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**Hassner, Ron E (2009) War on Sacred Grounds. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. xi + 222pp. ISBN 0801448069**

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and where not. The parallel employment of the author as a university professor and as a political consultant explains why he stresses the accurate predictions. The applications of the book range from medieval history, over current political affairs (North Korea and Iran for instance) to business conflicts. This embarrassment of riches might frustrate some readers who would like to see a more in-depth treatment of specific cases or a detailed presentation of the game-theoretic model. However, the smorgasbord approach also indicates that model-based forecasts can be useful in many different settings.

Gerald Schneider

Cook, Jonathan (2008) *Israel and the Clash of Civilizations: Iraq, Iran and the Plan To Remake the Middle East*. London & Ann Arbor, MI: Pluto. 204 pp. ISBN 9780745327549.

It is difficult to approach with an open mind a book with a title such as this, as Huntington's thesis of the clash of civilization has been used and abused so extensively. Adding to that a front-page picture of the globe as a ticking bomb covered in an Israeli flag placed on a map of the Middle East, one may wonder if the author is lacking creativity. Nevertheless, the title and front page together indicate the basic contents of the book, namely that the Middle East is a tense region wherein Israel plays a crucial role. Presenting the book as 'thought-provoking', Cook focuses his analysis on US Middle East policy under the Bush Administration and makes (at least) two basic arguments: first, that Israel's interests are in line with those of the USA; and second, that the post-invasion chaos in Iraq and the clashes between Palestinian groups are not surprising, as chaos was always part of the Bush Administration's 'grand plan'. Cook develops this argument through four case studies: the regime overthrow in Iraq; the attempts to destabilize Iran; the USA-Israel ties under Sharon and Bush; and lastly, the USA-Israel visions for the future. Cook is not alone in making these assertions. What may be considered 'thought-provoking' is rather that Cook insists on the positive strategic logic of the intimate Israel-USA ties and the regional chaos. Nevertheless, this story has already been retold enough times, and while some undoubtedly may find his line of argumentation enlightening and entertaining, others may instead wonder why this story had to be retold once more.

Hanne Eggen Røislien

Ehrhart, Hans-Georg & Charles C Pentland, eds (2009) *The Afghanistan Challenge: Hard Realities and Strategic Choices*. Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press. 264 pp. ISBN 9871553392415.

In this edited volume, Ehrhart and Pentland bring together leading German and Canadian experts to share their reflections on the challenges currently facing Afghanistan and the international actors operating in the country. The book is divided into two large sections. The first part is comprised

of a wide set of essays that together provide a comprehensive analysis on the numerous challenges in Afghanistan. This section is finalized with a nuanced and critical assessment of the international commitment in the country. The second part of the book is dedicated to analyzing and debating the efforts from a Canadian and German perspective. It also highlights the general public and political debates on Afghanistan as it is currently played out in these respective countries. The volume does not provide an outright policy plan or strategy for the further engagement of the international community. Nevertheless, it fulfils its objectives to offer a critical assessment of the exacerbating situation in Afghanistan. Several of the authors call for a re-evaluation of the overall objectives, strategies and tactics carried out by the international community. Particular emphasis is given to a firmer commitment towards deepening the attention and understanding of local politics, culture and regional dynamics. Overall, the volume is an essential piece on the contemporary debate and development in one of the most complex tasks for the international community of our time. It is meticulously structured and provides a solid overview of the complex realities in Afghanistan. Therefore, it is strongly recommended for practitioners, scholars and analysts with a special interest in Afghanistan, as well as for students of conflict and international affairs in general.

Jonas Gräns

Hassner, Ron E (2009) *War on Sacred Grounds*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. xi + 222pp. ISBN 0801448069.

Ron Hassner's *War on Sacred Grounds* is a tour de force. It is, quite simply, the best book on religion and war I have read. It is not merely meticulously researched, theoretically interesting and methodologically sophisticated, it is also extremely well written. It is the kind of book you could teach in an advanced political science class *or* enjoy at the beach. The central focus of the book is on why religious sites become contested, and why such conflicts are inherently difficult to solve. Hassner develops a framework for studying religious sites based on a site's 'vulnerability' and its 'centrality'. This enables him to estimate the importance of the site in the eyes of the worshippers and evaluate the likelihood of conflict erupting over it. Hassner draws on insights from both political science and the sociology of religion in his study. He does this in a careful and sober manner, and in a way, I believe, that does neither political scientists nor sociologists injustice. From political science he utilizes the concept of issue indivisibility to explain why conflicts erupt over sacred space. He argues that although political scientists have dismissed indivisibility as theoretically interesting but empirically irrelevant, sacred sites provide an example of an issue that clearly is indivisible. Side payments, he argues, cannot mitigate the indivisibility of sacred sites. He then draws on sociology and constructivism to show how sacred spaces can and have been reconfigured by religious leaders. Constrained by the balance of power between political

leadership, religious leadership and the community of worshippers, religious leaders are sometimes able to reconfigure the importance and vulnerability of sacred sites, thereby resolving disputes.

*Håvard Mogleiv Nygård*

Hechter, Michael & Christine Horne (2009) *Theories of Social Order: A Reader (2nd edn)*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. 350 pp. ISBN 9780804758727.

I suppose quite a few social scientists like myself have struggled to make it through such classics as *Leviathan* or *The Wealth of Nations*. On those occasions when I have actually finished them, I have often felt more exhausted than inspired. Reading classics as well as new pieces in *Theories of Social Order*, on the other hand, I could not wait to turn the page. The key to its readability is not only the short and well-drawn excerpts, but also the enlightening way they are knitted together by the editors, Michael Hechter and Christine Horne. The pieces are categorized in chapters by the type of actor or structure in which a solution for the problem of social order is sought: individuals, hierarchies, markets, groups and networks. For each of these, Hechter and Horne take care to bring out the core causal mechanisms and factors of the pieces and discuss their limitations and challenges. Each chapter ends with one or two empirical studies, which very nicely show how the theories can be applied to concrete puzzles. The second edition of the book contains a few more chapters than the first and, I would say, has an improved structure. This book will surely inspire many social scientists to give more attention to theory and integrate it more effectively in empirical research. It also brings out the editors' argument that the best explanations of social phenomena point out both causal factors and the mechanism by which they work. The broad topic – cooperation and social order – and the wide range of approaches taken by the authors ensure that almost any social scientist will find much of interest here.

*Helge Holtermann*

Jackson, Richard; Marie Breen Smyth & Jeroen Gunning (2009) *Critical Terrorism Studies: A New Research Agenda*. Oxford, New York: Routledge. 274 pp. ISBN 9780415574150.

Orthodox terrorism studies lack active research and a critical-reflective attitude. With a focus on spectacular acts and their immediate assessment, terrorism is treated as having a static disposition, of which only part is studied, for example Middle Eastern non-state actors. This kind of research provides us with short-term solutions and a simple us-against-them dichotomy. State actors are barely brought into focus and the influence of counterterrorism measures is neglected. *Critical Terrorism Studies* seeks to unveil these flaws in the dominant research. Influenced by the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory and the Welsh School, the authors prioritize human

security over state security. On this basis, they frame a new research agenda, characterized by a high degree of interdisciplinarity. Social Movement Theory highlights the dynamic of terrorism and the importance of context. Anthropological approaches seek to overcome the process of 'othering' and provide terrorism studies with knowledge on non-terrorist activities. Gender studies explore the role of masculinity/femininity, but also allow cultural studies and fine arts to give insights to terrorism contexts. Other central aspects of CTS are structural violence and the promotion of emancipation. It may be due to this multiperspective approach that some authors seem to disagree on the question of radicalness: Is CTS a whole new paradigm or is it working as a challenger in a dialectic sense? This book, however, allows the question to be left open, since it considers itself a first attempt to frame a new research agenda. And in this regard it discusses ontological, epistemological and methodological dimensions of critical terrorism studies in a striking and comprehensible manner. This book clearly has the potential to introduce an important, overdue critical turn in terrorism studies.

*Mareile Kaufmann*

Jarstad, Anna K & Timothy D Sisk, eds (2008) *From War to Democracy: Dilemmas of Peacebuilding*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. xvii(i) + 290 pp. ISBN 9780521713276.

Contemporary peacebuilding efforts aim at establishing both stable peace and democracy. It has been widely assumed that these objectives go hand-in-hand and reinforce one another. However, Jarstad and Sisk show that, to the contrary, there are inherent dilemmas in war to democracy transitions. Through investigating six different topics, this edited volume shows how efforts to build stable peace sometimes undermine the chances of democratization and, vice versa, how efforts to democratize sometimes reduce the likelihood of sustainable peace. The theoretical framework is presented in the first chapter, where Jarstad explains the four dilemmas of peacebuilding: the horizontal dilemma (inclusion versus exclusion); the vertical dilemma (efficacy versus legitimacy); the systemic dilemma (international versus local ownership); and the temporal dilemma (short-term versus long-term). The following chapters address these dilemmas: Fortna discusses international peacekeeping; Höglund looks at post-war violence; Jarstad looks at power-sharing; Kovacs studies the transformation of rebel groups into political parties; Reilly discusses post-war elections; Belloni looks at civil society; and Wallenstein studies international responses to democratization crises. Sisk concludes and provides policy recommendations. This volume fills a gap in the peacebuilding literature. Whereas much of the literature departs from either democracy theories or conflict management theories, Jarstad & Sisk bring both schools nicely together and show how peace and democracy are interrelated. In addition, they refrain from simplistic either/or conclusions. The book shows how 'the promotion of democracy and the