Ali Bilgic, *Rethinking Security in the Age of Migration: Trust and Emancipation*  

Reviewed by Can E. Mutlu  
Bilkent University, Ankara

There is a human drama of unimaginable proportions taking place at the external borders of the European Union (EU). In two separate incidents in October 2013 alone, approximately 400 irregular migrants drowned in the Mediterranean Sea while trying to make their way to EU territory. These deaths – near the island of Lampedusa, the southernmost point of Italy near the Tunisian and Libyan shoreline – are not an exception to the norm. According to the NGO ‘UNITED for Intercultural Action’, there were at least 17 incidents with double-digit casualties in 2012 alone (UNITED 2012). Whether we look at Lampedusa, the Spanish enclaves in Morocco (Ceuta and Melilla), or the Greek-Turkish border crossing over the river Evros, the effects of Europeanised border security policies and practices are felt the most by vulnerable irregular migrants trying to find a better life in the EU.

Ali Bilgic’s book ‘Rethinking Security in the Age of Migration: Trust and Emancipation’ provides a timely and much needed re-assessment of the policies and practices that cause such suffering and pain for irregular migrants and their families. The implicit assumption of this book is that ‘irregular’ migration is not an externality of contemporary socio-political inequalities, but rather a major part of world politics that cannot simply be ignored or pushed towards illegality. According to Bilgic, to solve this issue EU officials need fundamentally to ‘rethink the concept of security’ in such a way that rights and freedoms associated with ‘security’ become accessible and available not only to the state and its citizens, but also to irregular migrants that traditionally struggle to gain access to rights and services. Bilgic argues that policy practitioners and European publics need to rethink what they mean and understand by security in the age of migration. In other words, the clearly stated aim of the book is to demonstrate the possibility of a socio-political imaginary perspective where security is not just for those who are entitled to ‘speak security’, but also for those who experience and feel the effects of security practices. This is an admirable objective.

Compared to other scholarship on the EU’s migration policies, such a clearly stated vision of the political is refreshing within a sea of sterile contributions with very limited engagement with the political.

In his book, Bilgic is informed by the emancipatory approaches that are often associated with the ‘Aberystwyth School of Critical Security Studies.’ The emancipatory approaches, informed by the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory and originally articulated by scholars Ken Booth and Richard Wyn Jones, focus on the positive
aspects of security, according to which security as a concept is seen as a ‘necessary condition for the collective enjoyment of rights and freedoms in a peaceful way.’ Security, in this way, is a condition for the collective emancipation and collective betterment of the human condition. According to Bilgic, this interpretation differs from the main currents within the critical approaches to security. He argues that the Schmittian interpretation of politics and security that informs securitisation theory takes security “in negative terms; as something to be avoided, something belonging solely to the states and institutions, tasked by states to produce security” (Bilgic 2013: 6). While Bilgic is right to highlight these differences between approaches within security studies, his clearly entrenched position within ‘the Aberystwyth School’ undermines the potential of his argument. While the book makes important empirical points through a rich and productive theoretical lens, frequent digressions to demonstrate why the emancipatory approaches are better at ‘being critical’ of present-day security practices when compared to other approaches within the broader critical security studies literature become taxing for the reader.

To Bilgic’s credit, for the most part it is clear that securitisation practices and risk logics have found a receptive audience among the policy elite in the EU. Looking particularly at the field of irregular migration, the so-called ‘securocrats’ of the European Commission’s Directorate General (DG) HOME, and bureaucracies associated with more specialised agencies such as FRONTEX, EURODAC, or EUROPOL, function within a ‘field’ that has internalised security and risk logics as well as corresponding state-centric interpretation of security. The contemporary politics behind the securitisation of migration focuses on differences, operating on the differentiation between territorially defined citizenship regimes versus a mobile ‘other’ that continuously tries to traverse borders, fences, or walls. This is the politics against which Bilgic is making a righteous stand. On this point, Bilgic’s intervention is most timely and important. Rather than engaging with versions of securitisation and risk theories to demonstrate this point, Bilgic could have pursued a more positive and direct tone of engagement with policy practices that undermine the security of irregular migrants and receiving communities, while side-stepping theoretical debates within critical security studies that are not accessible to a wider audience. With thousands of people perishing on their way towards the EU, Bilgic is absolutely correct to argue that the EU institutions and bureaucracies must fundamentally change the way they conceptualise security. In particular, DG HOME must re-visit the practices of FRONTEX and the trend towards establishing a ‘Fortress Europe.’ Furthermore, Bilgic demonstrates through a series of direct quotations and empirical data that there is a strong basis for his claims on ‘trust-learning’ and its significance for security as emancipation.

Bilgic’s engagement with the literature on trust in relation to emancipation makes this book a must-read for any security studies scholar. The use of the concept of trust, and in particular, ‘trust-learning,’ provides a novel way of demonstrating how irregular migrants, receiving communities, and policy elites can come together and learn to trust each other, over time creating the necessary conditions of possibility for an emancipatory approach to security. As such, Bilgic provides trust-learning as a solution to the pressing insecurity dilemma facing those affected by irregular migration, migrants, communities, and bureaucracies alike.

Ali Bilgic’s book ‘Rethinking Security in the Age of Migration: Trust and Emancipation’ is empirically rich and theoretically thought-provoking. It provides an ex-
cellent combination of migrants’ experiences and bureaucratic practices, often jux-
taposing state practices and their effects on migrants in such a way that highlights
the pressing need to rethink our conceptualisation of security. Like many academic
books, the hardcover price of £80.00 makes it a difficult sell for students and profes-
sors alike. This is, however, one book that graduate students, professors, and prac-
titioners of migration studies and security studies should make room for in their
personal libraries.
Arab elites that bound and tie, despite everything

‘Everything is bound and tied’ or ‘this is about to collapse’? These two street-level political diagnoses that sound so familiar to any observer of the Arab countries are only mutually exclusive in appearance.

The avalanche of events that has shaken the region over the past three years, with the popular uprisings of the so-called Arab Spring and subsequent violent or authoritarian backlashes, has shown that sticking to just one of these assumptions is definitely misleading. Embracing the paradox becomes unavoidable.

Originally published in 2009, when nobody even imagined such a galvanic and puzzling regional scenario, the collected volume *Poder y regímenes en el mundo árabe contemporáneo*, edited by Ferran Izquierdo Brichs, mainly delves into the bound-and-tied perspective. It actually builds on the literature on stubborn authoritarianism which reacted against the problematic wishful-thinking attempts to extend democratisation and transitology approaches to the Middle Eastern and North African states in the 1990s. Not only does it emphasise how “authoritarian Arab regimes and their elites have developed a great capacity for survival and stability” (p. 13), but it also overtly gives a “pessimistic” view of the “population’s vitality as an actor in the Arab world” (p. 35).

At first sight, this could cast doubt on the validity of the analyses presented here from today’s post-Arab Spring perspective. Yet unmistakably, beyond delusions, what stands out is that no political tabula rasa has been achieved anywhere in the region since 2011, even in states which have witnessed proper revolutionary processes. No matter whether governments and regimes rise or fall, elites remain largely the same in each country. How else can we explain counter-revolutionary dynamics such as the military coup that took place in July 2013 in Egypt, if it is not because of the persisting duality between the former agents and allies of the regime of Hosni Mubarak, who have kept the reins of much of the state apparatus in their hands, and a Muslim Brotherhood which controlled many ideological-religious power resources for decades, as argued in chapter 5 (pp. 182 and 204). On the other hand, it must be acknowledged that, even if the focus is on authoritarian stability, the stated aim of the book is to “analyse the causes of this standstill, but also the forces that try to transform it” (p. 14).
This being said, the main contribution of this book to the comparative politics literature on the Arab countries lies in its attempt to systematise the examination of nine heterogeneous case studies (Algeria, Morocco, Mauritania, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and Jordan) by applying a common analytical framework which is developed in chapter 1. The need for this uniform treatment is justified as an antidote against any kind of culturalist, essentialist or orientalist temptation to inflate the inalienable specificities of this region – and one might add, also the alleged ‘national exceptions’ constructed by political discourses in different states. As simply put by the late Fred Halliday in his comment on Saudi Arabia, the goal should be to interrogate these cases as ‘normal’, ‘“normal” here meaning that we can ask the same questions we ask about other countries’ (p. 262).

The content and structure shared by the nine case studies begins with an identification and classification of the elites of each country (divided into primary and secondary, as well as political, bureaucratic, economic, religious…), which is connected to the historical processes in which they originated or were empowered. This is followed by a thorough analysis of, on the one hand, the power resources controlled by each of these elites (state, capital, relations with the population, ideology and coercive mechanisms) and, on the other hand, the phenomena of protest, opposition and resistance that they also face. After examining the relations of competition and alliance between the incumbent elites as well as their foreign connections, the chapters conclude with a global appraisal of the resulting structure of the power system and, in some cases, even future scenarios. Each of them is complemented by a briefer and freer comment by a well-recognised expert on the same country.

The theoretical proposition underpinning the analyses throughout the volume, dubbed as ‘sociology of power’, conveys a certain Marxist and structuralist aftertaste – not least when it insists on the tensions provoked first by European colonialism and later globalised capitalism in the Arab countries. The three elements upon which it is based – actors, power resources and structure of the system – allow us to take a balanced stand with regard to the agency – structure debate, advocating their co-determination: “Actors continuously produce and reproduce the characteristics of a society, but … their activity does not always evolve within the conditions they have chosen. Actors’ decisions are not fully determined by structure, but nor are they always taken within a framework that the actors fully control” (p. 48).

In the section on actors, which starts from the distinction between ‘elites’ and ‘population’, the definition of the former might have benefited from a more elaborated literature review and theoretical grounding (conversely, the strongest part is the empirical substantiation and examples). Classical dichotomous conceptual models that sharply opposed elite to non-elite or masses, like those of the first wave of elite theorists (Vilfredo Pareto), have been played down from the 1950s with the introduction of the idea of ‘intermediating elites’. Even though Izquierdo’s framework includes the analogous concept of ‘secondary elites’ to reflect some hierarchy or subordination, the boundary between elites and population remains too rigid. The question is whether the population as such can be properly considered as a political actor (p. 31), and whether the “avant-garde groups” (p. 33) that usually lead its mobilisations are not in fact elites of a different (not necessarily negative) kind.

The same goes for the contrast between the elites’ competition for differential accumulation of power or circular power relations, and the population’s linear power relations, just aiming at achieving some concrete goals: “When the population does succeed in mobilising itself, it generates a very different power relation to that of the elites’ internal competition” (p. 23). Can we automatically label as ‘linear mobilisations’, for example, the localised and low-intensity protests taking place on a daily basis in Algeria (p. 76), which are said by many observers to contribute above all to the reproduction of the system?

Of course, this discussion does not detract from the value of what is indeed a substantial contribution to the understanding of political systems and processes in the Middle East and North Africa, before and after 2011, precisely because of the editor’s success in providing a constraining analytical framework and persuading the rest of the authors to engage with it in their chapters. It can be particularly useful as an introductory reading or textbook for advanced-level students, as well as a critical guide for critical practitioners, either in its entirety or divided into individual chapters. It should also be underlined that, in spite of coming from the periphery of an increasingly (and harmfully) stratified European academic system, it has since been published in English by Routledge (Political Regimes in the Arab World: Society and the Exercise of Power, 2013) in order to make it accessible for wider audiences.
This book, edited by Fernando Carrion and Johanna Espin, two researchers from FLACSO Ecuador (Quito), highlights an area often forgotten in politics as well as policy analysis, that of borders.

Compiling thirteen chapters, the authors’ objective is to provide basic knowledge and understanding of the ‘everyday reality of border populations’. Remote from centres and capitals, border realities are often stigmatised or opaque. Enriched by intense exchanges, human and material flows, interpersonal relations, these two researchers from FLACSO present papers given to a research seminar on ‘Citizen Security in border areas’. These include a focus on the north-Ecuadorian border that is still the scene of important levels of violence. The book is structured into two main parts, the first one is a detailed presentation of the Ecuadorian case, alternating theoretical and empirical approaches. The second part is devoted to wide consideration of Latin American cases of border violence.

The first part focuses mainly on a data presentation of the violence issue in the different border areas of Ecuador. Here the authors analyse the causes and manifestations of different types of violence in the border regions and their impact on the security governance system at the border. In Ecuador, we acknowledge that border regions are remarkably varied in geographical terms with mountain areas (Andes), forest areas (Amazonia) and sea (Pacific coast). In parallel, the empirical observations made by the authors are that the violence expressed in those territories is also heterogeneous as shown by the very detailed homicide rates in the provinces of Sucumbios, Carchi and Esmeralda. The study supports recent statistics and shows that even if the violence increases in all border areas, the northern border (with Colombia) remains the most affected.

These border regions are experiencing high rates of violence but how could we explain this distinction from the rest of the country? In a more theoretical perspective, the authors claim that the border areas are sui generis social spaces that create horizontal types of social, economic and political relations. Interpersonal relationships and trust networks are predominant. As a consequence, these areas can become areas of ‘de-democratisation’ where we observe phenomena of political (and social) exclusion and weakened citizenship. In addition, the political behaviour of local elites entrenched in the territories contribute to isolate these areas from governmental public policy. Thus, these elites play a segregationist role towards border popula-
tions and contribute – by taking more autonomy – to spread a nationalistic message that fosters even more exclusion and precariousness. In these ‘parallel’ spaces of sovereignty and national citizenship, informality and violence can be expressed freely. As a defined social space, the violence that spreads there also becomes specific according to the authors. This violence is also *sui generis* and may be termed as ‘border violence’. This particular type is characteristic of an endogenous and self-driven dynamic of violence. Facing criminal acts, new actors of violence appear and this violence implies the emergence of new political authorities. This border violence has finally become a system.

Conceptual foundations laid in the first part are then tested on other cases such as the United States-Mexico border, the ‘Central American port areas’, the border regions of Brazil and the Colombian-Venezuelan and Colombian-Ecuadorian borders.

Regarding the first case, the United States-Mexico border, asymmetries - mainly economic – serve as traditional explanation for the ‘intensity’ of this border area. Beyond migration, informal activities and insecurity, the author introduces the idea of ‘complementarity’ border interactions (alcohol consumption, drug supply) based on a balance between supply and demand. However, this configuration has a negative impact on institutions by breaking legal order through police corruption or disenagement of judicial institutions giving way to increasing violence.

Extending this reflexion, Vincenzo Castelli discusses similar phenomena of micro-criminality in a place of exchange and ‘strategic socialisation’: the Central American port areas. Taking into consideration six case studies: Puerte Barrios (Guatemala), La Union (El Salvador), Corinto (Nicaragua), Limon (Costa Rica), Cortes (Honduras), Colon (Panama), the author finds that these ‘border port cities’ are ‘double-sided’ territories, embodying the opportunity for development and at the same time a profound social discontent of the population, especially among the youth.

Brazil is not immune to these phenomena. Indeed, border regions represent 20% of the territory and nearly 15,700 km. This chapter questions the growth of corruption in the border area. This issue may be explained by the distance from the central government, the global economy duality (legal/illegal) or the structural reality of Brazil. In this chapter, the added value is the consideration of historical temporality to understand border realities. Fernando Salla, Marcos César Alvares, Paula R. Ballesteros argue that the separation between modern bureaucratic and administrative centres and the traditional populations who mostly remained at the margins of the modern construction of the state largely explains the uniqueness of this space. They stressed that the politico-administrative building of border territories involves the emergence of new local elites, new conflicts for resource acquisition and a new management of inequalities. As such, the border is not only a geographical space but also a civilisational one between central institutions and the traditions of indigenous local peoples. If borders are characterised by their fluidity, they also emphasise that these spaces remote from borders are shelters for dissidents’ groups that ease their insertion into the informal economy.

The two chapters on the Colombian-Venezuelan and Colombian-Ecuadorian borders use a different analytical approach. The analysis here is no longer oriented towards a micro dimension but adopts a look at meso and macro level politics (high politics). In fact, Ana Marleny Bustamante considers that the border realities are here defined by the existing bilateral relations of States and in particular the nature of the
relations between the Heads of State. Foreign policy decisions or macroeconomic policies have a direct impact on the daily reality of border areas. Moreover, considering the existing political styles in the countries under scrutiny in these chapters (Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador), the border areas can only be managed (and crises resolved) by the intervention of the central government. Socorro Ramirez mainly supports this finding in her chapter on the Colombian-Ecuadorian border that highlights the necessity of normalised diplomatic relations in order that border regions may become spaces of economic and social development.

This book edited by Fernando Carrion and Johanna Espin provides the reader with impressive empirical work. Despite this added value we may regret two imbalances. First, we underline maladjustment in the treatment of cases. Indeed, the data supplied for Ecuador have no equivalent in the rest of the book. Second, we can criticise an imbalance between theory and empiricism. The superficial conceptualisation is nevertheless fully assumed by the authors when they say: “analysis from academic centres is undoubtedly very important, but more important is the direct and concrete knowledge of the field and the prevailing situation in the border area” (p.61) [reviewer’s translation]. However, singling out one type of violence in an area considered *sui generis* deserves a more thorough development, including the expression of symbolic violence (exclusion, marginalisation of populations, informalisation) and not only phenomena of physical violence, a non explicit choice made by the authors.

Many interesting issues are addressed in the book, such as rampant informality or marginalisation in border areas. Some authors also tackle the underlying problems of a more sociological dimension such as family disintegration and population mobility. Even if these main phenomena are evoked, it is regrettable that the authors do not offer a deeper treatment from an empirical point of view and do not deepen the possible correlations between the social, economic and political dynamics and the issue of security and violence in the border areas.

Moreover, the authors have presented singularities without taking methodological precautions, especially in selecting negative cases to present a proper comparison, which could have accentuated even more these singularities. If we can criticise a methodological weakness, what is more damaging is that many of the phenomena presented are ultimately quite similar to other parts of national territories, be they urban or rural. In this respect, the authors have failed to use the evidence of a territorial singularity in order to enrich the border violence reality.

We can also stress a lack of a dialogue between chapters, mainly in the second part of the book. Not only the formal dimension is affected (with many repetitions), but it also leaves some frustration on the substance. Indeed, some complementarities could have been managed between chapters, particularly those with more micro analysis (bottom-up) and those offering a rather meso or macro approach (addressing external policies – top-down).

In conclusion, despite these few weaknesses, this book provides an undeniable effort of illuminating an unknown reality and marks a real progress of knowledge about border areas in the countries under study. The work is all the more valuable in that it fits itself in those areas marked by a rampant informality where access to data is very limited. With all the empirical materials offered by the authors, it is obvious that it opens a window towards future research programmes and analysis.

Reviewed by Roger Mac Ginty
University of Manchester

In recent years the critique of the liberal peace has itself been subject to critique. Some of this critique has come from realist and neo-realist authors who are sceptical about the ‘sociological’ turn in International Relations that has sought to emphasise the perspective of bottom-up, local and non-state actors and processes. According to this view, the state and geo-strategic worldviews cannot be easily dismissed. Some of this material seems to be based on a nostalgia for MacKinder and seems oblivious to the transnationalism that explains much of our world. A more serious critique, however, has emerged from post-colonialist and Marxist scholars who argue, variously, that critics of the liberal peace are unable to escape from their own liberalism, and are reliant on essentially ethnocentric binaries that rest on a distinction between the local and the international. In this perspective, many critics of the liberal peace are merely advocating a liberal peace with a lighter footprint. They are implicated in the power relations and biases that they wish to criticise.

Consistently the most serious challenger of the critique of the liberal peace has been David Chandler. Chandler was actually one of the founders of the critique, especially with his path-breaking dissection of the ‘faked’ democracy of post-Dayton Bosnia. Since then, however, his work has become more theoretically directed and is no stranger to a few Jesuitical somersaults in an attempt to escape from anything that might be seen as fellow travelling with a fashionable academic turn. Freedom vs Necessity in International Relations is a challenging and rewarding read that confronts orthodox and uncritical notions of freedom and its role in the justification of systems of governance and international intervention. The book takes, as its starting point, the observation that the notion of freedom has been turned into a central motif for international intervention (and in fact the organisation of many Western states). Interventions are staged to ‘free’ people from tyranny, to give girls the freedom to go to school, and to give people basic choices about their own destiny. This is a human-centred approach that makes the individual, rather than the state or the international system, the principal referent. The practice of international relations, in this view, is at the service of people and motivated to protect and enlarge their ambit of freedom. These narratives are familiar to us at the local, national and international levels, as governments seek to justify their actions in terms of the ‘resilience’ and good sense of people. Such thinking lies at the centre of liberal political thought: empower people and they will act rationally in ordering their own society and in managing relations between societies.
Chandler’s argument is that these oft-used narratives are a façade. Rather than empowering and progressive, he sees the human-centred approach as a sham. It has been used, in his argument, to present humans, our freedoms and our choices as the problem in International Relations. Once ‘given’ our rights by states, we are then cautioned that this very freedom is a problem: “Our freedom is, in fact, becoming the central problematic around which understandings of practices of governance are placed” (p. 3). The book is a sophisticated reworking of the age-old dilemmas between freedoms and order, and takes the debates to new places. It sees itself as “a radical challenge to our human-centred and agent-centred understandings of the world” and there is some merit in this description (p. 21).

The book develops the theme that governments have convinced us that we need protection from ourselves. We have become implicated in the restriction of our own freedoms and those of others. We see ourselves as “the problem” (p. 24). In a somewhat Fukuyama-like phrase Chandler declares this ‘the end of liberalism’, the reversal of progressive trends that have been continuing since the Enlightenment. The book develops this theme over seven chapters and takes us through bio-political understandings of the human, the re-casting of resilience as a system of control, and the decline of structured understandings of the world.

There is much about this densely argued book that is convincing. In the spirit of a robust review, this reviewer will make two points. The first is that the argument, once made, does not seem to go anywhere. It is thoughtfully and logically constructed, but once presented it stalls. This reviewer does not expect scholar-activism or a charter to rid the world of all of its evils and to take back liberty. But there was an opportunity to construct a conceptual framework that could be used by others in the dissection of the post-modern agent-centred world. How do we use this notion of the post-liberal subject (if we accept it)? It is left to us to fill in the blanks – and there are quite a few. It would have been useful, for example, to construct some sort of loose typology of post-liberal subjects in order better to illustrate how the process occurs, and how it might differ between eras and regimes. Are we all equally rendered post-liberal, or does it affect some more than others? Are there strategies of resistance that post-liberal subjects can use to maximise their agency? Is there an inevitability about the ‘bait and switch’ that is foisted upon people?

The second point to make is that the book is strangely a-historical. Clearly there was no precise moment when liberalism was stripped of its freedom-giving aspirations and replaced with the shackles of post-liberalism. This was a complex and long-term process. But a fundamental question arises: was liberalism ever as generous as David Chandler implies? He is too sophisticated a thinker to point to a ‘golden era’ in times past, but there is a real sense that liberalism and interpretations of freedom have been eroded from optimistic aspiration to pessimistic agenda of control and fear. Looking over the sweep of more than two hundred years of liberal political thought one cannot help but wonder about the historical instrumentalisation of liberalism. It is almost as though the traditional role of liberalism were as an artifice to be used by the rulers of the day. It has always been subject to the contingencies of power and context. One is reminded of Quentin Skinner’s observation that ideas have no intrinsic meaning – there is merely context and interpretation. So one is left wondering what is novel about this argument? The subjugation of liberalism seems to be the latest iteration of a process in which freedom is smelted down and recast in a way that suits the contemporary Zeitgeist.
We can chart the modern history of liberalism by listing a series of milestones relating to emancipation, suffrage and the lifting of egregious forms of discrimination. But alongside this optimistic history of ‘progress’, there are also many other stories of colonialism, war, humiliation and degradation. These processes occurred at times when people were told they were free, or entitled to more freedoms. So what is so radically different about then and now? Back then peoples’ enthusiasm for freedom was curbed by a range of stratagems ultimately aimed at control and discipline. We have always lived in a ‘jam tomorrow’ world in which sacrifices have to be made for the greater (future) good. Moreover, governments have always been clever in enjoining us to police ourselves. Nationalists in particular have had immense success in persuading people to accept singular identities and to subjugate their plural identities for a war effort. All colonial and occupation enterprises have managed to persuade a cohort of locals that colonialism and occupation is in their best interest. Colonisers are the ultimate cuckoos.

So notions of freedom and liberty have always been subject to manipulation. What is new now?
Academic publications dealing with events that have unfolded in Arab countries since late 2010 have become plethoric. Analysis of popular uprisings, revolutionary processes and political transitions in the Arab world has almost instantly become a sub-discipline of its own. Publishers have been quick to react to the frenzy, somehow feeling that volumes dealing with these issues could easily become best-sellers. Some have and, often following a ‘first come, first served’ basis, reactive authors like Jean-Pierre Filiu1, Gilbert Achcar2 and Mark Lynch3, directly contributed to public and academic debate and comprehension. Other collective volumes, fostered fascinating discussion on mobilisation theory and social movements4.

In such a context, the task of finding immediate added value to The Arab Spring and the Arab Thaw is not self-evident. The editor, John Davis, tries to highlight the volume’s contribution in the short introduction to the book both by summarising what has already been written (in particular on issues of labelling the ‘Arab Spring’) and by trying to frame the unfolding processes with innovative theory. The new concept ‘Arab thaw’ as forged by John Davis, does not appear as particularly groundbreaking or even useful as it adds yet another label to an already long list. Theory, building on Kenneth Waltz’ levels of analysis approach, is meant to be the ‘glue’ that brings coherence to the ten separate chapters and sets this volume apart from other contributions. This ambition unfortunately appears as rather artificial, in particular because some of the chapters have already been published elsewhere and consequently cannot be considered to have adopted the methodology that is advocated. This type of retrospective coherence-building is shared by many edited volumes and by no means implies that the case-studies presented here are not individually worthy of interest. Beyond this limit, the collection of chapters is an interesting one that focuses on a variety of issues that are generally very relevant.

Kenneth Waltz’ theory, as presented in his seminal book Man, the State and War published in 1959, is the rationale behind the way chapters are ordered. The first section focuses on Arab societies themselves and on the revolts, while the second

section looks at the international system and global actors. The focus of the volume being very broad, the progression of the general argument (from gender issues to country case-studies, and then from regional organisations to United States foreign policy) does not appear as necessarily coherent, and yet again, is somewhat artificial.

Discussion in the first chapter on the effects of the 2011 revolutions on gender issues is promising. Laura Sjoberg and Jonathon Whooley intend to evaluate ‘the Arab Spring for women’ through the way dominant Western media (in addition to al-Jazeera in English) have accounted for the capacity of the Arab revolutionary processes to liberate women or on the contrary to constrain them further. Focus on representations can be relevant and the authors analyse an interesting debate that highlights the medias’ difficulty actually to make sense of complex events and processes. The critique of the biases introduced by media accounts which generally consider women’s liberation as a barometer to measure progress towards the ideal of a so-called Western, liberal democracy is convincing. Limiting oneself to representations and narratives and specifically to representations in the western media is however not completely satisfactory. First of all, it overlooks actual effects of the processes themselves and refuses to take a stance, be it one that is only tentative. Then, it omits a large segment of the media production, that of papers and websites in the Arab world itself. These are likely to be meaningful and to have a significant influence on the way actors of the revolutionary uprisings behave and the way they frame events. Readers would probably have preferred more data built on field work rather than yet another critique of so-called ‘Orientalist’ discourses, which most academics now consider as a given and in its own way has become dominant and mainstream. What we, as academics working on the Middle East and North Africa region (MENA), are currently desperately in need of is first hand accounts, fresh and updated data retrieved through field work that functions as a necessary input for all of us to test our hypothesis.

In this sense, the four following chapters are welcome contributions. Case-studies focusing on Yemen, Libya, Syria and Egypt are interesting and have evident added-value, in particular because the first two deal with countries that generally receive little coverage. Ahmad Ali Al-Ahsab’s chapter on Yemen builds precisely on direct experience of the uprisings. The main sit-in of the opposition to Ali Abdullah Saleh occurred right under the windows of his offices in Sanaa University. Questioning the particularities of the Yemeni version of the ‘Arab Spring’ is appealing and the statements made are rather convincing when they analyse the structure of tribal alliances and state power. One probably needs knowledge of Yemeni politics and history to fully understand and assess the author’s analysis.

Chapters on Libya, Syria and Egypt are less analytical and focus on the chronology of events and how the popular revolts in these countries have evolved since early 2011. Such a straightforward approach allows the authors to develop interesting narratives that give food for thought but that are at risk of being rapidly outdated by what is happening on the field. This is particularly the case of chapters on Egypt and Syria where events have dramatically changed the situation since the book was published.

The second part of the book dealing with ‘Regional and non-regional institutional involvement, American Perspectives and Winners and Losers’ (quite a programme!) opens up with a discussion of the role of the Gulf Cooperation Council’s tackling of the Arab Spring. A lot has been said regarding the way in which the six
Gulf monarchies, in particular Saudi Arabia, have engaged in ‘counter-revolutionary’ actions. However, a lot has yet to be written. Sylvia Colombo’s chapter, without making groundbreaking statements or using original material, is a good summary of where debates rested in early 2012 when a first version of this chapter was published by the Italian think-tank Istituto Affari Internazionali. Focus on ‘The Arab League and the Arab Uprisings’ by Bruce Maddy-Weitzman in the seventh chapter is also a broad summary-like chapter. David Jervis’ contribution on the European Union appears as more detailed, informative and consequently more interesting. The author rightly suggests that the term Europe “can refer to the actions of individual European countries and/or the actions of multilateral bodies such as the European Union” (p.193). However, one would have appreciated seeing this distinction put into effect throughout the chapter. The European Union, as an institution is seen as a ‘black box’ and internal debates and possible inconsistencies are ignored. Specific policies and experiences of EU delegations in the various case-studies covered, or of bureaucracies and institutions, are for instance overlooked and the focus is put on alleged national interests and history. This state-centred bias, consistent with ‘realist theory’, limits much of the discussion and does not help to analyse the nuances and complexities of public policies. While the European parliament has been particularly active in defending democracy and in building relations with civil society actors of the Arab world, it is in no way integrated in the analysis. Some projects like the Union for the Mediterranean, pushed forward by French president Nicolas Sarkozy prior to the Arab Spring, were hardly consistent with what other branches of what is labelled ‘EU’ were doing. Such diversity is fundamental to understand the weakness, but also possibly one of the strengths, of the EU in matters of foreign policy.

John Davis, editor of the book, in chapters nine and ten focuses on the Obama administration’s response to the crisis in the Arab world and finally evaluates which actors, at the international and local levels, benefited or not from the uprisings. It is not surprising that these two last chapters are the most consistent with the initial theoretical ambition of the volume. They also try to make sense of the distinction that the author makes between ‘Arab Spring’ and ‘Arab Thaw’, the latter describing a long term process eventually leading to democracy. Such a depiction of the dynamics at play is probably simplistic and the chapter on American foreign policy falls short of analysing many of the relevant variables (civil and military aid to Arab governments being one of them) and their effects on the field.

Unfortunately, these chapters are too broad and also quite often forward-looking. With situations evolving rapidly and authoritarianism appearing to be resilient in many places (Egypt being the most evident), such an approach takes the risk of becoming quickly outdated. At the time of publication paragraphs on Egypt’s elected president Muhammad Morsi’s internal and foreign policy dilemmas already appeared to have lost relevance (p. 237). Moreover, certain statements would hardly be endorsed by specialists. Few would indeed agree with the fact “Yemen represents the area where [American] administration policy had the most success (p. 238)”. Drone strike policies have been considered by most analysts as counter-productive and have greatly enhanced al-Qaida’s popularity in certain regions of the country\(^5\). The chapter on winners and losers, nevertheless offers a sensible (although with a clear anti-Obama political agenda) still-photograph of where the different actors (al-
Qaida, Hamas, Arab states, the United States, and the like) stood in mid-2013. There is certain added value to it as it allows the reader to measure just how quickly things evolve in the region and just how necessary it is to continue studying politics in the Arab world.
Bastien Irondelle, La réforme des armées en France. Sociologie de la décision

The reform of the French armed forces: the sociology of decision-making

Reviewed by Christian Olsson
Université Libre de Bruxelles

French defence policy faced a paradox at the end of the Cold War. While formally in the camp of the ‘victors’ of the political-military tug-of-war between ‘East’ and ‘West’, decision-makers realised that not only had the French nuclear arsenal lost its centrality in maintaining the international rank of France, but also the armed forces’ weaponry, savoir-faire and internal structure were relatively outdated and unsuited to its contemporary overseas operations. Ultimately, the country seemed to lose the privileged position it had enjoyed within the Western bloc during the Cold War.

It is in this context, in the beginning of the 1990s, that the debate on the reform of the military draft-system, which lies at the heart of Irondelle’s book, appeared as a way of modernising the armed forces while simultaneously limiting the overall defence budget. The aim, amongst others, was to reduce the defence apparatus, to increase the proportion of professional soldiers and to diminish the share of the defence budget attributed to personnel to the benefit of purchases of military equipment.

The author shows that, in part due to the historical importance of conscription for French national identity, citizenship and ‘territorial defence’, the debate however petered out during Mitterrand’s last years to give rise to a relative consensus on the necessity of somehow maintaining national conscription within a so-called ‘mixed army’ model, that is, a model that combines a highly professionalised and skilled force for the purpose of overseas military operations while keeping a role for a selective military (and to a lesser extent civilian) conscription. This consensus was, however, unexpectedly shattered by President Jacques Chirac when he decided in 1996, less than one year into his first term, fully to professionalise the armed forces.

* This review is being published after the very premature death of Bastien Irondelle at the age of 40 following a short battle with cancer. A brilliant student (this book is the result of his doctoral thesis written at Sciences Po under the supervision of Samy Cohen), and a first class researcher, Bastien Irondelle became a professor at CERI. He made his mark as a specialist on the security and defence policy of the EU. He was instrumental in forging many links between French and European researchers, particularly with those in Britain after a year spent in Oxford. His work remains an example for all those researchers and students who met him and loved him.

The autonomy of the political sphere in the realm of defence policies

The question dealt with by Bastien Irondelle is how Chirac managed to overturn the consensus and to impose this decision in spite of it being initially opposed by virtually every stakeholder of the reform. The author shows that the decision to discard compulsory military service is not reducible to a mere adaptation of the military apparatus to international constraints or to the outcome of inter-bureaucratic struggles and bargaining. On the contrary, he emphasises the autonomy of the political sphere by analysing how the executive branch could impose its will against what appeared at the time as the consensual solution: path-dependent changes within the remit of the ‘mixed army’ model. Hence one can read the book as a critique both of neorealist-inspired theories analysing defence policies merely as adaptations to international structural constraints, and of the “paradigm” of bureaucratic politics seeing it as the result of a compromise between rival bureaucratic interests. At the same time, the originality of Irondelle’s demonstration lies in the fact that, by mobilising a sociological analysis, he shows that the autonomy of the political sphere hinges on institutional, social and political conditions rather than being a matter of ontological principle or of constitutional prerogative.

One of the strengths of Irondelle’s argument is that it avoids the trap of retrospective confirmation. It is indeed easy to present yesterday’s choices as inevitable since they are confirmed by today’s world to the making of which they have contributed. It is in this regard one of the many merits of the book to analyse decision-making under Chirac’s presidency in the light of the conditions and possibility of that period, with all its uncertainties and potentialities, rather than of today. In other words, he manages to show that what today is seen as inevitable, was not so at the time. On the contrary the option finally imposed by the executive, the scrapping not only of the military service but of any compulsory national service, was at the time only defended by a tiny minority opposed by a coalition of influential politicians, defence industries, defence experts and military bureaucrats, themselves supported, although to a lesser extent, by domestic public opinion.

The central idea of the book, pertaining to the political agency in defence matters, is inter alia founded in a counterfactual reasoning: had Jacques Chirac not been elected president in 1995, this decision would most likely not have been taken, at least not in that time-frame. The demonstration is supported by the many interviews (110 in total) that the author has undertaken in the course of his research, including at ministerial levels, which are extremely well exploited. The book is very well informed and systematic and its author demonstrates an impressive and detailed knowledge of the mechanisms of French decision-making at the political, administrative and military levels. While generally critical of the conclusions of the authors representative of the bureaucratic politics “paradigm” (Allison, Halperin…), he downplays the role of hierarchy and authority, but many of his analyses vindicate the latter and show very concretely how bureaucratic politics conflicts might limit the margins of manoeuviing of the president.

2 Let us here remind the reader of the existence of the so-called ‘domaine réservé’ of the President of the Republic, the fact that foreign and defence policy is often considered to be his / her sole preserve, is the result of political praxis rather than of constitutional principles.

3 Irondelle concentrates the analysis on the interval between the publication of the White book on defence of 1994 and the decision of 1996 and its aftermath.
Irondelle shows brilliantly that the ‘success’ of the radical reform that the 1996-decision implied, hinged not only on the institutional context and the intellectual climate that prevailed in Chirac’s entourage (characterised by a self-confirming groupthink) in 1995–1996. It was also predicated on conjunctural factors linked to the beginning of Chirac’s term (the proverbial ‘honeymoon period’) as well as on long term factors linked to the history of Gaullism. All these elements set the stage for the ‘style régalien’, ‘the royal style’ that characterised the way in which this bold decision was taken and implemented. While conscious that he might be accused of falling prey to a “heroic illusion”, wrongfully to consider the decision-maker as a Nietzschean actor free of any determinism, the author is quick to reply that Chirac and his entourage themselves fell prey to this illusion, with significant self-realising consequences.

Political decisions as conditioned choices amenable to sociological analysis

Accusing the author of indulging in an ‘heroic illusion’ would in fact be a gross misunderstanding of the book’s analyses. While restoring a space of autonomy for ‘extraordinary’ political decision-making, Irondelle carefully avoids lending credence to a romanticised political decision-making for which the ‘decision’ would be a pure act of free will on the part of the leader. On the contrary, the author demystifies the very concept of decision by showing that it has to be analysed relationally, contextually and collectively.

A first element in the argumentation is that the choice to part with compulsory military service was made under very tight constraints. It was not predetermined and foreordained, but it was nevertheless heavily shaped by structural forces. Indeed, from the 1990s on, French defence policy gave priority to ‘force projection’ over ‘territorial defence’. This policy calls for a highly skilled force rather than for a plethora of conscripts. The political context is hence favourable to Chirac’s decision. This is all the more true as public opinion was eager to reap the ‘peace dividends’ and a dire economic conjuncture conspired to exacerbate the structural tensions inherent in the ‘mixed army’ model and the institutionalised compromises on which it rests. Between military and national service, between volunteers and conscription, and between military staffing level and the modernisation of weaponry, in sum, there was a window of opportunity for radical reform in the mid-1990s.

A second element in the demonstration is that even the relatively great powers of French presidents in the ‘domaine réservé’ could not avoid the military and defence bureaucracies concerned by the reform. The President needed to win over the defence establishment. Irondelle here shows concretely that the presidency was not able to impose the decision on its own since it did not have the planning capacity to prove the feasibility of its project and to elaborate the defence budget accordingly. This could only be done by the bureaucrats and military experts of the defence ministry itself. The President however controlled the rules of the game, the calendar and the participants in the reform. The defence ministry’s relative monopoly on expertise

4 We borrow this expression from Michel Dobry: Michel Dobry Sociologie des crises politiques (Paris: Presses de la FNSP, 1986).
could consequently not trump presidential authority. Chirac chose to limit the role of the interministerial level in order to elaborate the reform directly with the ministry of defence. By proceeding progressively and methodically, rather than revealing his preferences beforehand, he managed to transform the strategic committee in charge of the reform at the ministry of defence, and more specifically its steering committee, into a mediator between the will of the Presidency and the bureaucratic preferences of the different branches of the armed forces. The military apparatus was thus brought to appropriate the presidential project and to transform it into a joint political-military enterprise. In the process, many of the staunchest opponents to the idea of an all-volunteer force within the ministry became its most vehement defenders. This is how the presidency’s ‘vision’ was transformed into an effective decision.

A third element is that the author ultimately focuses very little on Jacques Chirac himself as a person. Indeed, presidential leadership is in Irondelle’s account never considered as the endeavour of a single individual but as the result of collective entrepreneurship on the part of politicians and experts gravitating around the President and groping for political leeway. Presidential leadership also takes on an institutional form through the defence council that first rejects the mixed army model proposed by the strategic committee in November 1995 and then approves of the professional army model laid forward by the same committee in January 1996. Although the author considers the individuals enacting presidential leadership (amongst whom the Prime Minister) to be genuinely convinced by the wider benefits of their reform, he simultaneously demonstrates that they are not insensitive to the tactical advantages entailed by the reform in the political game.

By stressing the structural conditions of this ‘successful reform’, Irondelle gives a very balanced, subtle and nuanced vision of the role of presidential leadership. The book does not amount to a plea for an exclusive theory of agency. On the contrary, the analysis renders all its importance to the historical, social and political context in which decisions are, or are not, taken. This is done by mobilising a multidisciplinary and somewhat eclectic approach using theoretical tools borrowed from different disciplines (IR, political sciences, social psychology, public policy), with a particular focus on sociological approaches. Thus, he avoids the charge of psychologism in the approach to President Chirac. Indeed the latter is here less relevant as a person than as occupying a particular position around which a group of officials converge.

Walking a fine line between agency and structural necessity

In Irondelle’s book, as often in political science, the main theory against which the author argues is oversimplified and its weaknesses overemphasised. Indeed, the author states that the neo-realist-inspired idea according to which the abolition of the draft was the mere consequence of an adaptation of the French defence apparatus to international constraints would amount to a denial of any space for choice and hence for decision-making. This neo-realist interpretation can then be dispelled by showing that there was in fact a choice between 1994 and 1996 since there was a debate and that the option that was finally imposed was initially only defended by a small minority. This argument is, however, problematic in that it suggests that any deterministic argument in social sciences implies a consciousness on the part of the social agents involved in the determinism at play, which is obviously not the case. It
is indeed possible to claim that the decision was inevitable in the long term although there were disagreements and oppositions in the short term. It is in this regard revealing that Irondelle neither uses, nor even quotes, the realist-inspired work of Sten Rynning on the transformation of French military doctrine that would however have been an obvious reading on the subject.

Equally problematic, the incremental professionalisation that prevailed prior to Chirac’s first term is explicitly approached as a form of ‘non-decision’. One could however argue that it was, if not the fruit of a single decision, one of incrementalism, or at least the consequence of a set of ‘smaller decisions’. The problem is here not only that the author sets the standard of a ‘real decision’ as opposed to a ‘non-decision’ very high since it seems to suppose a radical break with past practices. It is also that it fails to acknowledge the role played by different sequences of decision-making. The difference between the ‘decision’ and the ‘non-decision’, in this sense, seems indeed to lie in Chirac’s will to ‘accelerate history’ by abolishing the military draft in one decision rather than further to increase incrementally, and hence slowly, the voluntary soldier/conscript soldier ratio as many of his detractors wanted in 1995–1996.

Irondelle convincingly shows that French presidential leadership used the political leeway it had to impose the timing of the decision but at the same time he provides the reader with every single political, social and economic argument to say that the decision to scrap military conscription would in any case sooner or later have become difficult to avoid. The resulting paradox reminds us of the ancient stoicists’ approach to freedom. Just as individual freedom involves the alignment of the spirit on the necessary order of things according to the latter, the autonomy of governmental decision here seems to imply the alignment of this decision on the structural constraints that the government faces. The point of view defended by the book is indeed that the decision to abolish the principle of conscription, while not foreordained, was aligned with ‘necessity’ in the sense that the alternative, the ‘mixed army’ model, would in the long term have implied increasing costs and decreasing yields. The problems caused by the mismatch between the military draft and the ‘new missions’ of the armed forces would have become more and more difficult to manage. Irondelle’s interpretation of the political decision of Chirac hence oscillates between two (not necessarily incompatible) visions. One is the expression of the ability on the part of the presidential leadership to make an independent choice that was by no means ‘necessary’ (in the sense of inevitable at the time), while the second is the manifestation of the presidential will to make the difficult choices that were ‘necessary’ (in the sense of ‘being called for’) at the time in order to maintain the relevance of French military power in the future. To the extent that the author seems to lean towards the second interpretation, not only is the difference of interpretation with the realist analysis ultimately small but also one cannot help but notice a form of normative endorsement of Chirac’s decision in spite of considerable attempts at axiological neutrality. This is at least what seems to be implied by the claim that the alternative to Chirac’s decision, the further confirmation of the ‘mixed army’ model, would have been a ‘non-decision’.

One is thus left with the impression that although the executive’s decision was risky and all but evident at the time, it was still the only real decision that could have been taken. It is as if, in the learning process of the French defence apparatus, the presidential leadership under Chirac was just a bit quicker than the others and, in this sense, ahead of its time. The feeling of a retrospective illusion on the part of the author hence can not entirely be dispelled.

Conclusion

Ultimately, Irondelle’s book is not only important for all interested in French military and defence policy as well as in the presidential powers and their limits under the Fifth Republic. It is also a book that raises many theoretically interesting questions on the agency of political actors in defence and military matters, a domain that so often has been portrayed as the realm of ‘imperious necessities’. Although one can in this regard regret the absence of nomothetic ambition on the part of the author, as well as of elements of comparison with similar decisions in other countries, its main merit is to rehabilitate the notion of decision while simultaneously highlighting that it is less of a moment than a complex process. It is indeed also the human dimension of political decision-making to which attention is called with all its hesitations, confrontations, illusions, tactical calculations, strategies of persuasion and concessions.
Alexander Klimburg and Jan Pospisil (eds.), Mediating Security: Comprehensive Approaches to an Ambiguous Subject – Festschrift for Otmar Höll

Reviewed by Edward Newman
University of Leeds

This collection is a Festschrift for Otmar Höll, a pioneering Austrian scholar and former director of the Austrian Institute for International Affairs, in Vienna. Its chapters contribute to debates about the widening and deepening security agenda, and it also pays tribute to Höll’s leadership in what might be called the ‘Austrian school’ of security studies. This approach reflects a concern for a ‘comprehensive’ and multifaceted security agenda and also – unlike most other non-traditional security studies schools – the psychological dimensions of security. This volume also illustrates the importance of personal networks and leadership in the emergence and evolution of European international studies, and a number of the academic entrepreneurs involved in supporting this process are included in the collection. The book makes some interesting contributions to evolving non-traditional security studies debates – in particular related to development, the environment and armed conflict – and will be especially valuable for those interested in European perspectives, with a number of references to movements such as the Copenhagen school of securitisation.

The overarching themes which form the theoretical background for the book relate to the core debates of the evolving non-traditional security studies agenda: What should the referent object of international security be? What threats to security should define the study and the policies of security? Which actors should be entrusted to respond to security threats? What form should this response take? At what cost should security be achieved? How should security be studied and what forms the basis of reliable knowledge in this area? Is security an ‘essentially contested’ subject? The broader context for these questions will be familiar to any scholar of international relations or security studies: the end of the Cold War provided space for a broader security discourse, globalisation has encouraged attention to a wider range of actors, and normative changes in international politics have encouraged greater focus upon individual needs and rights. The apparent growing importance of non-traditional security challenges – such as environmental degradation, intrastate conflict, weak and failing states, communicable disease, poverty and forced migration – gave ample empirical evidence to support a broad approach to security studies. In this context the book adds to the huge amount of academic debate about the widening and deepening scope of security studies, taking analysis beyond the military sector to include a range of economic, social and environmental challenges, and challenging the state as the referent object. It also suggests that security and threats
to security are to some extent constructed, rather than objective facts. Ultimately, however, the chapters bear out the sub-title of the volume: security is indeed an ‘ambiguous subject’.

The collection begins with a tribute to Otmar Höll by Heinz Gärtner, the academic director of the Austrian Institute for International Affairs and Professor at the University of Vienna. This describes Professor Höll’s leadership over four decades in debates relating to the evolving non-traditional security agenda, and in developing the Austrian Institute for International Affairs as a think tank which has been both policy-relevant and academically independent. It also hints at some of the political challenges that were involved along the way. The main chapters are organised into three sections: on development and environment policy; political psychology and conflict; and global governance. Sanja Tišma and Marina Funduk (‘Green Development: A Notion Affecting Sustainable National Economies, Environmental Security and International Relations’) demonstrate how the growing attention to environmental challenges has relevance across a number of sectors, and how environmental protection has already made its way into the domestic and foreign policy agendas of most industrialised states. It remains open to question, however, whether this environmental mainstreaming is effectively challenging the ‘high politics’ preoccupation that is embedded in many national security establishments. Kunibert Raffer (‘The Millennium Development Goals as a Precondition for Peace and Security’) weighs the contributions and limitations of the Millennium Development Goals, but argues that the MDGs will not overcome existing inequalities, inequities and dependence, raising the difficult question of whether structural human insecurities can ever be addressed through existing (state centric) initiatives. Barbara Rohregger (‘The Politics of Social Protection: How to Get it Onto the Political Agenda and Make Sure that it Stays There’) explores the scope for establishing social protection on the international political agenda – which would, of course, be in line with human security ideas. But the political obstacles are formidable, which again highlights the clash between normative reasoning and political ‘realities’. Arno Truger (‘The Contribution of Development and Environmental Policy to Foreign and Security Policy’) attempts a very ambitious task in exploring the operationalisation of a comprehensive security policy and envisages this in specific policy terms for peacebuilding, covering security, socio-economic and environmental needs, legal frameworks, politics, and psychological factors.

In the second section, Pertti Joenniemi (‘Peace Mediation: The Challenge of Protracted Conflicts’) explores the evolving demands of conflict resolution and mediation in the context of contemporary armed conflict. He observes the limitations of so-called ‘liberal peacebuilding’ and quite correctly questions if liberal institutions are legitimate and effective in some contexts. Anton Pelinka (‘Conflict Research’) provides a very informative commentary of the field and provides a range of arguments. Most notably, he suggests that conflict research is about understanding and if possible moderating conflict – which is inherent in all societies – and not necessarily resolving it. Wilfried Graf, Gudrun Kramer and Augustin Nicolescu (‘Complexity Thinking and Basic Human Needs. Towards a Meta-Framework for Interactive Conflict Transformation’) explore the scope for transformational forms of conflict resolution, a topic that is normatively attractive but operationally daunting. The added value of this chapter – which will be very insightful for those who approach conflict resolution from the perspective of international relations or political science – is the
attention given to psychological dimensions. This is also the central theme of Herbert C. Kelman (‘Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation: A Perspective from Social and Political Psychology’), which focusses on deep rooted conflict. As he observes, interests, relationships and identities intertwine in the broader context of political institutions and subjective constructions.

The third section on global governance begins with A.J.R. Groom (‘Global Governance from Above and Below’). He argues persuasively that even in an anarchical international environment shared norms and values can constitute a society, and global governance is a facilitator and a reflection of this. At the same time global governance is somewhat nebulous: multilateral, multidimensional, decentralised, public and private, formal and informal. Gudrun Harrer provides a more specific case study (‘Entrusting Without Trusting: The International Atomic Energy Agency and the Nuclear Disarmament of Iraq 1991-1998’). This chapter deals with a troubling time for the United Nations as the IAEA sought to enforce disarmament in Iraq in the broader context of a political battlefield and punitive sanctions, and it benefits from the direct insights of many of the key players involved at the time. Blerim Reka and Ylber Sela (‘The Soft Protectorate in the Western Balkans: International Governance for Post-Conflict Societies?’) explores the EU’s role in the Balkans. The idea of a ‘soft protectorate – whereby countries in the region are introduced into various West European norms and institutions as a vehicle for stabilisation and as a pathway towards eventual EU membership – is very interesting and it raises a number of challenges. In February 2014 Bosnia experienced the worst unrest since the end of the war in 1995, and this was largely a result of social problems – and notably, not sectarianism. Although this chapter was written before this unrest it does point to the continuing challenges involved in integrating the Western Balkans into European society. Finally, Howard J. Wiarda (‘Adventures in Research: The Austrian Institute for International Affairs (OIIP)’) provides a warm recollection of his time as a visiting scholar in Vienna and the hospitality and support he received.

This collection – written mostly by scholars who have had some personal connection with Otmar Höll or the OIIP – is nicely written. It is also an interesting testament to Austrian international studies. The book reflects a number of assumptions about the evolving, widening and deepening security discourse that will find a receptive audience. In the contemporary era the meaning of security is both subjective and contested, but many scholars will agree that it necessarily involves social, economic and environmental challenges. More conventional security scholars may, however, balk at the absence of discussion about how the non-traditional and traditional security agendas interface. The volume would also have been strengthened by a more consistent theoretical framework which draws upon non-traditional and critical security studies. In particular, this reviewer would have welcomed more explicit engagement with the human security concept, and more discussion on the possible hazards of securitisation in a widening security studies context. Nevertheless, this is a Festschrift, and some compromises on overall coherence in the interests of having a lively debate are acceptable.

(Splinters of empire)

Reviewed by Médéric Martin-Mazé
CERI-Sciences Po, Paris

The title of this book, Éclats d’Empire, refers directly to the seminal piece by Hélène Carrère d’Encausse in the late 1970s; l’Empire éclaté. In this useful publication, Marlène Laruelle and Sébastien Peyrouse debunk the biased and over simplistic narratives broadcast by the media about the Caucasus, Central Asia and Afghanistan. Taking stock of twenty years of post-Soviet developments, they bring to the fore the complex and multifaceted reality of these poorly known societies. They do so with the help of thirty scholars who provide tightly-knit and empirically-focused chapters dealing with specific questions. These pieces are linked in seven different parts encompassing (I) identity politics, (II) state questions, (III) religious aspects, (IV) social transformations, (V) economic globalisation, (VI) foreign policy and (VII) cultural issues. Each of these thematic building-blocks receives an exhaustive and synthetic introduction by the editors.

Part one deflates the deterministic account of identity which dominates popular understandings of the Caucasus, Central Asia and Afghanistan. Although kinship is important, clan and ethnic ties do not subsume the diversity of solidarity networks in which actors are embedded and from which they draw an increasing part of their resources. Identity games are not fixed but instead complex and constantly changing. They do not necessarily yield destabilising effects on the social fabric of these societies.

Part two sheds light on security issues. In this regard, the situation varies greatly among the three sub-regions. Caucasian regimes experience a powerful territorial anxiety that is fed by the (not so) ‘frozen conflicts’ and the recent Russo-Georgian war. By contrast, the risk of territorial partition remains largely over-estimated in Central Asia. Furthermore, Central Asian regimes tend to instrumentalise the ‘Islamist peril’ in order to justify the authoritarian drift in which most of them are engaged. The Afghan situation remains polarised by thirty years of almost continuous conflict, two external interventions and the forthcoming withdrawal of Western military forces.

The Caucasus, Central Asia and Afghanistan also feature a sizeable heterogeneity as far as religious questions are concerned. In Armenia and Georgia, Christianity (the State religion) is not considered to be an issue. However, the other States in the

region have developed a schizophrenic relationship towards Islam. Although glorified as national religion, Islam is simultaneously regarded with suspicion by authorities eager to bring religious practices under state control. The official clerks inherited from the Soviet system compete with a range of new religious actors, whose doctrines range from politicised versions of Islam to more societal nuances of Islamism. These alternative religious elites are actively discredited as ‘jihadists’ while only a minority of them favour violence as a legitimate means of political action.

Part four tackles the social transformation that the Caucasus, Central Asia and Afghanistan have undergone over the past 20 years. Although national trajectories differ greatly, the three sub-regions feature, by and large, a process of massive social polarisation. The vast majority of the population has drifted into dire poverty, as have old Soviet middle classes (cultural, educational and medical professions). Except in Kazakhstan, where they have consolidated in urban centres, and in Afghanistan where they live off external subsides, the middle classes are either non-existent or under considerable strain across the region. Security professionals are an exception to this rule. They have maintained their social standing as upper-classes in providing essential services to the few hundred families who have a secured access to economic and political power.

These families take advantage of financial services provided in tax havens, buy real estate in Europe and send their children to the most prestigious American universities. According to the argument laid out in part five, these flows knock a hole in the dominant depiction of Caucasus, Central Asia and Afghanistan as global peripheries. Powerful globalising mechanisms are at work such as the export of oil and gas resources from Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan; the emigration of a numerous workforce from Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan; or the Afghan poppy harvest, its transformation and extraction towards consumption markets in Russia and Europe. However, although great hopes have been placed in the commercial diversification and the geographic opening up of the region, considerable hurdles still stand in the way of a full-fledged integration into the world economy.

Part six of the book takes issue with the so-called ‘Great Game’. This narrative powerfully frames our understanding of how the Caucasus, Central Asia and Afghanistan act on the world stage. But, instead of being pawns in the moves and countermoves played by great Powers, these States nurture different strategic cultures and have built specific foreign policies. Indeed, the regimes seek a form of legitimacy in the realm of international relations which largely escapes them in domestic politics. The relations with the ex-Soviet metropolis vary broadly, from an almost perfect alignment between Moscow and Astana to a slow normalisation with Georgia after the 2008 conflict. Although the United States and the European Union have managed to establish themselves firmly in the region, the growing influence of China is reflected in its economic relations with Afghanistan, Central Asia and, to a lesser extent, the Caucasus.

Finally, part seven tackles the cultural policies that have been implemented over the past twenty years. All the post-Soviet States have an intensively politicised culture. Political elites have sought to identify themselves with one medieval precursor, thereby legitimising their rule as well as the Nation-State emerging from the wreckage of the USSR. This politicisation goes hand-in-hand with the nationalisation of culture as that which belongs to the ‘titular’ nationality, thus reducing minorities’ cultural expressions to a reified folklore. However, this nation-branding is confront-
ed with constraints such as the plurality of historical memories, the rise of Soviet nostalgia and the general marginalisation of cultural elites.

The book nicely brings together broad-brushed thematic introductions authored by Marlène Laruelle and Sébastien Peyrouse with more tightly-focused analytical chapters written by one of the twenty-eight contributors. However, this formal coherence hardly conceals the high heterogeneity of the object of study. One cannot but conclude that the Caucasus, Central Asia and Afghanistan have too little in common to be treated through a single analytical framework — a fact of which practitioners in diplomatic apparatuses of international organisations are well aware. Although Central Asia seems to occupy a sort of middle-ground, Afghanistan and the Caucasus display radically different dynamics. The former therefore comes almost as an afterthought in a narrative that is laid out starting with what is closest to Europe and ending with what is furthest — a sign of Euro-centrism?

Furthermore, the highly descriptive nature of the text reinforces these shortcomings. Since the contributors understandably resort to little theory in the empirical chapters, the overall theoretical framework of the book remains scarcely developed. Although the criticism of the geopolitical discourse in part six is most welcome, one may regret that more sophisticated versions of international relations such as regional approaches, transnationalism or international political sociology are left unattended. They may have provided conceptual tools to bolster the coherence of the object of study.

While they might be regarded as drawbacks, these editorial choices give prominence to the rich empirical material laid out in the different texts. Taken together, the chapters and the thematic introductions present an exhaustive overview of the main developments characterising the Caucasus, Central Asia and Afghanistan since the collapse of the USSR. In an accessible but precise manner, they manage to dissipate much of the commonplaces, platitudes and misconceptions that are too widely shared and too readily accepted when it comes to these three regions.

There is therefore little doubt that the book will find its readership among students, journalists or practitioners who are interested in an empirical but critical introduction to these ‘splinters of empire’. Moreover, the broad geographic perspective and rich thematic scope will be attractive to those scholars who, after investigating one particular issue or geographic area, find themselves in need of a larger contextualisation.
Stefania Panebianco, L’Unione Europea “potenza divisa” nel Mediterraneo
(The European Union, a ‘Divided Power’ in the Mediterranean)

Reviewed by Marco Brunazzo
Università degli Studi di Trento

What is the role of the EU in the Mediterranean Region? Is the EU promoting a series of interventions in that region that contribute to the inauguration of a ‘Mediterranean European Policy’ on its own? How did the EU react to the popular mobilisations started at the end of 2010 in some of the Mediterranean Countries and what does this reaction say about the EU itself? These are just some of the important questions that Stefania Panebianco addresses in her book.

The volume starts by defining the EU using some of the main concepts adopted by political scientists. Among them, it is worth mentioning those of political system (Easton), systemic functions (Almond and Powell) and political process (Bentley). Particular attention is then given to the European institutional features, with an emphasis on the inextricable tensions between intergovernmentalism and supranationalism. The definition Stefania Panebianco finally adopts is that of a ‘multi-states political system’, in which different levels of government are interlinked. This complexity is, for the author, at the origin of the difficulties of the EU in implementing a coherent set of actions in the international arena, and on the Mediterranean scene in particular.

The second chapter deals with the relations between the EU and the Mediterranean Countries. In this part the author applies concepts like regionalism and neoregionalism. She also sees Euro-Mediterranean relations through the analytical lenses of the ‘triangle of regionalism’ proposed by Katzenstein. Stefania Panebianco analyses EU relations with the Mediterranean States along three different dimensions: economic, identity and political. She concludes that the Mediterranean Sea falls outside what is generally conceived as regionalism. From this point, the author looks at the different actions the EU has promoted in providing a process and framework for region-building. These are, for example, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, the European Neighbourhood Policy, and the Union for the Mediterranean. She presents these actions in detail, looking at the same time at their complexity, multidimensionality and contradictions.

The third chapter looks at the popular mobilisations of the Arab World starting in 2010. Concepts such as democracy (Dahl), democratic arena (Linz and Stepan), spirit of democracy (Diamond) and democratic anchorage (Morlino) are used to explain the possibilities these countries have to become sustainably democratic. As the
author shows, the EU alone is not able to democratise these countries, but it can help them to guarantee stability through new democratic institutions and regimes.

Finally, the fourth chapter concerns what, in the title of the book, is called ‘Divided Power’. What the so-called ‘Arab Spring’ has demonstrated is that the EU is criss-crossed by institutional divisions and political cleavages between Member States over the policy towards the Mediterranean area. These divisions are at the origin of a policy that is always subject to the adaptive pressures coming from the external pressures.

The book presents the main steps in the construction of the EU action in the Mediterranean Sea very clearly, while at the same time pointing to a weakness. However, the main aim of the book is to analyse the EU Mediterranean Policy as a stand-alone policy overcoming the traditional definition of a ‘European Foreign Policy towards the Mediterranean’. This is an interesting attempt: it builds on the general agreement that there is no European Foreign Policy (in the singular) but a series of European Foreign Policies (plural). For this reason, even if the different actions and programmes towards the Mediterranean area can be seen as part of the broader European Foreign Policy, the author demonstrates that the instruments, focus, multidimensionality and the general features are at the same time specific. For example, the history of this policy shows that there is no clear coincidence between the evolution of the EU Foreign Policy and the EU Mediterranean Policy. The Barcelona Declaration and Euro-Mediterranean Partnership inaugurated in 1995, the European Neighbourhood Policy, and the Union for the Mediterranean are all programmes not necessarily related to the development of the European Foreign Policy.

In my view, this is the main innovation introduced by this book, and this is also one of the more stimulating topics because it raises many questions. For example, it is not completely clear how distinct the European Mediterranean Policy is from the other foreign policies. A comparison with other EU policies towards other areas of the word would have helped the reader to acquire new elements of distinction between what is going on in the Mediterranean Sea and in other areas. At the same time, an analysis of the interconnections with other EU policies would have helped us better to understand the complexity of the Mediterranean actions of the EU. Stefania Panebianco certainly recognises multidimensionality as one of the main features of what she calls ‘Mediterranean European Policy’. However, a more explicit analysis of how this policy is interlinked with, for example, energy policy and immigration policy would have pointed to a clearer image of the contradictions of this policy.

Beyond the scope of this book, these are just considerations for further research. And they are just questions coming to the mind of a reader willing to know more of the topic of the book that is inevitably destined to remain central in the EU and its Member States’ action.
Heikki Patomäki, *The Great Eurozone Disaster: From Crisis to Global New Deal*  
English Translation James O’Connor  
Reviewed by John Fitzgibbon  
Canterbury Christ Church University

The ‘Eurocrisis’ has increasingly become the focus of scholarly investigation. As the Eurocrisis is a continuing event, the scholar is placed in a difficult epistemological position as nothing is harder to ‘hit’ than a moving economic and political event. To deal with this Patomäki takes an unambiguous approach of democratic global Keynesianism. This perspective is refreshing as it facilitates the author in both analysing the handling of the Eurocrisis, and the global financial crisis more generally, in addition to providing a lengthy discussion of his proposed solutions to the current global economic malaise. All too often academic books get bogged down by justification when dealing with similarly large complex geopolitical topics. This leaves the normative element to be tacked on at the end in a vague ‘what is to be done’ manner that covers a few sparse pages. In *The Great Eurozone Disaster* Patomäki gives over three full chapters, (5, 6 and 7) to outline his alternatives for the EU and global governance. His solution for the Eurocrisis is based on creating a social-democratic Federal Union that leverages the economic wealth of the stronger member states to invest in a programme of job creation with welfare protections to be implemented federally across the EU as a whole. This provides the template for what he envisions as a system for global governance that eschews the current market-based approach of international trade blocs in favour of a system based on democratic control of investment for the betterment of the world as a whole, specifically the environment and individual citizens.

Despite this brave attempt to outline an alternative path for European integration, and the world as a whole, it is the analysis of liberal economic policies that is the strongest point of the book. Chapter 4 is very good in this regard, incisively arguing that the focus on liberal economic policies in the creation of Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) was not matched by a sufficiently rigorous market oversight and democratic control. This allowed the global financial industry to exploit pre-existing imbalances in the Eurozone causing the economic collapse of the crisis states – Greece, Ireland, Portugal, Spain – with no attempt to prevent or halt them. While this discussion is articulate and coherent the rest of the book as a whole does not really get to grips with the specifics of European integration that were fundamental to the depth of the impact of the global financial crisis on the EU. In analysing the creation of EMU Patomäki fails to discuss the Werner report of 1969 which explicitly stated that a monetary union automatically required democratic oversight, a policy
focus on unemployment, and a mechanism for redistribution between the richer and poorer regions of a single currency area. Additionally there is no discussion of the Delors Committee whose political compromises led to the flawed architecture of the EMU. Such omissions are puzzling as they provide the most obvious evidence for the author’s fundamental argument that the current trajectory of EMU is incorrect and needs to be more democratic and socially focused.

Indeed this is a feature of the book as a whole which is light on empirical evidence and heavy on grand sweeping narrative. As the text is only 193 pages long, however, there is limited scope for a searching analysis of the Eurocrisis. But that is not the author’s intention. Rather Patomäki makes a deeply passionate criticism of the neo-liberal basis of EMU and a heartfelt call to implement democratic global Kenysianism as an alternative.
Stefano Ruzza, Guerre Conto Terzi. Aziende di sicurezza e privatizzazione della funzione militare
(Fighting others’ wars)

Reviewed by Giampiero Giacomello
University of Bologna

The topic is one of those that have attracted considerable attention in the media and in academia, namely the privatisation of the military function. Hence, is it still possible to write something ‘original’ and contribute to the field? Personally I think so and reading Guerre Conto Terzi by Stefano Ruzza has confirmed my opinion. The ‘puzzle’ that has prompted Ruzza to address such an issue is straightforward: for more than three centuries, the modern state has legally monopolised organised violence, excluding other actors, and so how is it that today we now witness a renaissance of ‘private’ agents of violence in the form of private security companies (PSC)?

The book is divided into two parts: the first part is dedicated to the history and evolution of private military forces, while the second presents five case studies, all taken from modern times. In the former, Ruzza explains clearly not only how persistent and pervasive the figure of the ‘free lance’, the soldier of fortune, is in military history, but also how it would have been impossible to fight many such wars without such soldiers. Ancient Greeks, Romans, Crusaders, down to Corsairs and Imperial armies (with the Landsknechte) have all included large numbers of military professionals bound to their leaders not by nationality or commonality of values, but by a contract, which guaranteed a salary in exchange for military service. Such a state of affairs changed quickly with the rise of mass national armies and the Napoleonic wars.

Not that armies of that period did not field ‘free lancers’, including noteworthy personalities like Carl von Clausewitz or Antoine Henry de Jomini, while that epitome of soldiers of fortune, the French Foreign Legion, was born in 1831. But the preeminence of the ‘Nation’ obscured all other details: even the Légionnaires had to fight for a sovereign nation-state. So did the many thousands of foreign volunteers that joined the Waffen SS and fought against Bolshevism, paradoxically, for a ‘certain idea’ of Europe. The simple reason for this transformation, as Ruzza clarifies, is that the modern state, beginning in the XVII century and reaching maturity in the XIX century, seized for itself the legitimate ‘monopoly’ of force, as Max Weber aptly synthetised.

The Cold War witnessed a revival of old-style mercenaries, mostly in Africa, as proxies of both the super Powers (it would be difficult not to consider the Cubans in Angola as a sort of ‘franchised’ professionals). But it was the end of the Cold War and the multi-polar world of today that has seen a revival of that old profession,
under the sleek and business-oriented designation of ‘private security companies’. Indeed, following Peter Singer’s argument, Ruzza notes how the latter, unlike the more prosaic private military companies that can only provide soldiers of fortune, enjoy a ‘business’ image that make them more acceptable to governments and tax payers. Furthermore, they can provide more comprehensive security services, like logistics or personnel protection, instead of simply ‘war fighting’.

The second part of the volume focuses on five cases, Sierra Leone, Croatia, the United States, Iraq and Colombia that demonstrate how widespread, and by now essential, the operational presence of PSC has become for sovereign governments. The criterion for the case selection here is that of a ‘weak state/strong state’ differentiation as all but one of the examples considered are ‘weak states’ with flimsy control over their territories, which cannot object to (and reject) the presence of PSC on their soil. The one, notable exception is, of course, the United States, which is, incidentally, the most interesting case. The US is a ‘strong state’ that not only allows PSC to operate on its territory, but also thoroughly supports them. Although not involved in high level of violence, Ruzza clearly explains that the reasons of the PSC’s success in the United States are quite perplexing.

In fact, contrary to what is normally ‘advertised’ or believed, logistical activities aside, PSC do not necessarily guarantee greater efficiency or a better cost-benefit ratio than what was undertaken by the US government itself in the past. Yet, not many in the US criticise this state of affairs, which is probably due to the growing influence that PSC have on the government and the legislative branch. Such inertia is, of course, self-perpetuating. I would also pinpoint the lasting conviction that ‘private’ is instinctively associated with ‘more efficient’ for many Americans, which sometimes is not the case with PSC. All other countries examined in the volume offer not only valuable details but also convincingly contribute to the volume’s main thesis, namely that the sovereign state’s monopoly of force has been an historical exception. We are now quite likely to revert to ‘pre-Westphalian’ conditions in which ‘private violence providers’ are thus a more common occurrence.

The argument advanced by Stefano Ruzza in his volume is indeed consistent with a large and remarkable body of literature that represents the ‘state’ as a peculiar, historical anomaly. Charles Tilly’s argument was the first to contend, on several occasions, that the modern state was an organisational ‘model’ most suited for Europe and the like (the United States, Canada and so on), but that it would not be necessarily successful everywhere. Far from it: ever since the beginning of what we call the ‘Westphalian era’, only the minority of states has been consistently capable of exercising their authority over their lands or monopolising violence. For most of the ‘states’, sovereignty has always been an organised hypocrisy, as Stephen Krasner aptly described it. Likewise, when Mary Kaldor wrote of ‘old and new wars’, it would have been more correct to evoke ‘old and older wars’ (as Kaldor herself in part later acknowledged).

Warlords and war-profiteers, the main agents in Kaldor’s early analysis, are not part of Ruzza’s volume, simply because he focuses on legally recognised PSC. It is nonetheless clear that the separation between the former and the latter is extremely thin. Details (such as the rules of engagement) aside, the major distinction is that warlords are locally raised and can hardly enjoy the legitimisation of a (more or less) stable and internationally recognised government; PSC mostly come from strong states (the US, the United Kingdom, Australia and a few others) that provide them with a patent of respectability and official endorsement. Last but not least, sovereign governments can dispatch PSC to missions that might be politically ‘delicate’ for national military forces, without fear of embarrassment. But this is no novelty as it has been one of the advantages offered by employing mercenaries as proxies. The basic line is that all these actors attain financial advantage from conflicts and the managing, in one sense or another, of violence, the once exclusive monopoly of the modern European state.

Ruzza, in fact, opens and concludes his valuable volume on this point. One of the distinctive, characterising features of today’s violence is the organisational form (emphasis in the original) that these private actors assume, which makes all the difference in the world: chartered PSC are accepted and respected (albeit not loved, of course); warlords and pirates are, as in the past, barred and persecuted. They are, nevertheless, from the same template. With the partial exception of corsairs, the old-time profiteers have proved to be quite resistant to ‘regulation’ (including their suppression); PSC, with their legitimising seal by strong states, would prove even more impervious to international law rules and regulations. They are here to stay, and in all likelihood, this time for good.