

Book Notes

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Deitelhoff, Nicole & Klaus Dieter Wolf, eds (2010) *Corporate Security Responsibility? Corporate Governance Contributions to Peace and Security in Zones of Conflict*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. 260 pp. ISBN 9780230241848.

Research on corporate security responsibility practices is well established as a field of inquiry, but the particular question of company contributions to peace and security is a more recent area of interest. Through a series of case studies, this book assesses how and why transnational corporations make direct or indirect contributions to security in conflict zones. The case studies focus on countries with varying conflict characteristics, political environment and type of company industry. The diversity of selected cases presents a useful compilation not only for those interested in corporate social responsibility, but also for readers curious about the context of particular conflicts. To give a preview, some of the chapters focus on companies operating in Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone, Israel/Palestine, and Northern Ireland. The book synthesizes conclusions from the case findings and provides initial theoretical insights on the state of company security contributions in zones of conflict and motivations for such corporate involvement. However, as the authors also acknowledge, one of the crucial questions about the impact of these activities remains to be empirically tested.

Oxana Slobozhan

Donati, Caroline (2009) *L'exception syrienne entre modernisation et résistance* [The Syrian Exception between Modernisation and Resistance]. Paris: La Découverte. 355 pp. ISBN 9782707147998.

Although never quite clarifying in which ways Syria is exceptional, Caroline Donati provides us in this book with a succinct and almost entirely pessimistic analysis of Syria's political and economic development from the regime of Hafez al-Assad (1970–2000) through the first decade of his son Bashar's period as president of the Syrian Arab Republic, which has a population of 19 million. Bashar's attempt at political opening quickly failed, and his economic modernization project will also fail because it is blocked by oligopolistic entrenched interests in Syria's new crony capitalism. Diplomatically, the government in Damascus is immobilized by its alliance (of convenience) with Iran, Hezbollah and Hamas,

and by the impossibility of making peace with Israel since this would remove Syria's exceptional standing as a resisting Arab state and reduce it to a pusillanimous Western client state of the Jordanian kind. After his first failed attempt to open up the Syrian polity to more freedom of expression, Bashar has replaced his father's institutionalized authoritarianism, with state monopolies in the various economic sectors, with a 'Sultanistic' form of government, based on shifting networks of favoured business leaders and consultants, who compete for the ear of the President. Donati's pessimism seems to have a strong basis in the available evidence, but perhaps the recent rapprochement between Syria and Turkey, which Donati pays considerable attention to, could create the opportunity for change. Syria has preserved many traits of the former Ottoman Empire, and Turkey has been moving away from Kemalism towards some kind of semi-Ottoman revival.

Stein Tønnesson

Gordon, Neve (2008) *Israel's Occupation*. London: University of California Press. xxi + 318 pp. ISBN 9780520255319.

By using a variety of theoretical frameworks to trace the history of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza since 1967, Neve Gordon is able to provide an analysis which is both refreshing and acute. As is revealed, a radical change in the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories has occurred since 1967, when, according to Moshe Dayan, the policy was that the occupation should be invisible. Today's system, on the contrary, is extremely vivid. To illustrate this, a table in the preface shows first that the annual average number of Palestinians killed by Israelis during the first 20 years was 32. Then, for the following 13-year period, the annual average was 106. Finally, during the second intifada the annual average was 674. This 20-fold increase in the death count is but a very specific example of how a complex history has drastically changed the policies of occupation and Palestinian reactions. Rather than viewing the Israeli policies of occupation as the product of a 'master plan' – what Gordon calls a static approach – the policies are viewed through a dialectical history. This approach is important because it reveals how policies, through excesses, create contradictions and reactions that work against the intentions of the original policy. This dynamic approach is also useful because it allows the Palestinians to be seen as political actors. More than anything, Neve Gordon's work is a valuable contribution to the

argument across a larger set of cases – quantitative data on ‘one-sided violence’ should make this possible. Statistical analysis would determine whether she has identified a general phenomenon and would require a clearer description of what ‘active rivalry’ looks like beyond the three conflicts that she examines. As it stands, however, *Inside Insurgency* is an important contribution to the literature on violence against civilians.

David E Cunningham

Midlarsky, Manus I, ed. (2009) *Handbook of War Studies III*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press. 392 pp. ISBN 9780472050574.

The Handbook of War Studies III continues a rich tradition of bringing together a collection of scholars and research papers that describe some of the central ideas on armed conflict and its management. War Studies III, however, takes a decidedly different tack than its two predecessors, and the changes reflect the evolution not only in the types of conflicts extant in our world, but also the shifting focus of scholarship. The first version’s emphasis was exclusively on interstate conflict and war, with section headings organized under the conceptual rubric of systemic, dyadic, and state-centered explanations. The second edition of the Handbook maintained the intellectual focus on interstate conflict and war, but introduced hints that terrorism and ‘identity’ conflicts might have a bearing in our referent world. If Handbook II hinted that there might be armed conflict that does not conform to contemporary models of systemic or dyadic theories, Handbook III goes the whole way in that direction. Chapters in this volume address questions of rationality, emotions, regime characteristics, and ethnicity, among other topics, with a common focus on understanding the onset and outcome of internal conflict. As with the other volumes, Handbook III is more focused on synthesizing existing research than presenting new arguments or evidence. It provides a general overview of where scholarship is going and some ideas on how to progress further. I would have liked to see more on the international dimensions of intrastate conflict (beside Saideman and Jenne’s chapter), on peacekeeping operations, and possibly on mobilization and the role of ‘contentious politics’ and state responses (beyond Lichbach’s contribution). Still, what Midlarsky has brought together provides an excellent overview of contemporary research.

Patrick M Regan

Murshed, Syed Mansoob (2010) *Explaining Civil War: A Rational Choice Approach*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar. 244 pp. ISBN 9781847208088.

This is an ambitious book which sets out to explore the Rational Choice approach to explaining civil war. Murshed offers an impressive synthesis of the rationalist literature on a myriad of civil war related topics. Not only does he address the outbreak of civil war – looking in depth at the political

economy of onset – but he also examines how civil wars end and how lasting peace can be created. Murshed offers a critical take on the popular ‘greed and grievance’ debate, highlighting that many studies that address the issue of whether greed or grievance cause civil war cannot adequately test these as competing explanations, and that they may in fact be complementary factors, but need to be rooted in the longer-term institutional and economic context of the country. In this sense, Murshed is arguing in the book for a clearer connection to be made between economic and political causes of conflict, particularly the role of growth and how this is critically limited by low-quality political institutions. Indeed, he sees growth failure as a key precondition for civil conflict and as a factor that links together many pieces of the puzzle in explaining conflict where natural resources are present. This book is likely to be too technical for those completely outside the fields of political economy and conflict studies, even though the mathematical proofs are presented in appendices. However, it is a great read for those versed in political science broadly and political economy more specifically, and will be an important resource for students of conflict.

Kathleen Gallagher Cunningham

Nordhaus, William (2008) *A Question of Balance: Weighing the Options on Global Warming Policies*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. xiv + 234 pp. ISBN 9780300137484.

Nordhaus warns against excessive efforts to mitigate climate change and makes impressively complex calculations to weigh the expected costs of climate change against the costs of policies to halt it. He finds that the targets set in the Kyoto protocol, by his fellow economist Nicholas Stern and, notably, by Al Gore, would lead to costs outweighing by far the costs of climate change, which Nordhaus estimates at around 2.5 percent of world output per year by the end of the 21st century. Nordhaus differs radically from the Stern report because he discounts all future costs to their current value. While the methods used are impressive, the reasoning has serious flaws. First, Nordhaus applies an extremely long perspective, discounting damage costs more than three generations down the line, arguing that it is unreasonable for our generation to carry a heavier burden than our children and grandchildren. Second, he builds on the assumption that the global temperature will not rise more than 3 degrees from the 1900 level. Higher temperatures would lead to damage of incalculable proportions, as the Greenland ice sheet might melt. Third, he assumes that the costs of climate change are evenly distributed among the world’s countries. In view of these flaws, I think Stern’s ethical argument against discounting stands. Nordhaus does, however, take the threat from climate change seriously and argues strongly that governments must impose a carbon price.

Stein Tønnesson

Pollack, Sheldon D (2009) *War, Revenue, and State Building: Financing the Development of the American*

State. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. vii + 328 pp. ISBN 9780801475863.

The central aim of this book is to explain how the US state transformed itself from a weak, decentralized confederacy into a global superpower through revisions in its system of public finance. The author draws heavily on existing theories of state development grounded in the fiscal sociology tradition (by Charles Tilly and Margaret Levi, for example) in the search for mechanisms that prompt changes in state revenue strategies. Unsurprisingly, the author concludes that the primary mechanism that drove changes in the US system of public finance was war and, to a lesser extent, the requirements of the expanding social welfare state. Much of the book is devoted to a review of the literature on European state development and early US political development that offers little in the way of novel interpretation or empirical findings. The chapters devoted to the analysis of the US case are surprisingly thin, especially so with regard to World Wars I and II. Readers steeped in the literatures addressed by the book will find little in the way of new theoretical or empirical knowledge about statebuilding; however, this book would be a very accessible introduction to the topic for undergraduates.

Cameron G Thies

Saideman, Steven M & R William Ayres (2008) *For Kin or Country: Xenophobia, Nationalism, and War*. New York: Columbia University Press. 288 pp. ISBN 9780231144780.

This book takes a more comprehensive view of irredentism. The authors look beyond cases where territorial control is challenged and also consider instances where theories lead us to expect irredentism yet actors choose other strategies. While doomsayers predicted extensive conflict between Hungary and neighboring states with large Hungarian populations after the Cold War, the Hungarian government has shown remarkable constraint. Two popular alternatives to account for variation in irredentism include the restraining role of conditional international organizations, notably the European Union, and that irredentist claims will only be pursued against weaker states. The authors argue that the importance of both accounts has been overstated. The first is often invoked to explain peaceful outcomes such as Hungary, but proponents lack a good explanation as to why the Croats and the Serbs were not restrained. As to the second, Russia is vastly more powerful than states in its 'near abroad' with significant Russian populations, yet has not pursued irredentist claims. The authors hold that irredentism must be understood relative to the incentives of politicians, and domestic factors primarily determine whether it is beneficial for politicians to pursue irredentist claims or other domestic strategies. The authors reach the counterintuitive conclusion that xenophobia can be a force for peace as intolerant groups are unlikely to favor annexing territory connecting significant numbers of 'aliens' to the home territory. This book provides an excellent review of propositions on irredentism

and demonstrates the advantages of a stringent research design to organize case studies. However, I missed a more systematic discussion of alternatives to irredentism, such as support for breakaway units, highly relevant for the future of Kosovo and secessionist states in the Caucasus.

Kristian Skrede Gleditsch

Tønnesson, Stein (2010) *Vietnam 1946: How the War Began*. Berkeley: University of California Press. 361 pp. ISBN 9780520256026.

Stein Tønnesson's study is more thorough than any previous one on the topic of the 1945–46 turning point during the first Indochina War. Tønnesson very convincingly demonstrates that the 6 March 1946 agreements signed by Ho Chi Minh and Jean Sainteny were not the result of deliberate peace feelings of French moderates, but that they were imposed by China's Nationalist Government, led by Chiang Kai-shek, and Chinese North Vietnam occupying forces, on both Vietminh and French authorities in Saigon. The latter were mostly preoccupied with saving time before launching operation Bentré, a military invasion aimed at expelling the DRV Government and reoccupying North Vietnam. Furthermore, Tønnesson argues that the famous attack of 19 December 1946, which marks the official beginning of the war, might have been – he leaves the question open – the consequence of a deliberate French strategy, if not a trap, and not the result of a calculated attack by the DRV. Thanks to a careful analysis of new Western archival materials, Tønnesson goes further, restoring a welcome sense of contingency. He shows that, rather ironically, one of the main missed opportunities to avoid the war took place precisely in December 1946: deliberately or not, Giap fell into the trap set by French authorities in Indochina, although the new socialist government in Paris seemed sincerely committed to peace. Tønnesson's book fits well into the rich French historiography on the topic. However, a global history of political, diplomatic, military and economic aspects of the years 1945–46 is still missing. The evolution of General Leclerc's mindset and role, in particular, still deserves delving into, not to mention the Vietnamese side. Tønnesson's groundbreaking study is a wonderful invitation for scholars to realize this wish.

Pierre Journoud

Weiss, Thomas G & Ramesh Thakur, foreword by John Gerard Ruggie (2010) *Global Governance and the UN: An Unfinished Journey*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 420 pp. ISBN 9780253221674.

Ten years back, the ambitious United Nations Intellectual History Project (UNIHP) was launched as an independent research effort looking comprehensively into what ideational and normative contributions the UN has made to economic and social development. At the time, this was a much