapons, which has seen the country evolve from nuclear test site, potential proliferator, recipient of US END, champion of disarmament, and now possibly a proliferant of the future. This evolution has much to do with Australian perception of the country’s external environment—particularly the possibility of regional conventional war and the emergence of nuclear threats—and the status of the relationship with its major security provider: first through ‘empire defence’ with the United Kingdom and then through the 1951 Australia, New Zealand and United States Treaty and END with the United States. Indeed, a central—albeit perhaps secondary—component of this work is its excellent addition to the literature and thinking about alliances, and particularly alliances underpinned by a nuclear guarantee.

With the United States looking to draw down its nuclear stockpile and interstate tensions mounting in the Asia–Pacific region, Australia is again faced with an increasingly difficult and troubling external security environment. Just as UK withdrawal from the region after the Second World War drove early Australian nuclear thinking, analogous moves by the United States could well have similar effects in the future.

Australia played an active role in early British nuclear weapons and missile research, and was the site of the first British bomb test in 1952. The government in Canberra may well have hoped to acquire a small arsenal of tactical nuclear weapons as part of this deal, and as the book makes clear ‘from 1956 to around 1973, senior officials in both the civilian and military bureaucracy and the defence establishment had concluded that Australia should have nuclear weapons’. This desire for a nuclear capability was heightened in the wake of the launch of Sputnik in 1957 and cemented by the growing concern that the United States might not wish to trade Washington for Canberra in the intercontinental ballistic missile era. Leah also suggests that serious high-level discussions took place between Australia and the UK about directly purchasing ready-made weapons in the 1960s—although these came to nothing. While Australia signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1970 (and ratified it in 1973), it was still hedging—as Leah suggests, it was ‘a means to buy time until Australia could harness the technology required to build and detonate a nuclear bomb’. The possibility of a nuclear-armed Indonesia or Japan or of a conventional conflict in Asia that might affect Australian national security loomed large. Indeed, thinking during this period was not so much about deterrence, but more about how nuclear weapons could be used as tactical weapons of war against possible enemies to the north.

The Australian interest in developing nuclear weapons calmed in the 1970s as the threat of regional war receded, detente took hold between the superpowers and a sort of global
nuclear order came into existence. This was also driven by a more formal appreciation of the US extended nuclear guarantee. In the 1980s, Australia became a leading proponent of a South Pacific Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (despite housing facilities related to US nuclear capabilities, and continuing to benefit from US extended nuclear deterrence guarantees), launched the influential ‘Canberra Commission’ and played an important role in establishing the CTBT. However, as the book makes clear, the next chapters in the story of Australia’s ‘love affair’ with the bomb remain uncertain.

This is a fascinating study which provides insights into a nuclear proliferation case that rarely features at the centre of debate and analysis, and one that can tell us much about both historical and contemporary nuclear dynamics. It should also serve as something of a wake-up call about the next generation of possible nuclear proliferators—that we should not simply focus on the ‘usual suspects’. While Australia may not have any civilian nuclear power production facilities (at the moment), or the ability to manufacture the fissile material needed for a bomb, it does have the largest deposits of uranium in the world, and is the third largest exporter of ‘yellowcake’. It also has an advanced military-industrial infrastructure, and sits in a dynamic and unpredictable region. Indeed, Leah recommends ‘that in the next two decades, either Washington should make more explicit signals of its commitment to the defence of Australia with the deployment of low-yield nuclear weapons on US warships navigating the Pacific Ocean, or policy-makers in Canberra should seriously reconsider the possibility of Australia wielding its own deterrent’. Australia’s nuclear future is therefore far from certain.

Andrew Futter, University of Leicester, UK

**Energy, environment and global health**


As someone who recently published a book on global energy security and climate change, I am entirely sympathetic to the challenge of writing a book-length manuscript in a time of so much turmoil and change. Therefore, I have tried to avoid being critical with the benefit of hindsight and read this book in search of meaningful insights into the interaction between energy security and climate change. Thankfully, once one gets past the overly, but entirely understandable, US-centric approach, *The risk pivot* has much to offer.

The title refers to two recent energy revolutions that are changing the nature and locus of geopolitical risk in the global energy system. The first revolution is the shift in the centre of demand away from the developed economies of the OECD to emerging Asia—initially China but now also India. The second refers to the development of unconventional hydrocarbons production that has handed the United States unexpected energy security and called into question its future engagement with the global energy system. Thus, the geopolitical risks associated with energy security have pivoted away from the US towards Asia. But, as the authors make clear, this does not make the US immune from risk, especially given the global nature of the oil market.

Although this is relatively short book, it covers a huge amount of ground. After an introduction that examines the postwar development of the global energy order, the bulk of the analysis is organized into three chapters. The first examines the relationship between energy and geopolitics, with an emphasis on the emergence of China as an energy super-

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power. The authors suggest that: ‘A central geopolitical question of our time is how the established international order—long dominated by the West—will integrate China and India, the rising energy giants’ (p. 20). But the focus is really on how the US should respond to this challenge. The second substantive chapter examines the emergence of the ‘global middle’, a class of states that sits below the engines of growth in Asia, but well above the rest of the ‘developing world’. This is an important category, as a source of both growing energy demand and geopolitical instability; it encompasses a growing number of insecure states that are also major energy exporters. The chapter examines two key states in this category—Pakistan and Nigeria—and considers challenges posed by the so-called resource curse and the origins of the ‘Arab Spring’. Along the way, it introduces the cost of food as a critical risk escalator. The final substantive chapter adds climate change to the mix, along with the issue of energy access in the global South. The authors maintain that a new struggle is emerging around the ‘right to emit’. This analysis is important because it establishes the critical link between the geopolitics of energy security and the geopolitics of climate change.

The concluding chapter considers the global governance architecture in relation to energy and climate change. The authors introduce the notion of ‘sustainable globalisation’ and conclude—unsurprisingly—that current governance structures are not fit for purpose. Consequently, policy-makers seem to be faced with two choices: reform and extend the existing institutions that are predominantly creations of the West, or create new institutions. The analysis is posited in terms of what the US should do—as the wealthiest and most powerful nation in the world—to address the problem. Once solution for the country might be to walk away from the problem confident in its new energy wealth; instead, the authors suggest that it should use its newfound confidence to seek out new solutions. But those solutions must be based on western rules and values. The problem is that such an approach is bound to be rejected by the emerging powers who—with some justification—argue that the industrialized West has had its moment in the sun and must now create space and opportunity for others to prosper.

It would be easy to find fault with this book on the basis of events that have unfolded since it was published, most significantly the dramatic fall in oil prices—which threatens the sustainability of the shale gas and tight oil revolution in the US—and the success of the Conference of Parties in 2015 (COP 21) that has amplified global ambitions to tackle climate change. But, even without the benefit of hindsight, the risk pivot is conceived in a world that fails to address climate change in any significant way. Surely, we should also consider the geopolitics of a world that takes climate change seriously? Such a world needs new ways of thinking about the geopolitics of energy and climate change. This book makes a good start, but it is far from the finished article.

Michael Bradshaw, Warwick Business School, UK


This is an interesting and highly topical book. It provides depth and insight into north-east Asia’s energy security, dissecting the steps that regional states have taken in the attempt to achieve security of supply or, as in the case of the energy-exporting states like Russia and Mongolia, security of demand, without eroding national sovereignty. Because of the diverging interpretations of energy security, a valuable feature of this volume is that the authors first define what energy security means for each of the regional states and only then...
do they proceed to analyse the compatibility of these views and perceptions with regional energy cooperation.

The book’s proclaimed objective is ‘to understand state preferences for regime creation and assess state capability to implement these preferences in north-east Asia’s energy domain’ (p. 1). The book’s geographical scope covers Russia, China, Mongolia, Japan, South Korea and North Korea—a remarkably diverse mix of countries with disparate interests, which by the authors’ own admission ‘differ on almost every important factor affecting energy cooperation’ (p. 5). Yet the authors do not rule out hope for north-east Asian regionalism outright; rather, they methodically analyse the varied energy security outlooks and contrast them with ‘the rhetorical enthusiasm and support’ (p. 198) for the creation of an energy security regime which is so often demonstrated by the north-east Asian states.

The book is rich in facts and analysis of bilateral relations between each regional state and its neighbours: in this lies the particular strength of the narrative which provides valuable—in places unique—insight into the perceptions and strategies of all regional states. An overarching conclusion is that structural complementarities exist in the region and could, in theory, give rise to a common energy security regime along the lines of what has been witnessed in north-east Asia’s integration in the areas of trade and finance. However, in energy security, bilateral relations prevail—and will continue to prevail for the foreseeable future—driven by ‘the diverging interests, appetites, and objectives regarding the required delivery infrastructure’ (pp. 205–206). Of significant interest is Suyuan Sun’s conclusion that key pieces of energy infrastructure such as the Eastern Siberia–Pacific Ocean (ESPO) pipeline can be the result of multilateral competition among producing and consuming states, rather than a model of multilateral cooperation between them.

A notable strength of the volume is the fact that it looks beyond the region to highlight key global institutional factors that affect the emergence of a regional security regime. One of these factors is the continued anachronistic attitude towards China of some international institutions, such as the International Energy Agency and Energy Charter Treaty. Despite being one of the biggest energy markets in the world, China still holds only an observer status in both. On the other hand, China is reluctant to relinquish any of its national sovereignty in favour of membership in an energy community and has consistently perceived the self-help strategy not as a choice but as a necessity. As Mikkal Herberg recounts, China’s concerted investment policy that has resulted from this perception has led to the pursuit of energy security on a wide scale and across the globe with Chinese national oil companies investing nearly $200 billion in 50 countries by 2014.

In the light of the fact that the book does look at extra-regional factors that have shaped energy security relations in the region, it is surprising that very little attention is given to Russia’s broader energy security policy. While Adam Stulberg astutely elaborates on the concept of the ‘Asian pivot’ (p. 127) in Russia’s energy security policy, there is no discussion of how the European vector of Russia’s policy influences this Asian pivot. Yet understanding this dynamic is of key importance to the analysis of Russia–Asia relations. The signing of a gas pipeline agreement between Russia and China in May 2014 after ten years of fruitless talks (a fact repeatedly mentioned throughout the book) was not accidental. Following the introduction of the Third Energy Package (TEP) in 2011, the regulatory pressure that Russia faced in Europe had been mounting, and by 2014 Moscow still had no certainty over the ability of the east European states to enforce the inter-governmental agreements for the South Stream pipeline amid the European Commission’s claims that these agreements were in breach of the TEP. Rising regulatory pressure in Europe starkly
contrasted with China’s self-help policy and its preference for bilateral relations, accelerating Moscow’s shift to Asia. Furthermore, US and EU sanctions imposed in the aftermath of Russia’s annexation of Crimea in March 2014 limited Russian energy companies’ access to western finance and liquefied natural gas technology, thereby making the prospect of a dedicated pipeline to China governed by a 30-year agreement starting in 2018 an attractive and secure option. Having signed the deal with China to construct the Power of Siberia pipeline in mid-2014, Russia publicly announced the cancellation of the South Stream project on 1 December 2014. The development of the European strand of Russia’s energy policy has and will continue to have a profound impact on the country’s relations with north-east Asia, but this analysis is unfortunately missing in the book.

There is no doubt that the prospect of multilateral regional cooperation in north-east Asia remains elusive. In his chapter, Llewelyn Hughes is correct to highlight that energy security extends across a set of fuels (oil, gas, coal, renewable and nuclear energy)—each with its own plethora of challenges. For the foreseeable future, energy cooperation in north-east Asia will be constrained to narrow and clearly defined issues while prospects for building an energy community will remain plagued by the overarching and changing structural factors which have been so well portrayed in this worthwhile scholarly volume.

Nazrin Mehdiyeva


This book is to be praised for its ambition and scientific innovation, as one of the first comprehensive analyses of Arctic–Asian relations in the twenty-first century. Asian countries and the Arctic future is the result of three years of cooperation between two leading research institutes in Norway and China, the Fridtjof Nansen Institute and the Shanghai Institute for International Studies, with other collaborating partners from across Asia. The strength of this edited volume lies in the double perspective on the research subject, Asian states’ interest and involvement in Arctic regional affairs, allowing readers to see and evaluate Arctic developments through the eyes of northern and Asian actors alike. This change in perspective is well reflected in two shorter introductory essays by Norwegian editor Leiv Lunde and his Chinese colleague Yang Jian. Further, what makes this volume extraordinary is that it has been published in English and Chinese, opening an important area in international affairs to a large community of Chinese-speaking scholars and practitioners.

Contemporary Arctic governance is in a state of flux due to regional forces and increasing globalization of Arctic issues, interested stakeholders in the polar region, multiple layers of governance, historical legacies from the days of Cold War confrontation and a growing understanding that future Arctic governance in a global context will require sustained efforts of international cooperation between Arctic actors. It is in this context that the book must be placed and to accommodate all these factors is no easy task. The editors and authors have succeeded in this.

The book is divided into three sections. Parts one and two discuss governance mechanisms and the political and economic context of the Arctic that largely determine the opportunities and constraints of more Asian involvement. The economic development section covers those resources presumably of highest interest to Asian states, including the potential for cargo shipping using Arctic sea routes, fish stocks in the central Arctic Ocean and minerals. The third part of the book is entitled ‘Asia in the Arctic’ and analyses recent
efforts to formulate and implement Arctic policies and strategies by the five Asian states, China, India, Japan, Singapore and South Korea, that were admitted as observers to the Arctic Council in 2013.

Despite the book’s undoubted contribution to the field of Arctic governance research, a few critical comments are in order. First of all, while reading it, one cannot but think that some of the assessments are a little premature and purely hypothetical, since several chapters explore the prospects for Asian involvement in the Arctic and the consequences this could potentially have on the region, instead of empirically investigating what kind of difference Asian stakeholders make in regional affairs—one may come to the conclusion that their influence to date has been fairly low. Also, the case-studies in part three make very clear that Asian Arctic politics is politics in the making, and gaining a foothold in northern governance is a possibility, not an inevitability. Still, these chapters are worth reading because they extend previous research on Asian states’ Arctic interests and more systematically investigate national policy-making and strategy formulation, though they abstain from taking the necessary step towards assessing Asian states’ impact on Arctic affairs.

Second, the three parts appear a bit detached from one another and would have benefited from more stringency and cross-referencing between analyses of the political and institutional environment for non-Arctic actors’ involvement, as outlined in parts one and two, and Asian states’ desires and aspirations for greater inclusion in the regional governance elaborated in part three.

Last but not least, the book has a strong focus on the role of China, much to the detriment of analysing the causes and consequences of the diversity in Asian states’ Arctic policies, widely acknowledged in many chapters. Moreover, the book is exclusively concerned with the prospects for Arctic economic development and leaves non-Arctic actors’ responsibilities and duties with regard to environmental protection, climate change adaptation and mitigation, sustainable development or human security very much aside. This singular outlook also poses the question of what Asian contributions to governing Arctic change will look like if Arctic resources, for whatever reason, remain untapped—some guesswork on this scenario would have been desirable.

Other than that, this volume is an outstanding contribution to the field of Arctic governance and a prime example of international science cooperation in a cross-regional context. *Asian countries and the Arctic future* is a great reminder that we are not yet in an Asian era in Arctic governance, but that there might be one soon to come.

*Sebastian Knecht, Freie Universität Berlin, Germany*

**Europe**


The cover picture of this book may well prove more timely than the work itself. The dramatic depiction of the *Storm at Sea* by Joos de Momper the Younger from the early seventeenth century, unwittingly reminds the reader in 2016 of the refugee crisis that has

Europe

the potential to undo decades of European integration. As hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees brave the perilous journey across the Aegean Sea, heading mainly for Germany, people's commitment to a borderless Europe is seriously tested.

The European Union is in crisis and so is EU scholarship. In particular, liberal intergovernmentalism, commonly considered the ‘baseline theory’ of European integration, is under attack. Andrew Moravcsik’s seminal study, *The choice for Europe* (London: Routledge, 1998), has dominated studies of European integration for the last couple of decades. Its core argument is as simple as it is compelling: national political elites chose Europe and the Europe they created in the process worked. It was a win–win situation. Member states empowered supranational institutions because it served their national interests.

The key claim of this excellent book, edited by Christopher J. Bickerton, Dermot Hodson and Uwe Puetter, is that this account no longer holds. Liberal intergovernmentalism might have been adequate in describing European developments up to the Treaty of Maastricht, but not beyond. In particular, Moravcsik’s claims about Europe’s constitutional settlement and Europe finding itself in a state of equilibrium look increasingly shaky. As Thomas Christiansen rightly points out in his chapter, Moravcsik boldly proclaimed his vision of a “boring” Union that reached a “European Constitutional Settlement”—a stable endpoint of European integration’ (p. 90) just at the time when the existing edifice of Europe’s unity started unravelling (compellingly presented in Nicole Scicluna’s *European Union constitutionalism in crisis*, Routledge, 2015). Thus, Moravcsik didn’t see the need to adjust his theory when Europe tried and failed to give itself a constitution in the mid-2000s—arguing that the constitution wasn’t needed anyway as it sought to address a problem that didn’t exist (the democratic deficit). In the same vein, he was adamant that the eurozone crisis was not a crisis of European integration. Such accounts are no longer credible. A new science of European integration is needed for a Europe that’s fracturing under an interlocking series of crises that undermine the legitimacy of member state governments, as well as the entire European project.

Bickerton, Hodson and Puetter seek to address this challenge by unpacking what they have identified as an ‘integration paradox’: European political elites continue marching towards an ever-closer union, even as their publics view it with ever more scepticism. In their words, the post-Maastricht period has been characterized by ‘an unprecedented expansion in EU activity [which] has occurred alongside growth in contestation and dissatisfaction with the EU’ (p. 26). Partly in response to hostile public opinion, the dramatic ‘increase in the scope of EU-policy making’ occurred ‘without the delegation of new powers to old supranational institutions along traditional, Community method lines’ (p. 304). Instead, a number of de novo institutions were created, such as Frontex, or old institutions were further empowered, such as the European Central Bank. The result is more Europe that is less supranational and even more dependent on member states. It is also less stable, leading to ‘the persistence of disequilibrium within the European construction’ (p. 46).

The renewed importance of member states gives rise to the first guiding hypothesis of new intergovernmentalism: ‘deliberation and consensus have become the guiding norms of day-to-day decision making at all levels’ (pp. 29 and 306). They are particularly important in the post-Maastricht period, the authors argue, because ‘they are the only means through which collective action is possible’ (p. 30). But what of exceptional decisions taken in response to exceptional challenges? In September 2015, German Chancellor Angela Merkel took such a decision when allowing Syrian refugees trapped in Hungary free entry into Germany. This unilateral decision may well prove more consequential to Europe’s unity than half a decade of eurozone crisis (mis)management.
The authors are critical of ‘the strong normative bias that … EU studies has had in favour of more supranationalism’ (p. 43). They are to be applauded for trying to break ‘with a strong scholarly preference for focusing on stability and expressing optimism vis-à-vis the future of the European project’, framing integration instead as ‘both unstable and contradictory’ (p. 37). However, I am less persuaded by their attempt to eschew making normative claims ‘about where integration should lead to’ (p. 40). Is such detachment possible? Is it even desirable? Or was Giandomenico Majone right to ask, ‘Has integration gone too far?’, in his Rethinking the Union of Europe post-crisis (Cambridge University Press, 2014).

Regardless, this volume is impressive in its scope, ambition and intellectual coherence. It is exceptionally well organized, with the introductory chapter clearly spelling out the key claims, which are tested in three following parts: first, ‘Changing conceptions of law and politics’; second, ‘Selected EU policy domains’; third, ‘EU institutions’. The second to last chapter offers a penetrating critique of new intergovernmentalism by Simon Bulmer, who reminds the reader that the book’s overarching aim is ‘to stimulate the debate rather than settle it’ (p. 303).

Here are more questions then: what are the consequences of the ‘persistent disequilibrium’ and the fact that ‘conflicts between governments and their own domestic publics have become a structuring feature of European integration’? If Europe’s fragility is its new normal, how lasting is it going to be? I am curious to know what comes after new intergovernmentalism. Following Doug Webber’s timely article in the European Journal of International Relations, ‘How likely is it that the European Union will disintegrate?’ (20: 2, 2014; for an updated version see Webber’s chapter in Desmond Dinan, Neill Nugent and Willie Paterson, eds, The European Union in crisis, London: Palgrave Macmillan, forthcoming), I call for a theory of European disintegration.

Stefan Auer, University of Hong Kong


Disappointed hopes can lead to fierce arguments among trusted friends and passionate lovers. Tom Gallagher’s Europe’s path to crisis seems to be written in a similar vein. Gallagher, a well-known researcher of nationalism, blames European decision-makers for having manoeuvred the European Union to the verge of collapse. For him, three factors account for the present unfortunate state of the EU: French nationalism in the past, German nationalism in the present and aloof elites within the EU administration in Brussels.

The book comprises seven chapters providing ‘evidence for the argument that supranational integration, culminating in a flawed project of European Monetary Union, is driving the peoples of Europe further apart’ (p. 214). This argument relies on a historical analysis of European integration with a strong focus on the French–German tandem, an assessment of the current social trends in Europe and various chapters discussing the reasons for the unfolding of today’s monetary politics.

Gallagher’s presentation of the history of European integration up to the mid-2000s offers readers helpful tools for understanding European politics. He scrutinizes the global and European contexts of the first 50 years of European integration and the motivations and domestic constraints of key decision-makers in France, Germany and the United States. It is here that the book makes its two most convincing claims: first, that the supranational structures of the European Union were deliberately designed to be weak so that they would
always benefit the national interest of the strongest member state. In doing so, their French architects hoped to rely on European structures as tools for French national interest. As German power exceeded French influence over the last decade, Berlin could dominate recent intergovernmental agreements on European monetary politics. Second, the insufficiencies of these structures to address the interests of the EU as a whole were repeatedly pointed out over the last decades. However, critics were sidelined, or even worse, accused of nationalist thinking: ‘Those who feared that a model of European centralization would throw up new problems were marginalized, although some had distinctive and well-thought-out positions’ (p. 67). The wish for the peaceful reconciliation of former enemies and myopic national interests trumped economic reasoning and long-term considerations.

Continuing with such a nuanced assessment of the complex interplay of various factors behind European integration would have made the second part of the book more convincing. However, in discussing the current state of the EU, Gallagher almost solely relies on politically motivated statements. In doing so, putting the blame on myopic decision-makers in Berlin, Brussels and Paris loses some credibility. If the author had outlined a similarly complex matrix of factors behind the state of European integration today—as he did in his historical analysis—his assessment of current affairs would have carried more weight.

However, the last chapters of the book already pave the way for further analysis which can address this gap. Gallagher hints at how party politics in France and Germany, misleading assessments by bureaucrats within the European administration in Brussels and a fast-changing global context defined the window of political action on key decisions. Pointing to these still rather uncharted waters is the greatest benefit of the book and a very important contribution to the debate.

Tom Gallagher’s Europe’s path to crisis is well written, paints a vivid picture of European decision-making and offers a political interpretation of the complex state of European integration today. The book relies on Gallagher’s impressive insights into European politics, his decade-long research on nationalism and his robust liberal and democratic convictions. It offers strong political arguments and points to very promising new ways in which to systematically assess the current state of European integration.

Timo Lochocki, The German Marshall Fund of the United States, Germany


Perhaps history, like revenge, is best when served cold; and while Thucydides would surely not agree, eyebrows are sometimes raised at the notion of such a thing as ‘contemporary history’. This collection of essays and interviews shows its usefulness, and should be snapped up by students of the peace process in Northern Ireland. Graham Spencer is to be congratulated on assembling the reflections of 14 retired senior officials on the British side in that process, and for his thoughtful introduction and concluding remarks. Welcome, too, is the ‘brief chronology’ of the peace process (filling eight pages) as agreements and atrocities succeeded each other from 1987 onwards. But the scope of this volume is broader: it is also a study of the relationship between British civil servants and their ministers. While never a case of upstairs–downstairs, civil servants knew their place. Very properly, the portraits on the cover are of four prime ministers, John Major and Tony Blair, Albert Reynolds and Bertie Ahern. Their facial expressions and body language are revealing. In the words of David Cooke, who in 2002 dictated in London, ‘on one grey afternoon’, the first draft
of the Joint Declaration of the British and Irish Governments, British officials were not ‘freelancing’: for better or worse, they had to work within government policy. While limiting their freedom of manoeuvre, that constraint must have stimulated their inventiveness in the drafting of documents and the conduct of negotiations—including with their Irish counterparts. Mention might have been made, though, of the need, on occasion, for legal advice to calm the bubbling cauldron of ideas.

Probably readers will turn first to the more familiar names—with a bookmark tucked into the ‘brief chronology’ to steer by—such as Sir John Chilcot and Jonathan Powell. Sir John has suffered undeserved criticism over the time it has taken for his inquiry to report on ‘Iraq’. His interview, like other contributions, displays the strengths of the ‘mandarinate’ in British administration; its replacement by managers and its increasing politicization are our loss. With his usual self-confidence, Jonathan Powell promotes his well-known view that it will always be essential to talk to terrorists (see most recently his letter about dealing with the Islamic State in The Times, 27 November 2015). This reviewer remains uneasy about the use of the term ‘peace process’ in the context of Northern Ireland, and the applicability of the lessons learned there to a variety of conflicts across the world. (See the interpretative declaration, not mentioned in this book, made by the UK on signing the additional protocols to the 1949 Geneva Conventions in 1977: ‘It is the understanding of the United Kingdom that the term “armed conflict” of itself and in its context denotes a situation of a kind which is not constituted by the commission of ordinary crimes including acts of terrorism whether concerted or in isolation’.)

Each of these pieces deserves study, representing as they do different stages in the process and different perspectives. Selection here must be invidious, but David Hill’s examination of the constitutional issues that bedevilled the process is one reminder of how much had to be conceded if progress was to be made. It would have been, for instance, useless, if tempting, to dismiss Dublin’s ‘constitutional claim’ to the entire island of Ireland as disingenuous. In a highly personal contribution, Sir Kenneth Bloomfield, himself born in Belfast, rightly remarks that ‘politicians and those officials who supported them over those testing years would do well to acknowledge all that was done and suffered by others ... I would meet so many who had risked life and limb’. The convenient metaphors found here for representing the process of negotiating—‘choreography’ or ‘keeping the bicycle from falling over’—scarcely conceal the bloody reality. The crisp judgment of the Court of Appeal of Northern Ireland in Regina v. McGeough (2013), upholding the conviction of the appellant of membership of the IRA, shows the callousness of the paramilitary mentality—and its impudence on that occasion in invoking the law of human rights and abuse of process. (There was no appeal against Mr McGeough’s conviction of attempted murder.)

Sir John Holmes, who worked directly with the Conservative Prime Minister John Major and then with his Labour successor, Tony Blair, provides a compelling account of the political difficulties both faced due to the attitudes within their own parties, and their success in the eventual signing of the Good Friday Agreement that laid the foundations of power-sharing government in Northern Ireland. Sir Bill Jeffrey explains that the agreement was ‘so hard to implement’ because of the nature of the problems it dealt with, not least policing and the decommissioning of arms. He warns that although people can once more enjoy a Saturday night out in Belfast: ‘Northern Ireland is still, in many respects, an abnormal and divided society’.

David Bentley

There is a subtle irony in the title of this new history of Britain’s post-1945 submarine service. As any submariner knows, the sea is in fact full of natural and artificial noise, and much of this book is about the intense acoustic competition between the submarines of Britain and its Cold War rivals. The book is also itself a deliberate attempt to give a voice to the Royal Navy’s traditionally ‘silent service’, and provide wider exposure to the impressive and expensive achievements of ‘Submarine Britain’.

Author Peter Hennessy, here joined by his former student James Jinks, is one of the most acute chroniclers of Britain’s national security state and, as might be expected, the book is very good on policy. The authors recount how the submarine service reshaped itself to meet the postwar Soviet threat, how it took on responsibility for Britain’s nuclear deterrent, and the ups and downs of its intimate relationship with the United States, at each stage showing the link between politics, technology and operations.

They also bring out very clearly how modern submarines are both technological and human marvels, the sophistication of the sonar and propulsion systems being matched by the training, skills and character of the crew. The human factor is especially important in the case of the commanding officer, responsible in missile submarines for multi-megatons of destructive power, and requiring a rare mix of aggression, self-confidence, calculation and resilience. Submarine captains’ accounts provide much of the book’s action, as they describe the tensions of close-quarters stalking of Soviet submarines—liable at any moment to perform the well-named ‘Crazy Ivan’ manoeuvre—or recalling the drama of underwater and under-ice collisions.

But this is as much a book about Britishness as it is about submarines. It sets out how the push for nuclear submarine propulsion and nuclear weapons was driven by perceptions of national identity and post-imperial prestige, as well as by strategy. And scattered throughout are examples of characteristic British behaviour, such as the disaffected shipbuilder who (at the height of the nation’s industrial turmoil in the 1970s) put ‘a handful of metal objects’ in HMS Conqueror’s gearbox ‘which later exploded during testing, delaying completion by many months and costing the taxpayer millions’ (p. 301). Or the religious-minded commander of the nuclear missile submarine HMS Resolution, who composed a Prayer for Polaris, combining deterrence theory with the self-conscious archaisms of the Church of England: ‘Lord thou command us saying “thou shalt not kill”. Thou knowest that we prepare ourselves constantly to kill, not one but thousands, and that by this preparation we believe we help preserve peace among nations’ (p. 264).

Despite these treasures, this generally excellent history suffers from a small but significant shortcoming in that it fails convincingly to answer the question: ‘was it all worth it?’ The Royal Navy’s demanding and often dangerous Cold War underwater jousting was justified then and since on the basis of deterrence: that the British mastery of the deeps would convince the Soviets they could not win a Third World War and therefore would not be tempted to start one. The problem is that the Soviets, for their part, do not seem to have subscribed to this theory, according to the book’s account of a 1993 conversation between British and ex-Soviet submariners. While the Soviets were obsessed with what they saw as the dominant US threat, they never thought they would have to fight the British, who were at most an ‘irritant’ (p. 591).

Perhaps more significantly, the authors cover at length and in detail the British policy debate about the ‘Moscow criterion’, the perceived need for an independent British nuclear
force to be able to threaten a certain level of destruction of the Soviet Union if it was to be credible. But they have found no Russian source to say whether these British calculations were correct—whether the Soviets were in fact deterred, and for the reasons the British hoped. This is where the book’s sharp focus on the British perspective becomes a hindrance. However spectacular the technology and however admirable the people, any armed force is only a means to an end, and this book could have benefited from a more rigorous assessment of whether in this case the ends justified the means.

This matters, not only because of the current debate about the renewal of Britain’s nuclear deterrent, but also because so much of recent British military history seems to have been a story of impressive human and technical effort failing to achieve good political results, whether in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and perhaps now in Syria. The silent deep suggests that something similar occurred in the Cold War, implying that there is a deeper and continuing problem with Britain’s approach to defence. It is frustrating that the authors, in their otherwise excellent book, do not follow this trail to its end.

James de Waal, Chatham House, UK

Russia and Eurasia


Next year marks both the centenary of the Bolshevik Revolution and the silver jubilee of a key moment in its dismantling. In November 1991 Boris Yeltsin appointed Yegor Gaidar the acting prime minister of a country in crisis. In short order, he helped draft the Belavezha Accords that dissolved the Soviet Union, freed prices from state control, began a market transition and managed a host of other major issues. These events, in their own way hardly less revolutionary than 1917, included two confrontations, the August 1991 coup and the October 1993 crisis, that might have led to civil war.

Gaidar was a central figure in these, second only to Boris Yeltsin. To redress hostile criticism of him, Petr Aven and Alfred Kokh, themselves both reform ministers in the 1990s, have compiled a fascinating series of conversations with former colleagues of Gaidar. These present a vivid and affectionate portrait of an extraordinary man of enormous energy and utter devotion to his work. He was a brilliant intellectual who could also devise and implement radical reforms in the most difficult circumstances—what Gennady Burbulis, one of the most interesting interlocutors here, calls ‘capacity for practical logic’ (p. 36). Other qualities may be more unexpected: his personal courage in negotiating an end to the Ingush–Ossetian conflict or his absolute determination to defeat the armed parliamentary opposition in 1993. Perhaps his one limitation was as a public politician: unlike Yeltsin, and Putin today, he could not communicate effectively with large numbers of strangers.

This book inevitably ranges beyond the man, to reconsider the times too. Recollections by participants in great events should be handled with care: as Aven notes, everyone has his own truth.

Nonetheless, this book is full of intriguing details: for example, on the background to the Belavezha Accords; the government resignation of April 1992 that called the bluff of a hostile parliament; how close Nemtsov came to standing for president in 1996; Yeltsin’s reaction when Gaidar proposed Gerashchenko as Central Bank chairman: ‘Are you nuts? I have two volumes of compromising material about him’ (p. 89).
Beyond the post-Soviet Kremlinology, larger themes of broader interest emerge. One is the enigmatic and contradictory Yeltsin: he agonized about leaving the Communist Party that 'raised me', but was ruthless in abolishing it after the 1991 coup; he inspired extraordinary devotion among many around him, but could abandon them without warning if he deemed it politically necessary. The complex psychology of his relationship with the radical reformers, too, is intriguingly explored here.

A second theme is the dire condition of the country by 1991. The shops were empty, reserves fell to $25 million, emergency barter measures were needed to import food, and there were very few competent economists. As for the burden of the military-industrial complex, Sergei Shakhrai tells us that ‘88 kopecks out of every rouble were spent on the defence sector’ (p. 287). The severity of these conditions sharpens the question of whether gradualism, or any other path not taken, was really feasible.

Mistakes were inevitable in crisis conditions. Perhaps the biggest, this book suggests, was the failure to hold fresh elections under a new constitution immediately after the April 1993 referendum that endorsed the reform course. The delay gained nothing and led to a bloody showdown just six months later. Yeltsin’s refusal to create a presidential party despite many appeals to do so is also dissected.

The great political battles of this period were domestic ones, settled among Russians. But one international factor intrudes: the failure of the West to give material support when it was most needed. The Gaidar government asked for $4–5 billion of emergency financing to support radical reform, but received little beyond humanitarian aid. As Carl Bildt observes in an afterword: ‘the ministries of finance prevailed over the ministries of foreign affairs’ (p. 397). Andrei Kozyrev, the most liberal foreign minister Russia has ever had, is unsparing in his criticism of the Clinton administration.

This rich book does not resolve all the mysteries about one of the most intense periods in Russian history. Many questions remain, in particular about the role played by parliamentary speaker Ruslan Khasbulatov, whom the authors did not interview. Further research would be valuable. But this is unlikely to come from within Russia. The present regime, this book suggests, deliberately denigrates the 1990s the better to justify itself. Could such a book one day be written about it too? Aven’s concluding words ring like an augur: ‘There is a big difference … no matter what mistakes we might have made, we have little to hide’ (p. 391).

Nigel Gould-Davies, Mahidol University International College, Thailand


The countries of the former Soviet Union offer fertile ground for the constructivist school of International Relations (IR) theory. The USSR’s collapse resulted in the creation of multiple new states, all of which were compelled to decide not only what their respective foreign policies should be, but why the policies should be that way. The comprehensive discrediting of Soviet communism not only created an ideological vacuum, it also required the adoption of a whole new identity. This process was of course influenced by developments in Europe, and particularly the expansion and development of the European Union. It was also far more than simply a discourse of elites. In November 2013, Ukrainians took to the streets of Kiev over the issue of an Association Agreement with the EU, ultimately toppling the government three months later.
Stephen White and Valentina Feklyunina’s detailed study, *Identities and foreign policies in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus*, provides a deep and systematic account of how this process played out within the ‘European’ core of the former USSR. For each of these states, the question of this European identity has not been simply one of geography or even ethnicity. The development of the EU into a set of normative as well as political and economic institutions, alongside the demonstrable superiority in living standards even in the poorer member states, provided a form of platonic ideal of ‘Europeanness’ that influenced the post-Soviet discourse.

For some, this implied that reclaiming Russia, Belarus and Ukraine’s European identity required them to adopt European models of governance and development—with Europe often being an effective synonym for the EU. For others, it created a desire to assert the distinctiveness of their nations while maintaining their status as ‘European’. For a smaller, but increasingly influential group in Russia, the EU model of ‘Europeanness’ was perceived as fundamentally incompatible with and even hostile to their own values.

The book provides a valuable contribution through creating a concise and useful taxonomy of these discourses, and detailing their employment over the course of the initial post-Soviet period up to 2014. The qualitative aspects of the research are systematic and rigorous, and succeed in developing fresh approaches in a field where the traditional ‘Slavophiles vs Westernizers’ framework seems increasingly inadequate. Wisely, the quantitative data on popular attitudes are accompanied by extensive interviews and findings from focus groups.

White and Feklyunina’s discussions with ordinary citizens of Ukraine, Russia and Belarus are perhaps some of the most revealing to the present-day reader. Conducted well prior to the events of the Euromaidan, the invasion of Ukraine and the imposition of sanctions, they nevertheless reveal a deep scepticism and no small degree of pessimism among the participants. The Russian respondents, in particular, showed a near paranoid attitude towards the EU, convinced that its ultimate objective is plunder and subjugation. This is perhaps understandable for the descendants of a Soviet state that inculcated near universal habits of suspicion. It explains the ease with which the Kremlin’s propagandists have convinced ordinary Russians that the economic failure of the Putin project is the result of meddling foreigners, intent on keeping Russia weak, rather than the political incompetence of their leaders. And it also illustrates their utility as a power resource for the political system, even as it faces crises both external and internal.

One cannot criticize White and Feklyunina for failing to take into account events post-publication, but when reading their findings in the context of the ongoing war in Ukraine, it is difficult not to reflect on how much has changed. Even as Ukrainian society has been pushed in Europe’s direction, Russia has become ever more alienated. The official discourse towards the EU, both as a political and economic competitor and as an example of the erosion of ‘traditional values’, has become markedly more hostile, and the theme of Russia as a great, independent and distinct civilization has resonated with the public.

This leads to one criticism that might fairly be made of *Identities and foreign policies*: that it does not directly address the intersection of the debates on ‘Europeanness’ and globalization. The post-Soviet states endured a hard introduction into the global economy, having developed inefficient models under a relatively closed system. Their citizens do not remember the experience fondly, which explains the prevalence of Soviet nostalgia that baffles many westerners. Globalization has been a contested phenomenon even among the ‘winner’ states, prompting a resurrection of nationalist populism in various forms, from Alexis Tsipras, to Viktor Orban, to Marine Le Pen and even Donald Trump. The supposed need, expressed so often by Putin, for ‘true’ sovereignty has appeal far outside Russia.
But this is purely a cavil, an issue that lies outside the scope of the research and which would rob it of its tight focus. White and Feklyunina have made an important contribution to the understanding of identity in shaping the politics of Belarus, Ukraine and Russia. Their book is essential for any scholar of the region.

Daragh McDowell, Verisk Maplecroft, UK

**Middle East and North Africa**


At first glance, a reader might be forgiven for thinking that Robert Mason's book on foreign policy in Saudi Arabia and Iran holds great topicality and relevance, given the marked deterioration in ties between Riyadh and Tehran since 2015. Moreover, the rapid changes both in Saudi foreign policy, which has become far more assertive and unilateralist, and in the Iranian relationship with the international community following the election of Hassan Rouhani as president, offer fruitful pickings for any academic research into the evolving nature of Saudi–Iran ties. Unfortunately, Mason has produced instead a rambling account that is hard to follow, that is already out of date, and that reflects the doctoral dissertation it started life as, rather than a polished academic publication.

All books have a considerable time lag between being written and eventual publication but, for a book that came out in 2015, it is surprising that the cut-off date for the material Mason includes seems to be 2012. There is nothing in the chapter on Iranian foreign policy that even hints at a change in policy post-Ahmadinejad, while there is only the briefest of mentions (p. 67 and p. 82) of the Arab uprisings, the impact of which impelled the ageing leadership in Saudi Arabia to demonstrate unprecedented muscularity in regional affairs. For a PhD dissertation submitted in 2012, Mason had ample time to extensively revise and update his thesis prior to publication, yet this does not appear to have happened. Instead, the reader is left with assertions such as ‘sanctions may raise the cost of Iran’s nuclear programme in order for it to be no longer in its national interests, but these costs will be offset by the Iranian “economic jihad”’ (p. 135), a statement that not only is left unexplained but also is of little use to a post-2013 readership.

Equally baffling is Mason’s claim that ‘the growth of relations between Saudi Arabia and China have raised anxiety in the USA, which sees China’s view of geo-economics as similar to that of imperial Japan during the 1930s’ (p. 78). Such a claim is reductionist in the extreme, in attributing monolithic positions to entire countries and ignoring the fact that decisions are taken by individuals in positions of power and influence, which themselves fluctuate over time, as the startling rapprochement in Iran–US relations under presidents Obama and Rouhani illustrates. Moreover, Mason provides little to back up his claim, other than to provide a link to a website maintained by the Economic Cooperation Organization, an obscure group based in Iran that should itself have given Mason cause to assess the veracity (or otherwise) of such a statement. Nor is it sufficient to summarize the balancing by Saudi officials of relations with the US and with China as: ‘It’s not just a function of Saudi Arabia; it’s also a function of Chinese priorities’ (p. 78).

More generally, Mason throws a multitude of facts and figures the reader’s way without ever really providing much in the way of contextual analysis that explains how and why they are significant. Distinct chapters on Saudi Arabia, Iran and, bafflingly, given the
book’s title, US foreign policy in the Middle East serve to compartmentalize the analysis of each country and do little to explore interlinks between and among the three triangles of regional influence. Readers who make it to the end of Mason’s book, struggling to identify a coherent thread that ties his argument together, face his ‘Future trends’ assessment that ‘the least likely scenario is that sanctions put so much pressure on the Iranian regime that it leads either to a rapprochement with the West or facilitates regime change and a new beginning in Iran–West relations’ (pp. 163–4). Being overtaken by events is a peril that confronts all authors who write about the fast-changing landscape of Middle East politics, but the Iranian nuclear negotiations became public in 2013 and offered Mason ample time to revisit and revise this finding.

This is a critical review; readers will find that some of the details of long-forgotten trade agreements provide nuggets of value, even when set against factual errors such as ‘the invasion of Kuwait in 1991’ (p. 24). Mason’s chapter on Iran also contains some good insight into the domestic influences on foreign policy-making, and, in particular, on the ‘institutional web’ of ‘linkages across formal and informal relationships between personalities, networks and state institutions’ (p. 91). Yet, in the final analysis, Mason’s book is a missed opportunity that adds little scholarly or practical value to a key geopolitical fault-line in contemporary regional affairs, and he would have been better served by breaking up his thesis into two or three journal articles instead.

Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, Rice University’s Baker Institute, USA


In the summer of 2015, in Lebanon, the grassroots movement ‘YouStink!’ made world headlines. It came about as a protest against the latest government shutdown that hampered the disposal of garbage. YouStink! called out Lebanese politicians as ‘stinkers’ for their inability to agree on solutions not only for the shutdown but for the disposal of the garbage. The shutdown had been going on for two years and prevented both the presidential and parliamentary elections from going ahead, but it did not hinder parliamentarians from extending their own parliamentary terms. Lebanese ministers, notorious for blaming one another for the deadlock, continued to play the blame game during the garbage crisis. In short, it was a political deadlock within a consociational system. This environment is a good illustration of Lebanese politics of the last decade and attests to the weakness of the Lebanese state.

Between 2006 and 2008, in a similarly tenuous political environment, Melani Cammett studied the political dimension of non-state welfare distribution in weak states like Lebanon, through the behaviour of its sectarian groups. Using Kanchan Chandra’s understanding of ethnicity, Cammett studied Lebanese sectarian groups as ethnic groups endowed with historical lineage. Compassionate communalism uses two complementary research strategies: creative design and mixed methods. As Cammett points out, sectarian groups in Lebanon adamantly deny that sectarianism is part of their welfare strategy. Only a very closed circle within each group maintains data on sectarian strategies and budgets. Cammett tackled this shortcoming by reverting to the many aspects of her problématique—a collection of systemic questions aimed at understanding one difficult problem. For each ethnic group, she studied the demographic composition of its brick-and-mortar social welfare location, the demographics of its typical beneficiary and the beneficiary’s level of political activism.

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Though she relied on hundreds of qualitative interviews, Cammett’s achievement is her ability to compile her own datasets in a very transparent and replicable manner.

Cammett’s theory of the role of ethnic groups in the provision of non-state social welfare stipulates that groups with state-centric political strategies distribute social benefits to ingroupers and outgroupers. However, groups with extra-state political strategies funnel benefits to their most ardent loyalists. Counterintuitively, competition for political representation within an ethnic group leads to more ethnocentrism and subsequently a narrower scope of welfare coverage. In other words, it is politics, not ethnicity, that shapes the welfare strategy.

The capacity of Lebanese sectarian groups to run colossal social welfare programmes might intrigue the reader. Cammett points to both the financial support of Iran and Saudi Arabia for these programmes, as well as to the fact that each sectarian group has lucrative businesses within Lebanon. However, Cammett reveals a more discreet source of financing, the Lebanese government. For example, needy Lebanese are entitled to medical aid of up to 85 percent of costs (the welfare budget in Lebanon is higher than in Scandinavian countries). But since state payments are in arrears, hospitals only accept cash patients. As a result, sectarian parties provide the necessary guarantee for payment and then they collect those funds from the government. Hospitalization becomes propitious for clientelism, where political parties broker (and take credit for) citizens’ access to their medical rights. This type of brokerage exemplifies the direct benefits sectarian elites receive from undermining the state and weakening a sense of political community.

While Compassionate communalism does an excellent job of exploring the ethnic political elite’s influence on social welfare and hence the government, the story of the problems inherent in the Lebanese project is incomplete without an exploration of the financial sector. Banks have been posting record high profits despite a crumbling local economy, high unemployment, and consecutive global recessions. Though the ‘resilience’ of the Lebanese banking sector has been praised, it is yet another unfortunate example of brokerage between the government and its citizens. While banking secrecy encourages non-residents to deposit funds into Lebanese banks, most of those deposits are then channelled towards safe and high-yielding public debt instead of being injected back into the economy. As a result, banks effortlessly profit risk-free on the country’s debt to the tune of billions of dollars. To make funds accessible to Lebanese at affordable rates, government loan programmes have been created and channelled through these same banks. This situation has created another lucrative opportunity in the guise of interest differential margins for banks. Bankers describe their ‘intermediation’ role as ‘patriotic’ for sustaining a broken economy amid a lack of trust in the political system. In reality, economic and sectarian political elites perpetuate a vicious cycle that cannibalizes the Lebanese project.

Cammett ends with a poignant quote from Kamal Salibi from 1988: ‘For any people to develop and maintain a sense of political community, it is necessary that they share a common vision of their past’. In her conclusion, she paints a bleak picture of Lebanon’s future, one without a unifying project or a unified community.

Though Cammett’s work is exceptional, I conclude with an observation. Lebanon has been ‘blessed’ with two structural ethnicity-mongering institutions: a consociational constitution and sect-based personal status laws. These institutions feed off each other, are abused by politicians and contribute to the political deadlock that gave rise to the YouStink! movement. While there is agreement among scholars that consociationalism silences guns but does not promote good governance, the detrimental effect of the sect-based personal status laws are often overlooked. Are sectarian identities created and solidified by politics
through provisions such as social welfare only, or are Lebanese from every socio-economic class born into a sectarian mindset that perpetuates itself? While movements such as YouStink! give hope, it is hard to imagine that it can build enough traction among generations born into sectarian personal status laws, youths taught different histories at school and adults nurtured in sectarian politics to overthrow the sectarian monster and build a nation.

Overall, *Compassionate communalism* is the kind of work on non-state social welfare that fills a gap in the political economy literature. I highly recommend the book for anyone interested in Lebanese and Middle Eastern politics, political economy in weak states, ethnic politics and consocialism.

*Barea M. Sinno, Rutgers University, USA*

**The unravelling: high hopes and missed opportunities in Iraq. By Emma Sky.**

Coming some years after the glut of writing that accompanied the US-led occupation of Iraq is this unusual and unlikely story of ‘a British woman, advising the top leadership of the US military’ (p. 4). That woman is Emma Sky, who was a 35-year-old working for the British Council when the American tanks rolled into Baghdad. Sky had already spent time working abroad, including in the Middle East, although her only experience of Iraq was her previous opposition to conflicts in the country when she signed up to be a human shield in 1991. Suddenly, she found herself on a military transport plane out to the region in response to a Foreign and Commonwealth Office advert.

Sky can be described as a romantic liberal of sorts, whose subsequent experience with the US military opened her mind to a very different culture of working. She warns herself that ‘Mesopotamia will always get the better of those who come to love her’ (p. 89) and the book is a very honest appraisal, from someone who clearly cares deeply for the country and the people she has spent time working with. It is also the story of a wanderer, an only child whose time at boarding school seemed to give her drive that found its direction in Iraq. Sky describes how ‘[she] had felt so alive in Iraq, with such a strong sense of purpose. The best times of my life—and the hardest times—were in Iraq’ (p. 362). Her enthralling, readable and fascinating account is simultaneously ‘an Iraqi story. It is an American story. It is my story’ (p. 341).

Sky’s political acumen and ability to gain the trust of senior figures placed her in the cockpit of US efforts in Iraq. She was no ordinary adviser, and this book is a tale not only of observation but also of influence in practice, whether around high-level efforts on sectarian reconciliation, the US–Iraq Status of Force Agreement discussions that would determine the nature of the US presence in the country or important prisoner swaps. Sky also tells of her education in the ways of the ‘American tribe’ that is the military at war, learning about rank, customs, culture and getting to grips with frequent helicopter rides. Sky explains that ‘[she] studied it [the US military], found shared values and objectives, and learnt how to work with it’ (p. 41). In turn, Sky’s honest advice within a ‘can do’ culture would prove invaluable for the military figures she worked with, and particularly the looming figure of General Odierno, or ‘General O’, to whom the book is dedicated. The ‘British babe’, as some US soldiers described her, also seemed to use her sense of humour to connect with an American bureaucracy that often appeared to take itself too seriously, although, by contrast, the British General Lamb comes across as a madman, albeit a highly intelligent and effective one.

The chaos and ineptitude of the early days of the occupation are well told. Sky didn’t meet a single Iraqi for the first week, but would eventually come to know the country and
its people well. This ranged from nuggets such as the fact that ‘Iraq was the only country where hello meant goodbye’ (p. 121) and more important observations on the defining challenges of ‘land, water, oil, minority rights, citizenship, identity and allegiance. No group recognized the grievances of the others’ (p. 32). Sky was initially based in Kirkuk and learnt from the Kurdish leader Masoud Barzani that the ‘Shi’a have a complex about the past. Sunnis are afraid of the future ... Kurds feared both the past and the future’ (p. 159). Kirkuk was a microcosm of the issues that challenged Iraq as a whole: the battle of the past and correcting grievances, seeking revenge while trying to chart a course ahead for the future. Sky then found herself in Coalition Provisional Authority chief Paul Bremer’s outer circle and witnessed the nominal transfer of sovereignty back to the Iraqis.

Her conclusion as to the balance of success and failure is never quite clear. At one point, Sky tells General O that ‘this is the greatest strategic failure since the foundation of the United States’ (p. 147) and paints an accurate picture of how the invasion collapsed the state and how the newly formed entity struggled to be inclusive in a landscape dominated by sectarian politics. On the other hand, Sky talks of success where she personally saw it and makes the important point that to get Iraq on the right track ‘just required huge amounts of effort—and the right people with the necessary relationships to push everything in the right direction’ (p. 225). Perhaps the most important lesson to be learnt from Sky’s account is that while she was there for the long term, the constant turnover of senior diplomatic or military leaders undermined the personal relationships that were key to building such a delicate political consensus.

The Obama administration is portrayed as uninterested in saving Iraq and while talking a good game around focusing support on institutions, not individuals, makes a bad mistake in doubling down on Maliki as prime minister at a time when he had lost the trust of many Iraqis. Vice-President Biden made the point in Sky’s company that ‘Iraq was Bush’s war’ (p. 272). Where the book is lacking is perhaps in critical reflection on some of the aspects of organization and reliance on the military as a key driver of occupation politics. Aspects of sectarianism are left open to interpretation and it is not clear whether the levels of religious identity were underestimated or artificially manipulated to fill the post-2003 political space. What is more, the role of Iran is poorly explored and comes across as shadowy, unknown yet constantly the source of many of the problems the US faced.

Sky is an immensely likeable figure throughout and readers will share her frustrations and insights along the way, whether around a significant political moment or more light-hearted anecdotes—such as sharing a plane with then Prime Minister Maliki who was in fits of laughter while watching Mr Bean. Although she is now safely ensconced in US academia, you feel that Sky’s relationship with Iraq is by no means over.

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Sub-Saharan Africa


The ongoing concerns with global environmental change and the concomitant call to observe the limited carrying capacity of the Earth so as to avoid the collapse of our ecological systems have huge implications for how we think about humans and nature. Of course, humans are to blame for environmental problems, but solutions to these problems have raised heated debates, as was evident at the recent Conference of the Parties (COP) held in
Paris in December 2015. Even more heat is generated when resolutions adopted at global meetings of this nature are to be translated into practice. This is easy to see in nature conservation, where solutions to globally defined environmental problems meet complex local realities that challenge dominant conceptions of nature. Knut Nustad captures this global–local interplay in Creating Africas.

He draws on the work of Tim Ingold and on the broad social science research on nature and society to argue that ‘the separation between society and nature underlies the environmental problems that now threaten all of us’ (p. 8) and that this ‘separation of people and environments, conceptually and in policies, is a part of the problem to be dealt with’ (p. 32). The logic here is that transcending the society–nature dualism in theory and in practice is an important step towards finding solutions to environmental problems. The three parts of the book are devoted to developing this argument. In the first part (chapters one and two), Nustad challenges two theories, namely cultural relativism and social constructivism, for entrenching the society–nature dualism even as they seek to critique conceptions of nature. In his view, cultural relativism—the assumption that people experience the world through culturally given categories—is problematic, first, in that ‘it implies that humans are disengaged from a reality that all other non-humans belong to’ and second, in that it subscribes to ‘disengagement within humanity, between so-called “native” or “indigenous” people who perceive the world culturally, and westerners who do not’ (p. 39). Nustad is of the view that, like cultural relativism, social construction ‘presupposes an independently existing singular reality’ (p. 40) from which multiple representations of nature emanate. He argues that representations of nature reflect multiple realities and that these multiple realities constitute different versions of Africa.

The second part of the book (chapters three and four) is devoted to the history of nature conservation and how the society–nature dualism developed over time in St Lucia in South Africa. In this part, Nustad shows that conservation in present-day iSimangaliso Wetland Park is a result of shifts in the interactions between people and animals, and the ideas and policies underpinning these interactions. While the shifts mirror the history of nature conservation in South(ern) Africa, they also reveal the local context that has profoundly shaped the politics of conservation. Nustad reinforces the point that the general view that protected areas emerged as a result of the need to protect wildlife for hunting does not appropriately reflect experiences in Zululand game preserves in the vicinity of St Lucia, where the main rationale for creating these was to address the concerns of the African population with regard to the impact of wild animals on their farming and livelihoods. From this history, Nustad goes on to engage with political dynamics in the Dukuduku forest in the St Lucia area (chapters five and six). He shows that the Dukuduku forest is not one but multiple forests in that ‘it has been enacted variously as hunting grounds, as a site of small-scale agriculture, as useless growth [and] as forest plantations’ (p. 107). This multiplicity of the forest confirms his notion of multiple realities that form the basis of his argument. In the concluding chapter seven, Nustad strengthens his argument by pointing at neo-liberalism as one of the sharp instruments by which nature is made external to society.

Creating Africas is a good read and keeps alive earlier discussions on society–nature dualism. Nustad has succeeded in developing a coherent analytical framework that weaves together various ideas of nature and practices of conservation, and contested meanings of land in South Africa. He confirms the need to confront environmental problems conceptually in order to inform policy on the ground and tackles issues of hierarchies within the human family that underpin injustices in nature conservation. His starting-point, but also a central theme of the book, that humans, animals and their environments are mutually
constitutive and should be treated as such, is not new. Like most critical scholars writing on the relationship between society and nature, Nustad provides a nuanced analysis of nature conservation, but then comes to a dead-end: ‘what would [an alternative] park look like?’ (p. 169). Well, this question was for him to answer!

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The last decade has seen the emergence of a body of scholarly literature exploring southern-based economic growth as well as South–South and South–North trade and investment. Driven by Goldman Sachs’s BRICS concept (a grouping of emerging economies comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa), much of this research has focused on the big players like China, India and latterly Brazil. Lost in this work has been consideration of the new dynamics driving business in Africa, particularly the idea that the continent can be a source of foreign direct investment (FDI) and a home base for successful multinationals, not just a passive recipient of new flows of funds from China and other countries seeking to exploit natural resources. The edited volume reviewed here ably steps into this gap and sets the stage for further investigation.

The editors divide the book into three sections, looking first at inward investment flows into Africa. Rather than a simple rehashing of already known numbers, the four chapters in this section go further, asking questions about the knock-on effects of FDI as well as the differences in firm-level practices. The chapter by Theresa Onaji-Benson examines the impact that FDI has had on domestic investment levels both before and after the global financial crisis. Although her finding is not clear-cut, it does point the way for a more incisive analysis of not only the local impact of FDI, but also policy directions that recipient countries should be considering, particularly with a view to encouraging national economic diversification. Yetunde Anibaba takes up a different aspect of FDI inflows, asking to what extent expatriates serve as inward knowledge transmission avenues. The findings from the case-study in the chapter are provocative, suggesting such knowledge transfer requires sustained pressure from the firm and active pursuit by national employees enrolled in peer-to-peer training initiatives. Lite Nartey and Stephen Mezias return to the theme of Chinese investment in Africa, arguing that much of the work on this important question could be pushed further if only the international business scholarly community would give more attention to theorizing the phenomenon and strengthening its research methodology. Consequently the chapter advances a series of avenues that might be pursued, including political risk tolerance and first mover advantage. In the final chapter of the section, Any Freitas and Lyal White ask whether firms from different countries behave in the same manner in Africa, taking the case of Brazilian firms as a case-study to argue that the FDI source country has an impact on whether the investor is looking for short-term exploitation or a longer-term presence more amenable to national development goals.

The second section takes up a much-overlooked area, presenting a series of chapters examining outward FDI flows from African countries. Robert Rolfe, Alessandro Perri and Douglas Woodward start the discussion with a chapter setting out the patterns and determinants of intra-African FDI. Kevin Ibeh builds on this theme by providing a solid survey of African multinational corporations and what has prompted these firms to expand across the continent. The section ends with Olawale Ajai’s chapter discussing the causes
of failure in attempts at Africa-to-Africa internationalization, an approach that focuses on the lessons that can be learned from case-studies of unsuccessful firm expansions. None of the chapters in this section purport to be comprehensive, nevertheless they do provide an excellent roadmap for future research and highlight that there is much to be learned from further study of the internationalization of African firms. Indeed, the three chapters in this section make it clear that this field of study reveals much about the sorts of governance, infrastructural and social policy lacunae negatively impacting attempts to drive sustained economic growth.

The final section of the book moves in a very different direction, setting aside much of the careful theoretical and methodological discussion in the previous chapters to focus instead on the provision of detailed case-studies on Tata, Vale, RIM, Standard Bank, Game and the First Bank of Nigeria. In themselves, the case-studies provide excellent insight into major firms operating in Africa. They also help shape this volume as an excellent primer on the challenges facing international business on the continent. Where the first two-thirds focus on larger theoretical and methodological questions, the case-studies provide detailed, concrete examples of the phenomenon driving the book.

The editors make clear from the outset that they are not attempting to present a definitive collection on the changing dynamics of international business in Africa. Rather, their aim is to establish the subject as a rich area for research, with a great deal of potential for deepening theoretical approaches to the study of international business. In this, they are wholly successful. Furthermore, the book also offers valuable insights for students, scholars and practitioners of International Relations and development studies. The book is an excellent introduction to the changing investment and business landscape in Africa and will, this reviewer hopes, provide a spark driving more research in this area.

Sean Burges, Australia National University, Australia

South Asia*


The study of Indian foreign policy is slowly but surely changing, at the same time as Indian foreign policy is itself being transformed. Too long the preserve of the urbane and eloquent diplomats India specializes in cultivating, the field was until recently dominated by reminiscence and self-justification—by thorough but dry country-by-country assessments of the evolution of India’s various bilateral relationships or post hoc polemics about past policy decisions. This is no longer the case. As India has emerged as a ‘rising power’, and as dissatisfaction has grown with those inherited ways of explaining its behaviour, established and emerging scholars have taken a fresh interest in its foreign affairs and have taken different approaches to understanding them.

This hefty tome—an essential addition to the bookshelf of any student of the topic—displays both the new agendas being laid out and pursued by scholars in the field and the new insights achieved by their application of increasingly robust theories and methods. It contains no fewer than 50 chapters by 55 contributors, the overwhelming majority academics or professional analysts, both junior and senior. Eleven chapters cover the evolution of

* See also Gale Mattox and Stephen Grenier, eds, Coalition challenges in Afghanistan, pp. 467–9.
policy from the Raj to the post-Cold War era and changing approaches to national security, natural resources, international development and soft power. The next ten examine the various institutions and actors that play a role in policy formulation. Then come another ten on India’s relations with particular states and regions, followed by a further seven on ‘key partnerships’. The remaining nine contributions explore India’s multilateral diplomacy in a series of areas and ‘look ahead’ to how India’s rise will shape its future foreign policy.

As is often the case with edited volumes, especially on this scale, some of the chapters précis or reprise material presented by their authors in earlier books or articles. But the bulk—too many to discuss in detail here—are fresh and original. None are theory-heavy, but the volume as a whole shows the impact of applying novel and established approaches to a hitherto under-theorized field.

Among the highlights in the highly readable section on the evolution of Indian foreign policy are the chapters by Rahul Sagar, Srinath Raghavan and Rohan Mukherjee. Sagar provides a tantalizing glimpse of the nature and variety of pre-independence international thought in India, from the religious writings of Keshub Chandra Sen and Swami Vivekananda, to the conservative classicism of Swami Dayananda Saraswati and the liberalism of Dadabhai Narooji, among a number of others, through to Aurobindo Ghosh, Mohandas Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore, Vinayak Savarkar and of course Jawaharlal Nehru. Raghavan, for his part, delivers a welcome reappraisal of Rajiv Gandhi’s foreign policy, arguing that it was more innovative and influential, in terms of later governments, than often appreciated. Last, but not at all least, Mukherjee contributes the best short assessment of India’s international development programme currently available.

Overall, however, the strongest part is the third, on institutions and actors. Paul Staniland and Vipin Narang provide a masterly overview of the ways in which India’s democratic politics and bureaucracy shape its foreign policy, as well as the weaknesses in the Indian state which undermine its capacity to make and implement good policy in that area. Rudra Chaudhuri and Tanvi Madan supply useful supporting chapters on the roles of parliament and ‘officialdom’ in the decision-making processes. The section is rounded out with explorations of the influence exerted by the media, think-tanks and universities; India’s far-flung diaspora; public opinion; and the scientific community, especially in the defence establishment and various aspects of the economy.

While the chapters on the state and institutions illustrate the growing complexity of foreign policy-making in India, the section on ‘geography’ points to its extending reach. Twenty years ago, India’s region was conventionally thought of as south Asia. Today, this book implies, India is an increasingly significant player in central Asia, south-east Asia and the Middle East, as well as the dominant—though far from unchallenged—actor in its immediate environs.

Similarly, part five ably demonstrates the changing nature of India’s relations with key global powers. Among the highlights are Ashley J. Tellis’s sober assessment of the partnership with the United States forged since the early 2000s and Varun Sahni’s exploration of India’s ties with Brazil, as well as Constantino Xavier’s neat overview of its ‘unbreakable bond’ with Africa.

The last two sections focus on India’s many and varied multilateral engagements and assess its future as a rising power. With good reason, they emphasize lingering tensions and outright contradictions. As Poorvi Chitalkar and David M. Malone note, India boldly claims a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council, but when it held a temporary seat, in 2011–12, its behaviour was meek and its performance ‘mixed’ (p. 586). When it comes to trade, nuclear weapons or climate change, India’s attitudes to multilateral action.
are complex, and sometimes far from constructive. But there are signs of change in other areas. Jason A. Kirk detects a new confidence in India’s relations with international financial institutions, while Samir Saran points to the promise and payoffs in India’s active ‘plurilateral’ diplomacy with other rising powers.

The book concludes, however, on a cautious note. Sunil Khilnani warns against overenthusiasm about the country’s ‘rise’—in India and outside it. He counsels that the external challenges that India will face are likely to grow, not diminish, in the medium term, and India should seek ‘preventative or aversive power’ to manage them, not the kind of ‘interventionist power’ favoured by the West (p. 695). E. Sridharan, for his part, thinks India will continue to be a ‘rising but constrained power’ (p. 710), tied down by a difficult neighbourhood, few military instruments to influence others, internal political fragmentation, limited bureaucratic capabilities and growth rates that will take some considerable time to lift India’s per capita wealth.

In short, this is a rich and thought-provoking volume. It is also one of the strongest signals yet that a renaissance of the study of Indian foreign policy is well under way.

Ian Hall, Griffith University, Australia


This work is a beguiling prospect for anyone who has been involved in south Asia or has an interest in the region. The idea of analysing so many distinct insurgencies and counterinsurgency (COIN) campaigns within the covers of one book is both ambitious and tantalizing. From Islamist groups like Lashkar-e-Tayyiba (LeT) through to the Maoist Naxalites and the Tamil Tigers of Sri Lanka there are so many contrasting themes: separatism, religion, tribal affiliation, alienation, geographical factors, poverty and ideology. Quite apart from a comparison of methods one could also assess the relative strategic and tactical merits of such leaders as Hafiz Saeed of LeT, Prachanda of the Nepalese Maoists, Prabakharan of the Tamil Tigers (LTTE), Bhindranwale of the Sikh Khalistan movement and Osama bin Laden of Al-Qaeda.

On the COIN side, it is equally fascinating to compare the Pakistani Army’s disastrous campaign in East Pakistan in 1971 with its later efforts against Islamist militants in the Swat valley and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas on the Afghan frontier; and with India’s defence of the Kashmir Valley and the sorry story of Operation Blue Star in Amritsar in 1984, and the horrific events of the final months of the Tamil enclaves in the Jaffna Peninsula in 2009.

Unfortunately, and in spite of occasional good moments, this book provides few answers. It is partly a victim of its methodology. Most chapters are constructed around the history of a particular insurgency, drawn from a wide range of well-attributed source material, but interspersed with a number of staccato assertions and a bewildering array of statistics of varying relevance. Each chapter ends with a short section of conclusions, too brief to collect its themes.

Although charging £78 for this book, there is minimal sign of Ashgate’s editorial hand. The same tribal group is spelled ‘Pakhtu’n (p. 126), ‘Pashtun’ (p. 157) and ‘Pathan’ (p. 157). There are several questionable and unsupported statements such as: ‘terrorism is a nuisance involving random killing of civilians by non-state actors which delegitimizes a government’ (p. 1), ‘the political chicanery of Delhi’ (pp. 3 and 99), ‘the state is a predatory mafia’
(p. 191) and some less than tactful references to Pakistan’s ‘ham-handed’ COIN campaigns (pp. 3 and 128). Nearly 70 years of Baluchi insurgency are discussed on only two pages, whereas other campaigns, such as Kashmir, are treated in the minutest detail: ‘the 3 inch mortar detachment of the 7th Sikh picket, firing at a range of 150 yards, was able to beat off the attack’ (p. 93).

There are also numerous errors of fact. Sialkot is in Pakistan, not in India (p. 90); the US-sponsored regional grouping was SEATO, not SENTO (p. 95); Al-Faran was a cover name for Harakat-ul-Ansar, not a group of criminals from Rawalpindi jails (p. 101); the LeT is not a Wahhabi group, it belongs to the Ahle-Hadith tradition of Islam (p. 102); the Muslim population of the rest of India is not ten million (p. 107); Baluchistan does not command all of Pakistan’s coastline (p. 120); the Taliban emerged in Quetta in 1994, not in Kandahar (p. 148); Vladimir Putin was never the ‘Soviet President’ (p. 150) and so on.

The two best chapters are the first and the last. The first provides a summary of existing theory, charting its evolution from colonial COIN strategy through to the concepts of ‘new war’ and ‘fourth generation warfare’ (4GW). The British General Templer in Malaya argued that COIN should only be 25 per cent shooting, the remainder should be winning ‘hearts and minds’ (pp. 18–19). Sadly, this has all too rarely been the case in south Asia, where many of the COIN campaigns have been heavy-handed and brutal. Partly, this is a function of capability: effective COIN needs excellent intelligence and highly trained and equipped special forces. By contrast, the Indian tradition has been, to quote Rajesh Rajagopal, ‘area domination and saturation of the disturbed area with troops’ (p. 13).

However, my own observation from Afghanistan in recent years was that no amount of ‘hearts and minds’ would have won NATO the war in Helmand. The population knew that NATO would go home one day and that the villagers would have to account for their actions before a vengeful Taliban. It is interesting to reflect that two ‘successful’ COIN operations of recent years, the Indian defeat of the Khalistan movement and President Rajapaksa’s suppression of the Tamil Tigers, owed little to Templer or the proponents of minimum force.

The final chapter comprises only three pages—not nearly enough to draw together the threads of the eight previous chapters. However, it raises an interesting question: is COIN such a distinct methodology that countries need two forces, one for conventional warfare and the other for irregular conflict (p. 193)? The NATO experience in Afghanistan would suggest so. Special forces performed well, but the infantry were often little more than targets. The authors also judge, correctly in my view, that we are not witnessing a ‘new warfare’. Certainly there are new weapons and novel techniques: surveillance drones played an important role in Afghanistan, as did the Taliban’s use of the internet. But, fundamentally, today’s unconventional warfare would be familiar to nineteenth-century British officers in south Asia; and, in spite of the burgeoning inventory of weighty COIN field manuals, defeating insurgents is no easier than before.

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


Although India is becoming a major world player, it is surprising to note how little is actually known in the western world about this vast country; this is especially the case in the European Union. But the reverse is also true: India’s citizens hardly know anything
about the EU. Rajendra Jain and Shreya Pandey, two contributors to this edited volume, have undertaken one of the first large-scale surveys of the visibility and perceptions of the EU in India. The results are surprising. In news items, the EU is almost neglected and is only mentioned when it is of direct relevance in one way or another to India itself. Any interest in what is going on in the EU is totally absent. Even though the EU is perceived as an economic power, its visibility is poor even in this area and does not do justice to its actual weight in India’s trade balance. But both European and Indian leaders are fully aware of the advantages and necessities of cooperation on several matters. In 2000, they agreed to institute summit meetings; in 2004, they deepened this relationship by signing the India–EU Strategic Partnership; and in 2006, India was even invited to become a member of the Asia–Europe Meeting. However, very few officials, let alone citizens, are aware of these high-level interactions.

This mutual ignorance motivated the organization of a consortium of European and Indian scholars, who were able to conduct meetings over two years, thanks to a European Union grant, to exchange their views on recent developments in India. The meetings resulted in a rich collection of thought-provoking and insightful contributions. The principal aim of the book is to ‘examine and highlight India’s role as a key actor in today’s world’ (p. 1), of course, with special attention to its relationship with the European Union. However, India’s international role could only be described and analysed by taking into account its internal and regional developments, as well as the country’s social, cultural, historical, economic and political background. This broad perspective turns this book into much more than a close analysis of India’s place in the contemporary world.

In the first part, India’s culture, society and democracy are studied in five contributions. The second part is devoted to economy and development, with chapters looking at both domestic and international dimensions. The most elaborate section is the third part of the book, on foreign and security policy. Aside from India’s direct relationships with close neighbours and the security threats involved, there are new kinds of transnational threats which the country has to face up to. Moreover, in order to develop an effective foreign and security policy, India must take into consideration not only its close neighbours, but also other major players, such as the United States and China. It is highly remarkable that the European Union is almost absent in these chapters on foreign and security policy, even though the EU is a bigger trade partner to India than the US. The last section on ‘India and the EU: comparison, interaction and exchange’ aims to bring to the fore this far less known cooperation, which has become ever more important over the last decade. In addition to the interesting contribution on the perceptions and visibility of the EU in India, in this part Gulshan Sachdeva examines how the EU and India depend on each other for making tangible progress in Afghanistan. However, the increasing importance of security and strategic challenges does not (yet) outweigh the far more intensive cooperation in the domain of trade investment.

There can be no doubt that contributions to this volume will enhance our understanding of India, its place in the world and its relationship with the EU. They are not just detailed accounts of the present state of affairs, but offer penetrating analyses which invite further research and reflection. Its wide-ranging methodological approach and its analyses of India’s history, culture, identity, social fabric and economic and political characteristics make this volume an invaluable instrument for any study of the country’s international role and of contemporary India in general.

Erik De Bom, University of Leuven, Belgium

‘Panda-huggers’ and ‘panda-bashers’: observers of China’s foreign policy generally divide themselves into these two camps, whether consciously or unwittingly. In The China challenge, Thomas J. Christensen seeks to rise above this divide and provide balanced, carefully considered suggestions about the policy that the US should pursue towards China. For this book has to be seen as a contribution to the ongoing debate in Washington regarding how to deal with an ever-more-powerful Beijing. A long-time China academic and watcher who served in the US Department of State’s East Asia team during the George W. Bush administration, Christensen is uniquely qualified to add to this debate.

The book is split into two parts. In the first part—divided into five chapters—the author discusses the reasons behind China’s rise and its repercussions for the United States, Asia and global governance. This first part tells a well-known story to informed readers familiar with Chinese and Asian politics and economics. However, it is still informative in that Christensen’s underlying narrative is that China’s rise has been possible thanks to Washington’s willingness to support Beijing’s post-1978 reforms, as well as to allow it to benefit from the US-led global institutional framework. This argument is not new and has also been applied to the rise of Germany or Japan, among others. Yet Christensen does bring a nuance that is often lacking—explaining how Chinese reforms often came before or concurrently to foreign suggestions, rather than later.

In chapters four and five, Christensen focuses on Beijing’s strategic challenges in the Asia–Pacific region and on global governance, respectively. These are crucial chapters for the author’s argument, since they explain the reasons why he thinks China still poses a threat to a global order from which it has benefited extensively. In short, nationalism and the threat of instability are key drivers behind the actions of the Chinese government. Thus, Beijing might be forced to escalate its actions in the Asia–Pacific—most notably, in the East and South China Seas—or to undermine existing global governance regimes—including non-proliferation, climate change, economic regimes, and peacekeeping and humanitarian intervention—even if it is not its goal to do so.

Building on these two chapters, the second part of the book analyses Beijing’s behaviour over three periods: the early years of China’s rise in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union (1991–2000), post-9/11 (2001–2008), and since the global financial crisis (2009–14). These chapters are the most informative and, arguably, interesting for readers already familiar with Chinese foreign policy, as they cover a period in time in which Christensen served or advised different US administrations. This provides for a fascinating account of the Washington–Beijing relationship from an insider’s perspective. We learn about issues as varied as the thinking behind China’s shift in policy towards Sudan in the mid-2000s, the eagerness by the Chinese delegation to have a joint Obama–Hu statement following the latter’s 2009 trip to the US, or Sino-American discussions on climate change.

According to Christensen, China has not become anti-American or anti-western as it has grown in economic, diplomatic and military clout. Nevertheless, it is now more willing to voice its own views. Sometimes, this has served US interests. Take the case of North Korea: starting in 2003, China has become more engaged in dealing with its neighbour’s nuclear programme—a move long sought by successive American administrations. Other times,
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however, Beijing’s position has put it at odds with Washington. As an example, Chinese leaders maintained an ambiguous position regarding Iran’s nuclear programme during the P5+1 negotiations (the book was written before the July 2015 agreement).

Based on his scholarship and policy experience, Christensen offers three recommendations for the US to approach relations with China—clearly summarized in the epilogue. First, Washington should maintain a strong military presence in Asia, combined with a diplomatic effort to accommodate China into existing institutions. Second, the US should shape Beijing’s military choices. Finally, the American and Chinese governments should find areas of cooperation. Following these suggestions would guarantee peace between the two countries.

This book is recommended for its well-articulated argument about the shape that US policy towards China should take. Readers from outside the US, however, will find the book of interest because Christensen sheds light on ongoing debates in Washington about the best way to deal with the Asian giant. As such, The China challenge is as much about American foreign policy as it is about Washington politics.

Ramon Pacheco Pardo, King’s College London, UK


In Muslim, trader, nomad, spy, Sulmaan Wasif Khan gives an account of how events in Tibet from the 1950s to the early 1960s informed not just important elements of Chinese foreign policy, but also wider relations among Third World states in an era of post-colonial state-building. As bottom-up history, it is a delightful corrective to reductionist accounts of international relations which focus on state capitals—there are not many analyses of diplomatic history which start from the subnational level. It also sheds light on developments in Tibet during a crucial period for the region.

Khan argues that in the 1950s, ‘the Chinese state was weak in the Tibetan borderlands; that addressing that weakness caused the PRC to change from empire-lite to a harder imperial formation; and that the transition brought about a shift in Chinese foreign policy during the Cold War’ (pp. 4–5). The shifts in Chinese foreign policy have had long-lasting consequences. Khan shows how the ‘five principles of peaceful coexistence’ of 1954 (namely mutual respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty; mutual non-aggression; non-interference in others’ internal affairs; equality and mutual benefit; and peaceful coexistence), which remain a central part of Chinese diplomatic rhetoric, emerged from interactions with India over managing trade in the Tibetan borderlands. Because events in those geo-strategically important borderlands contributed to the breakdown in Sino-Indian relations and the conflict between the two countries in 1962, China’s Tibetan frontiers would not just play a role in relations between these two Asian powers, but affect the prospects for Third World solidarity for the rest of the Cold War.

Khan seeks to show that there was some contingency in these developments, by contrasting the Sino-Indian dynamic with that between China and Nepal. After an incident on their border in June 1960, Beijing and Kathmandu took a conciliatory approach to its resolution (chapter 3). Over the following couple of years, however, mutual suspicion between India and China—rather than the dynamics on the border per se—would lead to a breakdown in relations, the cutting off of cross-border trade (which contributed to famine in Tibet in 1962), and conflict.
In terms of political change within Tibet, there are a number of themes. One is the relationship between governance in other regions of the PRC and that in Tibet, where many reforms were delayed until 1959 (it was not until 1965 that the Tibet Autonomous Region was established); this highlights the different and delayed process of statebuilding in parts of the PRC’s ethnic borderlands. Another theme is the consequences of a transition from empire to nation-state, under which political elites saw a need for clearly demarcated boundaries rather than a blurred frontier across which the nomads of the book’s title had travelled back and forth. In the case of Tibet, this was in contrast to what Khan describes as previous ‘ways of life defined by statelessness’ (p. 12, see also chapter two). The ‘nation’ part of the nation-state was complicated by a conception of nation which Zhou Enlai would later harden to claim that all places with Tibetans belonged to the PRC (p. 124).

The book is short at 136 pages of main text, more narrative in style than theoretical, and does not fit easily into any academic discipline, lying somewhere in the intersection of political anthropology and international relations. This reviewer sees that as a good thing, though some might be looking for more disciplinary ‘rigour’. The account of developments in Tibet in crucial periods of the late 1950s is based in part on new Chinese sources, and alternative renderings of these events might have been given more space. These points notwithstanding, Muslim, trader, nomad, spy should enlighten readers interested in either Tibet or Chinese foreign policy.

Tim Summers, Chatham House, Hong Kong

The European Union and Japan: a new chapter in civilian power cooperation?

We do not often think of the Japanese–European relationship as being among the most important in international relations. The editors of this volume intend to show that Japan and the European Union constitute a ‘vital axis for future global governance and … an essential pillar in the emerging fluid global order’ (p. 2). Based on a number of symposiums and other meetings sponsored by Waseda and Oxford universities, the articles demonstrate how Japan–EU ties illustrate the changing nature of foreign policy; ‘larger visions of world order’ (p. 5), such as how the global community will organize itself in the twenty-first century; and shared normative values that may bind such a new world order. The book examines four areas: ‘power relations’, or the political relations and respective positions of the EU countries and Japan; trade and regulation; economic and environmental issues; and food and health (p. 15).

The first section provides a serviceable overview of Japan’s and the EU’s respective positions in the world, as well as Japan’s view of the EU. Hidetoshi Nakamura briefly lays out the development of EU–Japan ties since 1991, when a summit meeting led to a joint declaration to improve ties. While both made major commitments to further upgrade relations in 2001 and 2011, most cooperation has been through the G7/G8 framework. He suggests that a strong connection with Europe fits into the broad arc of post-Second World War Japanese foreign policy, as it has emphasized among other things working closely with other democracies and using the United Nations as a key diplomatic forum. The almost unbroken rule of the Liberal Democratic Party has meant that Japanese bureaucrats were able to pursue long-term policy initiatives with Europe. Mario Telo focuses on ‘the emergent German hegemony’ within the EU that has made ‘civilian’ foreign policy more likely (pp. 36, 40). As such, European diplomacy has concentrated on multilateral, multi-
channel, regionally based and economically orientated efforts. The implication is that Japan fits well into these trends. Paul Bacon and Martin Holland use a mix of content analysis and elite interviews to show the importance of Japan’s association with the EU. Most Japanese news media coverage concerns economics and business, and is generally positive towards European societies.

The section on trade issues does a more thorough job of comparing policy regimes in Japan and the EU. Min Shu outlines the changing nature of Europe’s trade relations with Asia. The EU trade deficit with Japan has remained relatively stable and small, compared to shortfalls with ASEAN countries and China. In response to surging Asian exports to Europe, the EU reformed its Common Commercial Policy to emphasize greater market access for European goods and services. European trade policy has tried to balance three trade-offs: bilateralism and regionalism, trade protection and market access, and economic interests and foreign policy goals. Frederik Ponjaert sketches the recently concluded EU–Japan Trade and Partnership Agreement. He suggests that it is very much in line with other such pacts, as it is more a political project than an economic imperative and, while evincing a shared desire for greater trade conditionality, draws mainly from respective bureaucratic processes that hold little in common. Gijs Berends’s comparison of food safety regimes in Japan and the EU (which perhaps should have been placed in the book’s final section) shows that, in cases such as post-Fukushima Japanese agricultural exports and European precautions against Mad Cow disease, Japan and the EU have been willing to work towards policy compromise.

Energy, environmental and economic issues seem to be less contentious than trade. A third section indicates noteworthy convergence in both business approaches and policy-making. Miranda Schreurs describes the process of mutual learning between two countries that think much alike on energy and the environment. Bart Gaens and Henri Vogt show how the EU and Japan both use foreign aid as the primary method for promoting economic development abroad. The two also cooperated to save the Kyoto Protocol on climate change, note Hiroshi Ohta and Yves Tiberghien, after it ran into difficulties at the turn of the millennium.

The last section, a grab bag of policy issues, is less effective, and the chapters are only loosely related to one another. Paul Bacon’s examination of human rights makes perhaps the volume’s fullest presentation of the concept of civilian power, based on Amitav Acharya’s notion of ‘norm localization’ (p. 186). EU organizations have expressed concerns about the death penalty and administration of justice in Japan. Yasue Fukuda’s study of biomedical research cooperation and Koji Fukuda’s examination of food safety show growing cooperation, but what is so special about joint activity in these relatively small-bore policy areas? Japan and the EU already act together with various other countries on functional problems.

A fine addition to literature on Asian–European relations, the book nonetheless overstates the importance of Japan–EU ties, while discounting the importance of the US and China as players informing the decisions of both European and East Asian governments. Ties with North America and China are far more important than the EU–Japan bilateral relationship. As with most edited volumes, the quality and usefulness of the chapters vary. Some take a broad, high-politics approach, while others hone in on low-politics concerns such as food safety policy. While of some general interest, the latter do not rise to the level of the geopolitical discussion in the first section. Also, some articles almost exclusively focus on either Japan or the EU, and so have only a little to say about the Tokyo–Brussels relationship. The concept of civilian power, obviously key to the volume, needs to be better explained at the outset. Perhaps a second book on the EU–Japan connection could flesh out some of these issues.

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

**North America**


Stefano Recchia has made a fascinating contribution to the literature on the bureaucratic politics of military interventions. Recchia argues that America’s senior generals play a vital role in pushing administrations to adopt a multilateral approach towards humanitarian interventions and that, contrary to what we might expect, liberal interventionists are far more sceptical about having international bodies such as the United Nations Security Council or the North Atlantic Council sanction such initiatives.

Using over 80 interviews with senior US officials, as well as declassified material from the Clinton White House, Recchia demonstrates that it is those in uniform who frequently push for a mandate from the UN or NATO. The idea that US generals are ‘reluctant warriors’ is nothing new: much of the literature on post-Vietnam intervention makes a similar point. What is innovative, however, is Recchia’s argument that generals are likely to insist on a multilateral approach to intervention precisely when multilateral support is most difficult to get: in situations where they fear the US will be left with an unduly large share of the burden of intervention and where exit strategies are unclear. Conversely, liberal hawks see bodies such as the UN and NATO as obstacles to effective intervention, and tend to regard questions of humanitarian intervention as too urgent to be left to the deliberation of international bodies. Recchia makes the vital point that interventionists tend to focus on why the US should intervene, whereas military officials tend to think of how intervention might occur, which makes them acutely aware of the potential costs of such interventions.

Recchia uses four case-studies—the US interventions in Haiti, Bosnia, Kosovo and Iraq in 2003—to provide a detailed analysis of just how the ‘pulling and hauling’ on questions of intervention plays out. In a largely convincing fashion, he shows that administrations are willing to incur relatively high costs—in terms both of the efficacy of the intervention and the political cost of building international support—to secure international organization approval for intervention when the generals express a reluctance to intervene. In Haiti, Bosnia and Kosovo, intervention was essentially impossible until the Clinton administration managed to find a way to placate the military by gaining international approval, as a way of sharing the burden of intervention and ensuring some sort of viable exit strategy.

Much as Recchia builds a strong case for the influence of ‘reluctant warriors’, his case-study selection does mean there are some limitations to his approach. Of the four cases he examines, three are from the Clinton era, and the fourth, the invasion of Iraq in 2003, doesn’t really conform to the model, as there the generals were silent rather than vocal in their dissent. Recchia provides good reasons for this—the senior military leadership of the time were hardly profiles in courage—but it is at least possible that his conclusion that powerful military actors push reluctant interventionists towards a multilateral approach is in part due to the particular politics of civil–military relations in the Clinton era.

First, Recchia slightly overstates his case at times. In an effort to construct a usable theory, he can be too dismissive of other relevant factors. For instance, in Kosovo, revitalizing NATO surely played a role in the Clinton administration’s use of the alliance in the intervention, even if it is also true that generals were reluctant to intervene without multi-
lateral support. Similarly, the presence of civilian doves means that we should be careful about assigning too much veto power to the generals; other actors within the Clinton administration were often equally reluctant about the merits of intervention. For instance, Secretary of State Warren Christopher often played a restraining role, and during the Bush administration’s intervention in Liberia Vice-President Dick Cheney and the Secretary of Defense were chary of any US humanitarian intervention.

These quibbles aside, this is a fine book. Recchia’s extensive interviews with senior national security officials alone make the book worth reading. For scholars interested in military intervention, this interview material provides a wealth of insight and Recchia certainly makes a compelling case that senior military officials are often multilateralists, however cynical their reasons for embracing multilateralism, and—surprisingly—that liberal interventionists can be strikingly unilateral in their approach, whatever their public rhetoric suggests. Recchia’s argument may be counter-intuitive but the evidence is largely persuasive.

David Fitzgerald, University College Cork, Ireland

Ballots, bullets, and bargains: American foreign policy and presidential elections.

For readers looking for one book to explain the possible effects of the 2016 US presidential election on America’s foreign policy, Ballots, bullets, and bargains is a fantastic starting point. It provides a great read for newcomers and aficionados of US politics alike.

Michael H. Armacost served for decades at some of the highest levels of the US foreign service, including as ambassador to the Philippines and Japan, and more recently as president of the Brookings Institution until 2002. Armacost demonstrates both authoritative and encyclopaedic knowledge of the American system, while simultaneously peppering the book with fascinating personal insights. The subject of Armacost’s enquiry is both vast and—surprisingly—rarely assessed comprehensively in one book. Indeed, given the vulnerability of American foreign policy to the political winds around presidential elections, Armacost notes that it is fortunate no adversary has taken advantage of the regular paralysis it causes to strategic policy-making.

Armacost uses history to illuminate the more obscure issues which have had a huge impact on policy. For example, he charts the inauspicious history of the handovers between presidents who did not see eye to eye. He explains how the US system regularly produces presidents with scant experience of foreign policy—and vice-presidents who are even more ignorant of it. But the book isn’t all doom and gloom: the author highlights the strengths of the American system and how it regularly produces vital course corrections. At times, the issue at hand is sometimes presented in a way that obscures the importance of domestic policy. While this is not the focus of the book, there are many places in the analysis where more in-depth discussion of the domestic context would improve the argument.

While the book’s core strengths are its effective utilization of history and its well-presented case-studies, they also lead to one of the problems with Ballots, bullets, and bargains: Armacost occasionally spends too much time retelling the past. Many case-studies are repeatedly made use of to support several different points and are retold in different sections of the book. On occasion, well-worn history, such as the Cuban Missile Crisis, is given a long explanation, where more analysis would have been preferable. This is not to say that any of Armacost’s history is questionable, in fact the opposite. Some of his most
interesting points are made when he explains a past foreign policy endeavour and then recounts his personal thoughts and involvement in it.

The tendency of *Ballots, bullets, and bargains* to look back, rather than forwards, is also clear with regard to the sections on political polarization. Despite polarization’s growing impact on how foreign policy is devised and the marked hollowing out of the ‘middle’ of American public opinion, Armacost devotes very little space to the issue. In the conclusion, it is almost dismissed altogether, even though many scholars have made clear that the chances of increased consensus-building are limited.

Finally, the analysis would also have benefited from a deeper understanding of the role Congress plays in foreign policy-making, not only because of the growing partisanship already mentioned, but also because of the numerous ways determined senators can disrupt American foreign policy. To his credit, Armacost does suggest some reforms in the final pages of the book. Yet his conclusions are fairly circumspect and it would have been interesting to hear more about how the system can change, perhaps at the expense of some of the plentiful historical analysis.

In short, *Ballots, bullets, and bargains* is an insightful yet accessible read, well worth a look during this election season.

*Rory Kinane, Chatham House, UK*


What if the ‘war on terror’ was misdirected by the narrative frames built in the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 attacks? Did they perpetuate and extend the war into unrelated locations in Iraq because few could resist the dominance of the stories that were told? What if even those in the highest positions of power held misgivings about the Cold War consensus privately, but because of the narrative structures, resonances and the search for legitimacy and support, they continued to act within its parameters? What if, as one subtitle suggests, the Cold War consensus persisted because the ‘doves [were] in Cold War cages’ (p. 246)? Do dominant narratives constrain the latitude of discussion, deemed legitimate or within the bounds of acceptability, and hence limit the policy options advanced, thus vitiating presidential choice?

This clever and intellectually rewarding book rests on the idea that our understanding of the world is bound up with the words we use to narrate it. It seeks to trace the formation and dissolution of the dominant narratives across 70 years of US national security policy through a deep reading of US foreign policy literature and critical theory and through case-studies and content analysis, coupled with some diagrams that bundle terms into spaghetti-like depictions—which have left this reviewer more baffled than enlightened. As Krebs advances his argument with a refreshingly brilliant and cogent style, the book should find its way to being used as widely as related studies, such as David Campbell’s *Writing security* (Manchester University Press, 1992) or Michael Hunt’s *Ideology and US foreign policy* (Yale University Press, 1987).

The book rests on the assumption that national security requires leaders to engage public audiences for the purpose of acquiring legitimacy; that if that legitimacy is lacking, the long-term prospects for the policy are fragile; and that events in the international arena do not speak for themselves, but require articulation (p. 2). The study assesses the impact of narratives on the formation and demise of national security, thus examining the founda-
tions of the stories told and the choices and decisions taken within the so-called ‘webs of significance’. The work is especially cognizant of the dominance of the president in narrative formation on foreign policy and national security issues. Its framework is highly theoretical, yet for those not inclined to delve into such forms of explanation, the case-studies are imbued with a rich understanding of empirics and provide analyses that make for a rewarding read and a useful potential tool in the classroom. Krebs analyses the power of narratives centred on their selectivity, their temporal ordering or sequential storytelling, their structured meaning and historical agents (p. 11). If Gramsci and Foucault haunt the pages throughout, the arguments are nevertheless compelling and challenge some very dominant and frequently repeated contentions, most centrally that the Cold War consensus had fractured before the heightened US participation in the Vietnam War.

Before turning to the case-studies, Krebs lays out his theoretical framework in a sophisticated chapter on ‘domination and the art of storytelling’ (pp. 31–65). Thereafter, chapter three examines two case-studies in which even master storytellers such as Franklin Roosevelt and Ronald Reagan were unable to make their narratives stick, on issues that they fundamentally believed in and sought to advance against seemingly endless scepticism. The non-interventionist agenda remained persistent despite FDR’s endless attempts to undermine the Neutrality Acts and push for US engagement in the Second World War and Reagan’s vaunted depiction of the Contras ran the risk of incredulity in the wake of the Vietnam War (pp. 109–11). Yet attempts to narrate German and Japanese aggression, especially after Pearl Harbor, were quite a different story. These narratives, pursued with much greater consistency, were closely woven around—albeit not consciously—Kenneth Burke’s ‘pentad’ of ‘act’, ‘scene’, ‘agent’, ‘agency’ and ‘purpose’. In other words, they were stories structured around what is happening, where, by whom, how and why, which are key elements of classic stories and enduring myths (p. 12). Similarly, despite his faltering start, George W. Bush established narrative dominance after 9/11. That alternative framings were not even engaged with or acknowledged which facilitated a national security response that was constrained by the preferred narrative advanced by Bush: that America was attacked because it represented freedom and democracy. Few could operate outside the dominant narrative framework; those who tried within the United States found little traction. The meaning of 9/11 was ‘fixed’ (p. 145) and presented a straitjacket ‘that would facilitate and dampen the opposition on the road to Iraq narrations’ (see David Ryan, Frustrated empire, Pluto Press, 2007).

The second part of the book, which is just as rewarding, examines the demise of the Cold War consensus. Though I think the author is overreaching with the claim that ‘scholars have not studied it rigorously’ (p. 177), I think the rigour of this analysis certainly adds to the literature and the contention on the demise of the consensus before the Vietnam War. For instance, Fredrik Logevall, in his Choosing war (University of California Press, 1999), challenged the existence of the Cold War consensus in 1964–5. Nevertheless, Krebs is right to say that the proposition that Vietnam led to the demise of the consensus needs to be challenged, especially in the light of the argument and evidence presented here.

Overall, this is a highly innovative and rewarding book that seamlessly merges narrative theory with a deep reading of US national security.

David Ryan, University College Cork, Ireland
Mexico has received short shrift in most writings on the hemispheric Cold War, on account of its perceived political stability, and because it lacks the obvious allure of the better-known cases of overt and covert US intervention. US historian Renata Keller, in a work based on her doctoral dissertation, contends that Mexico was in fact ‘an active battleground where multiple groups debated, spied, schemed, and struggled for influence’ (p. 5). Mexico in the 1960s and 1970s faced an internal struggle over the legacy of the by then fully institutionalized Mexican Revolution, whose unfulfilled promise was placed in sharp relief by the radical changes ushered in by the Cuban Revolution after 1959. The country’s much vaunted decision not to break diplomatic relations with Havana in 1964, in conformity with all other members of the Organization of American States (OAS), thus needs to be understood, she avers, as much in a domestic context as in terms of the fulfilment of the established principles of Mexican foreign policy: a means of ensuring that the issue of Cuba did not become a rallying point for a much-fractured opposition to the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) regime and its ‘political theatre of democracy’ (p. 147).

The study is based on a wealth of primary sources. The author cites extensively from the files of Mexico’s two intelligence agencies, the Department of Federal Security and the Department of Political and Social Investigations, which have been much utilized, since their declassification in 2002, by those historians seeking to look behind the façade of the supposed ‘pax PRIísta’. She weighs this evidence judiciously; while recognizing some of the reporting as obviously false or exaggerated—at times even paranoid—‘Mexican intelligence agents were not completely fabricating the existence of threats’ (p. 155). Keller has also secured exceptional access to the Cuban Foreign Ministry archive covering relations with Mexico in the 1960s; although not offering any stunning revelations, the documents show that Havana’s policy towards Mexico ‘was ambivalent, variable, and contradictory’ (p. 9), and that the Cubans were not unaware of Mexico’s double game. The more readily accessible US documentation indicates—in line with other more recent Cold War studies concerning Latin America—that the United States was not the ‘primary determinant’ (p. 10) of either Mexico’s Cold War or Mexico’s relations with Cuba; indeed, in 1964 Mexico was able to persuade the US of the value of having at least one Latin American embassy in Havana as a ‘listening post’ (though Keller fails to note that the US’s other neighbour, Canada—which also declined to break relations with Cuba—served in this capacity too). The bibliography, finally, attests to an assiduous reading of the burgeoning secondary literature on these previously neglected years of Mexican history.

The author takes a strictly chronological approach, neatly interweaving internal developments in Mexico with issues that intermittently impinged more directly on the trilateral Cuba–Mexico–US relationship, such as the Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961, the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis (which unambiguously demonstrated where the Mexican government’s ultimate loyalty lay), the 1964 OAS debate, the challenges posed for Mexico in particular by the revolutionary postulates of the 1966 Tricontinental conference, and Cuba’s actual role in domestic unrest. The focus is primarily, however, on the growing polarization between left and right within Mexico and the consequent political mobilization that seemed, at the time, to threaten the continuation of the PRI regime, and the latter’s growing repression—
most prominently illustrated in the 1968 Tlatelolco and 1971 Corpus Christi massacres, as well as in the widespread use of ‘dirty war’ tactics.

One of the author’s principal claims is that President Adolfo López Mateos (in office 1958–64) pursued contradictory foreign policy measures towards Cuba, publicly praising the achievements of the revolution while quietly decreasing bilateral trade, instituting travel restrictions and facilitating US spying on Cuba; this is fully substantiated in her book, but is not quite as novel a charge as Keller implies. Christopher White in his opus, Creating a third world: Mexico, Cuba, and the United States (University of New Mexico Press, 2007), which merits just a passing reference in a footnote in Keller’s work, had already suggested, on the basis of archival research, that Mexico was quietly passing on information about Cuba and its revolutionary activities in the region to Washington.

Mexico’s Cold War is well paced, clearly written, thoroughly sourced, convincingly argued, and above all measured in its assessments. As a consequence of this monograph, Mexico can no longer be justifiably excluded from future studies of Latin America’s overall involvement in the Cold War.

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