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Editor's Shelf

Robert H. Taylor

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Editor's Shelf

The theories, strategies, and myths associated with the “Long War” against terrorism and its sources have dominated the genre of books crossing my desk for the past two years. In those works a number of authors have asserted that the threat America faces around the globe is propagated solely by ethnic hostilities and symbolic politics. Unfortunately, it appears that many of these theories are being accepted as fact without the requisite intellectual and political analysis necessary to understand the root causes of violence and terror. Of the hundreds of books we receive for review, only a select few have thoroughly examined the inspiration and sources of these threats and the associated strategies for their defeat; these few are indeed worthy of our readers’ attention.



Anthony H. Cordesman, in coordination with the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), has produced two thoroughly researched and objective works related to the ongoing violence in the Middle East. *Iraqi Security Forces: A Strategy for Success* (authored with the assistance of Patrick Baetjer), provides readers insight into the current security situation in Iraq. In a pointed attack on the initial US policy in Iraq, the authors expose the failures of US planners to correctly assess the nature and size of the Iraqi insurgency and the import of the collapse of the Iraqi military and security apparatus. Cordesman goes on to outline a plan for how governments should *not* fall into the same trap that America did when conducting such a war or occupation. Cordesman’s second book examining the destabilizing events in the Persian Gulf region precipitated by the continuing instability in Iraq, the Iranian nuclear threat, and the reality of terrorist attacks within Saudi Arabia’s borders is *National Security in Saudi Arabia: Threats, Responses, and Challenges*, coauthored with Nawaf Obaid. The authors analyze several factors underlying Saudi Arabia’s security concerns, especially those external to the kingdom. The majority of this examination focuses on Iranian military strength and its developing nuclear program. This is a thorough, sobering analysis of the wide-ranging threats to Saudi security and the kingdom’s ability to respond. The authors present a scathing analysis of economic and demographic influences affecting Saudi Arabia’s ability to continue to defend itself and the associated US support. Both of these books should be required reading for anyone involved or interested in the development of US foreign policy and military strategy related to the Middle East.

Michael R. Fischbach, a professor of history at Randolph-Macon College, has provided a fascinating analysis of one of the most sensitive issues affecting the peace process and the future of Palestinian refugees—their grievances and the fate of properties abandoned in 1948. *The Peace Process and Palestinian Refugee Claims* is

For details on publishers and prices of books mentioned, see “Off the Press” in this issue or call *Parameters* at 717-245-4943 (e-mail: Parameters@carlisle.army.mil).

an authoritative and superbly researched examination of Palestinian history from the territorial negotiations of the last five decades to the Palestinian claims of today. Many in the West are unfamiliar with the fact that some 750,000 Palestinian Arabs either fled or were expelled from Israel in 1948 and were forced to abandon vast amounts of land and properties. Fischbach concludes that what the Palestinians really want is not compensation (Israel has offered this several times), but restitution and the inherent right of return. The book provides great insight for the casual student of Israeli and Palestinian relations.

Following on the theme of Middle Eastern relations is Patrick Clawson and Michael Rubin's latest work, *Eternal Iran: Continuity and Chaos*. Building on the thesis that the Middle East and Iran in particular have become one of the most controversial and least understood regions of the world, the authors present an extremely well-researched, balanced, and comprehensive compendium of facts and Iranian history. The authors explore the character and roots of Iranian nationalism, but more importantly they focus on the image that the Iranian people have of themselves and their attitude toward the outside world, specifically the United States. Clawson and Rubin have successfully provided readers with an understanding of a people and culture that previously appeared to many in the West only as an insoluble enigma.

At the extreme of Islam are the radicals and terrorists; perhaps the best known but least understood among these are the suicide bombers. *Manufacturing Human Bombs: The Making of Palestinian Suicide Bombers* is the result of years of research by Mohammed M. Hafez, a visiting professor in the political science department at the University of Missouri and an acknowledged expert on political developments within Palestine. The author spent extensive time on the West Bank and in Israel during the Al-Aqsa intifada of 2000, interviewing both participants and victims to develop this balanced and informative volume. This chilling study provides readers with an unequalled understanding of how suicide bombers have become the weapon of choice among Islamic fundamentalists. The author presents an in-depth analysis of the mentality, lifestyle, faith, and honor of those who decide to become and those who support suicide bombers. This insightful book examines the attitudes of the societies that spawn these people and the issues surrounding the use of suicide terrorism in countries such as Iraq, Israel, Chechnya, and Afghanistan. This is a must read for anyone interested in Middle Eastern culture and, especially, for those involved in countering this deadly strategy.

How groups and nations exercise asymmetric threats to equalize relative power in times of conflict has become a recurring theme since 9/11. Ivan Arreguín-Toft's *How the Weak Win Wars: A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict* provides an invaluable contribution to our understanding of how the weak are able to defeat the strong. The author develops his thesis based on the belief that although the power of the actors, their technology, and any outside support they might receive are important, it is the interaction of the opposing powers' strategies that truly makes the difference. Using statistical and in-depth historical analyses of conflict over a 200-year period, Arreguín-Toft reveals how this new understanding of asymmetry permits an appreciation of how the United States was successful in its war in Afghanistan while the So-

viet Union was not. His strategic interaction theory is certain to influence individuals and groups involved in international relations as well as policymakers and planners grappling with interstate and civil wars, and countering terrorism.

In the first of two planned volumes addressing US Army theater command in Vietnam, Graham A. Cosmas (deputy director of the Joint History Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff) examines the US role in the conflict from February 1962 through the end of 1967. *MACV, The Joint Command in the Years of Escalation, 1962-1967* traces the story of the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, from its establishment to the climax of American escalation in 1967. This volume presents a view of the conflict from the perspective of the MACV commander and his staff through this period of the war, examining how and why certain decisions were made. It is the story of a small, temporary headquarters that grew incrementally into a major theater command directing some 500,000 American forces and an equal number of allied forces comprising South Vietnamese, South Koreans, Australians, New Zealanders, and Thais. Dr. Cosmas has done a superb job of culling a number of primary sources from the National Archives, the Kennedy and Johnson presidential libraries, and the historical offices of the various services to develop this extensive analysis of one of the critical periods in US military history. Of invaluable assistance to this project were the extensive papers of General William C. Westmoreland. The author presents a riveting tale of commanders juggling a plethora of missions in an attempt to satisfy a variety of political masters and their constituencies. This is a wonderful work that is destined to become a classic in the study of theater-level warfare.

Finally, I must admit to the sin of oversight. Several months ago I was contacted by a colleague regarding the possible review of a book resultant of a symposium on Dwight D. Eisenhower held at Fort McNair, Washington, D.C., in January 2005. I vaguely recall stating something to the effect that, "Yes, that might be of interest to our readers," and then completely removing the fact from my consciousness. What a terrible omission on my part. In fact, Dennis E. Showalter's magnificent accomplishment in editing *Forging the Shield: Eisenhower and National Security for the 21st Century* offers a special and unique understanding of the key role President Eisenhower played in developing America's legacy in the national and international security arenas. The roll-call of contributors for this work reads like a "Who's Who" from the annals of leading security specialists and historians. However, this reader believes that the highlight of the work is the account of the concluding roundtable panel and discussion chaired by Brent Scowcroft with Andrew Goodpaster, Montgomery Meigs, and Louis Galambos. This was, in fact, the last public appearance by General Goodpaster prior to his death, resulting in a most appropriate dedication of the book. The work focuses on Eisenhower's contributions to victory in the Cold War period as President and Commander in Chief (1953-1961), and his influence over defense strategies and foreign policy initiatives. The superbly presented Introduction by Showalter and Ernest R. May's moving Epilogue add markedly to this excellent summation of President Eisenhower's legacy. This book should be on the shelf of all who might consider themselves students or practitioners of US domestic and foreign policy during the period of the Cold War. — RHT □