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## Book Notes

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## Book Notes

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Arquilla, John (2011) *Insurgents, Raiders, and Bandits: How Masters of Irregular Warfare Have Shaped Our World*. Chicago, IL: Ivan R Dee. xviii + 310 pp. ISBN 9781566638326.

The talents of great generals leading ‘big battalions’, from Hannibal and Caesar to Guderian and Patton, are examined from every possible angle in thousands of volumes, but the captains of insurgencies are usually treated as supporting and often rogue characters. Yet the wars of nowadays are fought and won not by pitched battles but by ambushes and raids, so Arquilla is right to insist that the exploits of his 18 heroes ‘carry important lessons for military practitioners in this new era of irregular warfare’ (p. 269). His selection of cases from Robert Rogers to Aslan Maskhadov will leave every reader wanting to add a personal favorite (my choice would be Nestor Makhno, while Ahmad Shah Massoud would probably come out as a top contender), but the arresting vividness of analytic portraits makes the book very hard to put down. Where Arquilla is rather dry and imprecise is in defining ‘irregular warfare’ by three key features: engagement of small units, prevalence of guerilla tactics, and resort to terrorism (pp. 4–6). This definition may be no worse than the Pentagon’s vague description of ‘unconventional’ war, but it doesn’t quite answer the purpose of the book. No bona fide terrorists are presented, despite occasional references to Al Qaeda and Osama bin Laden. The problem area of urban guerillas should have been covered but isn’t, while banditry belongs to a different analysis, so Phoolan Devi is an odd woman out. Another disappointment is Arquilla’s abbreviated effort at drawing lessons, where the question most relevant to this narrative – how important for sustaining and winning irregular war is personal leadership? – is not raised. Nevertheless, the book is excellent.

Pavel Baev

Brabazon, James (2010) *My Friend the Mercenary*. Edinburgh: Canongate. 352 pp. ISBN 9781847674401.

Liberia’s relapse into violence following its devastating civil war (1989–96) is frequently overlooked. Between 2000 and 2003, the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) attempted – ultimately successfully – to forcefully remove President Charles Taylor from power. James Brabazon, then a fledgling television producer, employed gun-for-hire Nick Du Toit for protection and filmed LURD as it advanced towards the capital Monrovia. Written as a memoir, the publication focuses on the journalist’s relationship with Du Toit, who became notorious for his leading role in a failed 2004 coup in Equatorial Guinea. While the latter third of the book describes the coup (and its organization and outcome), the section on Liberia is particularly revealing. Brabazon’s travels with LURD form the book’s major backdrop, and there are fascinating anecdotes and insights into the rebel group. Despite the book’s popular style and wide intended readership, it would be a mistake to disregard the writing as that of a carefree, ill-informed journalist, as academics are, on occasion, prone to do. The publication provides an important, often graphic, account of a dynamic often missing from the literature on Liberia. The author was one of the few foreigners able to access the rebels, interview both foot soldiers and leaders, and develop a rapport with the group. Such was the intensity of Brabazon’s interaction with the rebels and Du Toit that one even wonders whether his independence was severely compromised. Many may argue that his conflicted views on the integrity of LURD, the 2004 coup, private security and the propriety of war reporting bear witness to this. The book has its faults, but it certainly provides an important reminder of LURD’s role within Liberia and, more broadly, the shocking brutality of armed conflict.

Mark Naftalin

Chenoweth, Erica & Maria J Stephan (2011) *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict*. New York: Columbia University Press. 320 pp. ISBN 9780231156820.

In this theoretically informative and empirically rich volume, Erica Chenoweth and Maria Stephan present strong evidence indicating the advantages of nonviolent forms of resistance when challenging authority. Drawing on a new dataset of 323 violent and nonviolent resistance campaigns (an enormous feat in itself), the authors rely on quantitative analysis to marshal support for the advantages of civil resistance. They find that nonviolent campaigns enable greater participation from larger sectors of society than violent insurgencies, which makes them more likely to produce loyalty shifts that tear at the regime's economic, social, and political base. Nonviolent campaigns also permit greater tactical diversity and innovation, are more resilient in the face of adversity, and draw more sympathy in the wake of brutal repression. The theory and quantitative chapters are followed by studies of four cases – Iran, Palestine, the Philippines, and Burma – to illustrate the links between nonviolence and success. The case studies enable within-case comparisons between violent and nonviolent resistance, and also between successful (Iran, Palestine, Philippines) and unsuccessful (Burma) cases of civil resistance. The authors systematically map the reasons why civil resistance works and, just as important, why alternative explanations fall short. Although the book is not entirely convincing when addressing endogeneity problems or the potential interactive or additive effects of violent and nonviolent forms of resistance within cases (Philippines or Iran), readers will still appreciate the authors' attempt to instill methodological rigor into their work. Published in the wake of the Arab Spring, the authors only briefly touch on events in Egypt and Tunisia. It will be fascinating to see how their argument extends across the rest of the region.

Andrew Yeo

Chivers, Chris (2010) *The Gun*. New York: Simon & Schuster. 481 pp. ISBN 9780743270762.

Chris Chivers has written a fascinating and comprehensive history of the development of automatic firearms. The book is divided into three parts. The first covers the initial inventions of the Gatling and Maxim machine guns and culminates in the 'industrial slaughter' of the trenches of the First World War. It focuses upon the people behind the inventions – including Richard

Gatling and Hiram Maxim – and the conservative military establishments that for a long time ignored and overlooked the new inventions. The middle section focuses upon the development of the Kalashnikov assault rifle. Chivers covers the invention of the gun and its initial production in the Soviet Union. The last section covers the global production and proliferation of the Kalashnikov and the development of its US rival, the M16 rifle. Chivers has a refreshingly critical view of the mythology of the Kalashnikov and its eponymous inventor. He points out that Mikhail Kalashnikov is an unreliable witness, perhaps due to spending most of a lifetime adapting his life story to the whims of the party. The original AK-47 was difficult to manufacture and inaccurate. Its eventual ubiquity and form was a consequence of the Red Army's requirement for a rugged assault rifle and the Soviet system's penchant for mass production, rather than the genius of its inventor. It became the symbol of revolution across the developing world because it was produced in such vast numbers and then given away to friends and allies. Chivers also notes how the development of ammunition played as important a role as that of the firearms. Above all, Chivers paints in meticulous detail how the technology of killing explains much of both the deadliness and the outcome of armed conflicts.

Nicholas Marsh

Cunningham, David (2011) *Barriers to Peace in Civil War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 282 pp. ISBN 9781107007598.

Negotiated settlements to civil wars are notoriously unstable. David Cunningham contributes to this important topic with a study revealing that an increase in veto players makes for longer civil wars. In other words, the more armed actors involved in a war that are viable veto players, the harder it is to reach settlement and hence the longer the war. The veto player theory is rich and the author does a strong job measuring aspects of veto players. The focus on veto players is a natural theoretical progression from Doyle and Sambanis's work, which demonstrated that the number of factions involved affected the prospects of civil war peacebuilding success. One part of Cunningham's analysis is quantitative, where the main dependent variable is duration of civil war and the method is hazard analysis. His use of time-varying covariates and dyadic analysis is commendable. Controlling for many different factors, he finds that the number of veto players has a positive impact on war duration. The statistical analysis is supplemented with

case studies. There is no doubt the book makes an important contribution, though the following points need to be made: It would have been nice to see some mention of third-party mediation, though this would raise endogeneity issues. Mediators are drawn to the most intractable conflicts such as those with many actors. Another interesting possibility would have been the use of competing risk hazard analysis, since civil wars can end in various ways. Cunningham writes clearly and makes his points strongly. Examples are worked in to the text nicely, and the rigorous statistical analysis is convincing. The book concludes with an interesting look at the policy implications of the research. I recommend this book to civil war scholars.

*Karl DeRouen Jr*

Grodsky, Brian K (2010) *The Costs of Justice: How New Leaders Respond to Previous Rights Abuses*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press. x + 355 pp. ISBN 9780268029777.

The main task of this book is to discuss why new elites in postcommunist states pursue the transitional justice (TJ) processes they do. Grodsky argues that previous theories explaining TJ decisions focus too much on relative power between new and old elites and too little on public goods provision. New leaders, he claims, will be sensitive to their constituents' demands and ultimately will not pursue TJ policies if this reduces their chances of staying in power. Therefore, when deciding on TJ measures, new leaders will ensure that such policies do not have a negative impact on public goods provision. Even if there are pressures for addressing former wrongdoings through TJ, both from domestic actors and internationally, new leaders also have to address public demands related to employment, economic growth, health care, etc. Grodsky introduces a justice spectrum with seven types of TJ: (1) cessation and codification of human rights violations, (2) rebuke of the former regime, (3) rehabilitation and compensation of victims, (4) truth commissions, (5) purging human rights abusers from public offices, (6) criminal prosecution of 'executors', and (7) criminal prosecution of commanders. He uses this spectrum to analyze TJ policies undertaken in four postcommunist states: Poland, Croatia, Serbia and Uzbekistan. Based on media analyses and interviews, Grodsky concludes not only that new leaders make TJ decisions based on the relative power of former elites, but also that they are sensitive to the delivery of other political goods. Grodsky's book is an important contribution to the growing TJ literature; in particular, his theoretical

framework provides a new and fruitful explanation of why new elites pursue the TJ policies they do.

*Helga Malmin Binningsbo*

Human Security Report Project (2009/2010) *Human Security Report 2009/2010: The Causes of Peace and the Shrinking Costs of War*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 128 pp. ISBN 9780199860814.

The 2009/2010 Human Security Report provides a detailed account and thorough explanation of the significant recent decline in the number of conflicts worldwide. The report is divided into three parts. Part I examines the forces and political developments behind the decrease in international conflicts. It highlights the reduction in casualties caused by interstate war since the end of the Second World War, and by civil war since the beginning of the 1990s. In Part II, the report analyzes the challenges inherent in measuring mortality rates and exploring death rates in conflicts. The final part of the report examines the recent conflict trends around the world with particular emphasis on Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, and Somalia – places with a high level of violence. It also analyzes the notion of Islamist extremism as a source of conflict and scrutinizes the claim that wars have become more intractable. Finally, it discusses the potential for the global economic crisis to underpin political violence in fragile developing countries. The report argues that the primary explanation for the current positive global trend is the growth of international initiatives serving to settle and prevent conflicts. The report makes a nuanced prediction that while the future is uncertain, and most likely will include fluctuation in terms of global security, the recent trend gives reason to be carefully optimistic. The importance of the report cannot be overestimated. Few academic initiatives have been able to attain such high influence as the Human Security Report. It will continue to provide essential analysis for policymakers, practitioners, and academics on the state of affairs in international conflict around the globe.

*Jonas Gräns*

Jackson, Paul & Peter Albrecht (2011) *Reconstructing Security after Conflict: Security Sector Reform in Sierra Leone*. London: Palgrave Macmillan. 236 pp. ISBN 9780230239005.

Sierra Leone today is a stable state, an electoral democracy, free from international tutelage and peacekeeping assistance. Most important, there is a perceived sense of 'security' among its civilian population, a major shift

from the civil war years marked by widespread rebel abuse, terror and looting. How did this change happen? Jackson and Albrecht adopt a process tracing methodology to understand the mechanisms (actors and actions) that aided reconstruction of Sierra Leone's security sector between 1997 and 2007. In this historical narrative, the authors suggest that improved personal security was not simply a product of Britain's lead nation intervention and UN mission presence. The key to success lay in positive political will and local ownership. Sierra Leone's security sector reform success was far from a linear process. Synergies from local participation, initiative and field-level decisions, rather than brilliant and timely external political inputs, helped the process forward. Despite the overall peace consolidation, poverty and low human development persist. This socio-economic weakness makes the positive strides in security, justice and governance reform important yet incomplete. Jackson and Albrecht add in-depth case information to a literature dominated by policy and lessons-learned manuals, but their book fails to raise novel questions and does not point the reader in any new directions. It would help if the authors had developed quantitative comparisons of outcomes across the spectrum of recent security sector reform cases or a qualitative typology to highlight the nuances of the Sierra Leone case. This volume adds to a long list of 'post-mortem' analyses on Sierra Leone's recovery process. However, its contribution is limited at best.

*Sukanya Podder*

Kalinovsky, Artemy M (2011) *A Long Goodbye: The Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. ii + 304 pp. ISBN 9780674058668.

This book presents an excellently researched historical case, but it is destined to be read primarily by experts in security policy who struggle with the impossible task of bringing the US and NATO intervention in Afghanistan to an acceptable conclusion. Kalinovsky goes as little as necessary into the calamities of the protracted war, dismissing along the way such popular myths as the crucial role of the portable surface-to-air Stinger missiles (p. 43), and focuses primarily on decisionmaking in the Kremlin, particularly in Gorbachev's Politburo. The main value of his research is in analyzing a mass of new primary sources obtained primarily from the Gorbachev foundation, which prove that the top brass had strikingly little influence, while crucial deliberations involved an extremely narrow group of people (p. 219). The views of Vladimir Kriuchkov, the head of the KGB, are certain to remain

shrouded in mystery, but the role of the particular personal friendship between Najibullah and Eduard Shevardnadze, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, comes out as an issue open to further investigation (p. 139). The author argues that Gorbachev gained confidence to overrule the 'hawks' in the permanently reshuffled and increasingly stressed leadership in the course of advancing the dialogue with the USA, which underpinned his New Political Thinking (p. 144). The author's criticism of Gorbachev for the failure to take effective control of the Afghan problem might invite many a reader to put a question mark on the margin of p. 234 as it goes clearly against the thrust of the central argument that pins on Gorbachev responsibility for wasting too much time with the bad choice. Today, again, no good choices are available and procrastination makes them worse.

*Pavel Baev*

Moodie, Ellen (2010) *El Salvador in the Aftermath of Peace: Crime, Uncertainty, and the Transition to Democracy*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press. 294 pp. ISBN 9780812242287.

This insightful book tells a stark, simple story with great analytical depth: after El Salvador's 12-year civil war ended in 1992, rising levels of violent crime led to repeated claims among ordinary Salvadoreans that the situation had become 'worse than the war'. This paradox is not just a striking point of departure for the book, but an analytical reference point throughout. The study is based on more than four years of fieldwork in the San Salvador metropolitan area between 1994 and 2008, purposefully cross-cutting the socio-economic strata of the city. Moodie shows how exposure to violence was transformed from a communal and purposeful experience during the war to a privatized and unpredictable experience in the postwar period. Much of the analysis revolves around 'crime stories', narratives that serve to give a shared dimension to the individualized victimization. The analyses of these stories also illustrate how the social impact of violence is determined not so much by the actual events as by how they are given meaning. Moodie's style of writing is praised as 'beautiful' on the back cover but may, at times, be perceived by some readers as pretentious and opaque (this is especially true of Chapter 6, parts of which have been published in the journal *Social Text*). Her mastery of the genres of anthropology and cultural theory comes at the cost of possibly shutting out a broader readership. That is a pity, since her work could make important contributions to the study of violence across disciplines. Beyond the specific

experiences of El Salvador, Moodie's book fundamentally challenges the meaning of peace and sheds new light on the societal dynamics of violence.

*Jørgen Carling*

Nepstad, Sharon Erickson (2011) *Nonviolent Revolutions: Civil Resistance in the Late 20th Century*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 200 pp. ISBN 9780199778218.

This book is ambitious. Sharon Erickson Nepstad – fascinated by the power of nonviolent action – provides a comparative study of the factors affecting the success or failure of nonviolent revolutions. The aim is not to develop a general explanation of revolutionary outcomes, but to advance and inspire further research on this topic. Her research focuses on structural conditions and political circumstances, and on strategic factors such as the unity of protest movements and the counter-strategies of the rulers. Therewith, the author goes beyond the focus on individual factors in previous studies. Moreover, she chooses a comparative approach in which successful and failed nonviolent revolutions of the 1980s are contrasted and assigned to certain regime types: socialist regimes (East Germany and China), military regimes (Chile and Panama) and personal dictators (Philippines and Kenya). For that purpose she uses only Anglophone secondary literature, which limits the scope of the findings. The central result is that the strategies of actors to unite the protest movement and stick to nonviolence increase the chance of nonviolent revolution. Above all, the author emphasizes the disposition of domestic security forces to defect as a crucial factor for nonviolence to succeed. Furthermore, she finds an ambivalent influence of international actors, who under certain circumstances even undermine the prospects of nonviolent revolution. Although generating fascinating insights, the macro-perspective of the book has to be criticized in order to encourage in-depth case studies. In general, the author overestimates the impact of strategic decisions by resisters and undervalues the self-dynamics of revolutionary events. This book is provoking in its brevity, but inspiring in its culminations. It comes at the right time.

*Christian Fröhlich & Alexander Leistner*

O'Gorman, Eleanor (2011) *Conflict and Development: Development Matters*. London: Zed. 179 pp. ISBN 9781848135758.

The interconnections between armed conflict, poverty, and economic development have greatly preoccupied

academics, Western governments and international aid organizations in the last decade or so. Eleanor O'Gorman provides a short, 'critical' introductory text to this increasingly complex field, seeking to cover developments within both the research and policy spheres since the end of the Cold War. Defining the topic broadly, she gives most attention to the debates of 'new' versus 'old' wars, the liberal peace paradigm and its impact on peacebuilding policy, and how to define peace and security. The book is quite loosely structured. It includes chapters on 'conflict' and its relationship with poverty and development; the role of 'conflict analysis frameworks' in development project planning; changes in focus and organization within the international aid architecture; the role of gender in armed conflict and development work; and the recent focus on fragile states and liberal statebuilding in Western development policy. Most useful is probably the book's overview of the shifts in focus as well as in organization within Western development policy circles. The chapter on our knowledge of 'conflict' and its relationship with poverty and development is somewhat disappointing, as it is more of an introduction to analytical perspectives on peace and conflict than an overview of what we know about the links between development-related factors and various forms of armed conflict. Moreover, it is hard to see that the gender dimensions of armed conflict are the most relevant to cover in this short book. That being said, the book works as a brief introduction, perhaps particularly to recent development policy debates, for people new to the topic.

*Helge Holtermann*

Reno, William (2011) *Warfare in Independent Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. xxii + 271 pp. ISBN 9780521615525.

William Reno's analysis of warfare in independent Africa has three main ingredients: African elites' strategies for gaining power and staying alive; the commercial and political systems within which they operate; and how they utilize limitations and opportunities offered by an international system in flux. Armed with a typology of five categories of rebellion, Reno provides a loosely chronological presentation of the evolution of warfare in Africa since the 1960s. He breaks new ground for the study of rebellions in the 1960s when demonstrating how actors and institutions within the international system played a crucial, although not always prudent, role in their support for liberation movements of various calibers. Reno's chief interest is, however,

developments since the end of the Cold War: to explain the rationale of currently predominant warlord rebellions and the less ambitious parochial rebellions. An international setting less prone to indulge African rebels, crumbling state control and increased insecurity have changed African elites' fields of leverage – a key concept in the book – and forced them to refashion their strategies for recruitment and justification of their struggles. This book is not a bombshell. The purpose of *Warfare in Independent Africa* is not to prove any high-concept, mono-causal theory about war in Africa or the world as such. It stands in a tradition of down-to-earth empirical studies of politics and conflict in Africa where the main goal is to understand the cases under scrutiny. Reno makes results from a growing field of research accessible in an elegant and rich analysis and takes our understanding of these murky phenomena one step further.

*Øystein H Rolandsen*

Slater, Dan (2010) *Ordering Power: Contentious Politics and Authoritarian Leviathans in Southeast Asia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. xviii + 324 pp. ISBN 9780521165457.

This groundbreaking study will set the stage for many books to come. Slater asks why some authoritarian states are more stable than others and finds the answer in 'protection pacts' between governments and social elites. What decides the terms of such protection pacts is the level of fear among elites of social revolution, separatism or external aggression. The greater their fear, the more power they yield to the state, and the more they let themselves be taxed. Southeast Asia, with its mix of strong and fragile authoritarianisms as well as democratic elements, forms a fruitful testing ground for comparative political science. It is refreshing to see Slater round off his analysis by showing that theory derived from Southeast Asia may be applicable to other parts of the world, not least Europe. Elite threat perceptions are the 'causal motor' of ordered power. This explains why the Singaporean and Malaysian 'authoritarian Leviathans' are strong and durable whereas the states of the Philippines and Thailand are fragile. The key factor is the relative strength of leftist movements in the aftermath of WWII. Burma and Indonesia's long-term military rule has a different explanation: threat from separatist movements. Slater's treatment of the former South Vietnam is not quite as convincing. However, he ends his book with an interesting remark about a kind of authoritarianism he otherwise leaves out

of his analysis – the states born in successful leftist revolutions: China, Laos, North Korea and Vietnam. Drawing from the Mexican experience, he sees such states as prone to internal fragmentation and factionalism. Some of them have existed for a long time, but duration is not the same as durability, he says.

*Stein Tonnesson*

Stone, Randall W (2011) *Controlling Institutions: International Organizations and the Global Economy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 256 pp. ISBN 9781107005402.

At a time when the world is tumbling from one financial crisis to the next, some look with hope, others with anger and fear to the International Monetary Fund (IMF). According to the anti-globalization movement and a strange bedfellow – realist international relations scholars – the IMF is simply a tool in the service of US interests. Randall Stone advances a more sophisticated model of informal governance and US influence over the IMF and international organizations. Stone suggests that Washington is ready to accept comparatively low levels of formal decisionmaking power in international institutions, knowing that US policymakers can use informal mechanisms to control these institutions when vital US interests are at stake. The USA's informal influence is built upon organizational advantages such as superior access to information and the power to persuade key officials. These informal resources allow Washington to shape key IMF decisions despite holding only 17% of votes. Stone's analysis is rigorous, including case studies on the World Trade Organization and the EU. Yet, Stone's model may overstate leading powers' ability to take control of an organization. It implies that the USA can overcome bureaucratic resistance alongside secondary powers' opposition whenever necessary. In our increasingly multi-polar world, secondary powers are becoming more willing to unite to block leading states' efforts at manipulation of institutions. For example, even at the height of US hegemony, Germany and France prevented NATO from endorsing the 2003 US invasion of Iraq. Nonetheless, *Controlling Institutions* makes an important contribution to the contemporary debate on the scope and nature of global governance. Stone's book is essential reading for all scholars and practitioners who are interested in learning how international institutions really operate.

*Michael F Harsch*

Toft, Monica Duffy; Daniel Philpott & Timothy Samuel Shah (2011) *God's Century: Resurgent Religion and Global Politics*. New York: WW Norton. 276 pp. ISBN 9780393069266.

Delivering another blow to secularization theory, *God's Century* argues that religious individuals and institutions are and will continue to be important political actors. But whether they are actors for violence or peace, for totalitarianism or democracy – indeed, whether they are effective or ineffective actors – depends on two variables, according to the authors. The first is the relationship between religion and government in each particular state: is religion independent of or integrated with political institutions, and is the relationship consensual or conflictual? The second is the specific 'political theology' of the religion: does it possess a theology of peace or of violence? While the latter explanation sounds (and to some extent is) tautological, the authors' point is that religious beliefs matter; religion is not a mere epiphenomenon of more 'real' forces like class or ethnicity. With the aid of many historical and contemporary examples, and supported by tables and charts, the book explores the rise of politically assertive religion (partly as a consequence of liberalization and democratization, together with modern media) and the contribution of political religion to global democracy and to global violence and terrorism. The book acknowledges that religions can be agents for peace and justice but that 'religious civil wars' can be even more virulent than secular struggles. The final chapter presents 'ten rules for surviving God's century', on the (probably correct) premises that religion will not be fading anytime soon and that its effects – for good or bad – will remain significant. The book is written in a popular and accessible style but offers some information and insights for scholars too.

Jack David Eller

Van Dam, Nikolaos (2011) *The Struggle for Power in Syria: Politics and Society under Asad and the Ba'th Party*, 4th edition. New York: IB Tauris. xiv + 255 pp. ISBN 9781848857605.

Good books on modern Syria are few and hard to come by. Nikolaos Van Dam's work on the rise of the Ba'th regime in Syria, however, stands out as one. It is a short

historical account of the rise to power of the current Ba'th regime, following Syrian history only from the last half of the 20th century. Unlike most works on Syria, however, Van Dam's focus is entirely Syrian. This allows for a more concentrated version of events than that which is provided in most accounts of Syrian history, which tend to factor in the regional and international aspects of Syrian politics. This broader picture is obviously necessary, but the insider view that Van Dam provides is a rarer account to come by. It is therefore easier to supplement Van Dam's work than it is to understand Syria without it. The greatest strength of Van Dam's book is that he allows both the Syrian regime itself and its internal opponents, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, to have a voice. Extensive quotations from these actors are used throughout the main text, as well as in three appendixes and in a separate bibliographic chapter titled 'Syrian Ba'thist memoirs'. The book also contains extensive demographic breakdowns of the country, which provide the reader with a deeper understanding of exactly how the minority-based regime functions. If there is anything for which the book can be criticized, it is insufficient updating since the 1996 third edition. Some updates have been made, but they relate mainly to the death of Hafiz al-Asad in 2000.

Jørgen Jensehaugen

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