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Book Reviews

The Market for Force: The Consequences of Privatizing Security, Deborah Avant. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005, pp.310. $75.00/£45.00 (hardback); $29.99/£18.99 (paperback).

For Deborah Avant, an associate professor of political science at George Washington University, there is a need both to avoid extremes and to inject a sense of nuance and context into the debates regarding the privatisation of security. Her concern is that those involved in these debates are speaking past each other. For proponents of privatisation, this is easy to do because of the seeming need for market solutions due to the limitations of state security sectors and the numerous crises that could be addressed through the application of managed violence. For opponents of privatisation, this is equally easy to do because of their pejorative interpretation of the word 'mercenary' and their wish for the 'ideal' state monopolisation of violence as described by Max Weber. In order to refocus these debates, Avant suggests in her book that '...we examine the variety of institutional forms that are emerging, the way they are functioning, and think about their viability in terms of whether they generate mechanisms that work together, potentially generating reinforcing processes, or chafe against one another, generating continuing change' (p.263).

To make this welcome and much-needed examination of the privatisation of security debates, Avant develops her study around three dimensions of control pertaining to the management of violence that are foundational for the study of civil-military relations: the functional, the political and the social. The functional dimension pertains to the effective application of violence necessary to achieve goals, a line of analysis closely linked to the work of Samuel Huntington. The political dimension, informed by Samuel Finer's thinking, analyses the management of violence through the lens of political allegiance and accepted political structures. Finally, for the social dimension associated with Morris Janowitz's arguments, the particular social context and the related social values form the analytical boundaries by which violence should be assessed. For Avant, through a consideration of the privatisation of security by means of these criteria, the trade-offs are evident and it becomes clear 'that the claims of optimists and pessimists do not compete – they focus on, and illuminate, different dimensions of privatization's effect on the control of force' (p.78).

By embracing this argument, the book's valuable qualities are twofold. First, the book serves as an excellent and concise primer regarding the contemporary international private security industry. Through relying upon a rich research base developed through interviews and primary and secondary materials, Avant expertly outlines the various supply, demand and ideational rationales that led to this largely post-Cold War phenomenon. Second, in order to make the trade-offs plain regarding the three dimensions, the book employs excellent case studies, the strongest of wish pertain to contracting in Sierra Leone, Croatia, and the US and regulatory approaches by the US, South Africa and the United Kingdom. These case studies

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serve well to inform the book's main hypotheses that stress the importance of intervening variables such as state strength, the nature of the security task and 'the strength and consistency of norms and their relative hold on the public and private purveyors of force' (p.254).

The reader might quibble with one aspect of the book that simultaneously relates to its presentation, its marketing and one element of its argument. Early in the text, Avant defines privatisation (with italics in the original) as 'decisions to devolve the *delivery or financing* of services to private entities...The comparison then, is between private financing and/or delivery of security and the financing and/or delivery of security by states – either directly or through state-based consortiums such as international organizations' (p.26). The particular point regarding private financing is somewhat underplayed in part because of the book's predominant emphasis on the private security industry and its state-based clientele. This is reinforced by the book's cover featuring the armed personnel and a helicopter of one US-hired private security firm, Blackwater USA. Additionally, the book's sole chapter that deals specifically with private financing is not as well-rounded as the other sections. To a degree this is understandable, especially with respect to interaction between humanitarians and private security firms. If the appreciation of state military functions by humanitarian organisations is still coming to fruition (and even here the book notes significant challenges), then it is safe to say that their understanding of private security firms is not nearly as well-rounded. This lack of understanding relates to several issues: the competition amongst humanitarian organisations, the concerns regarding image, the desire to maintain the humanitarian ethic, and the problems related to coordination within and between humanitarian organisations. Because this chapter, however, at times attempts to rely upon 'what ifs' regarding private financing, its limitations are underscored just as it inadvertently strengthens the case material in the other chapters.

One can empathise with Avant as writing this book must have been like following a moving target. On the one hand, much of the book's argument rests upon cases that, for lack of a better term, have run their course; the available evidence is in. On the other hand, to rest the book solely on these cases would see Avant ignoring Washington's current and considerable reliance upon private security firms in Iraq. Described by Peter Singer as the 'coalition of the billing', this private presence on the battlefield, third in numbers behind the American and British armed forces, is the largest in contemporary times. As such, material garnered from the Iraq case, as analysed through the three dimensions, makes frequent appearances, especially in the initial and later sections of the book.

Stemming from this material, important questions come to the fore. Because of the ecological impact (Avant's term, p.220) of the US on the international private security industry, to what extent should hoped-for global regulation rest with international bodies like the United Nations rather than as brought about through the sole superpower's policies? Similarly, because it is a transnationally sourced industry as Avant reveals, a lot of the manpower in Iraq working to advance American policy comes from developing world countries with implications posed along the functional, political and social lines. How might this substantial American reliance impact upon

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the security sector dynamics within the exporting countries and how should the US react appropriately? Though Avant, obviously, cannot be conclusive regarding these matters, her analytical approach does offer the reader numerous contentious issues to ponder in the future. This, in and of itself, is an important contribution.

© Dr Christopher Spearin
Department of Defence Studies
Canadian Forces College

Deadly Connections: States that Sponsor Terrorism, Daniel Byman. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005, pp.369. $30/£19.99 (hardback) $18.99/£10.99 (paperback).

The disturbing message of Daniel Byman's *Deadly Connections* is encapsulated in his observation that 'if al Qa'ida were hounded wherever it tried to set up shop, it would be far harder for the organization to recruit, train, raise money, purchase weapons, protect its leadership, and otherwise survive and prosper' (p.309). What is unfortunate for the victims of international terrorism is that neither al-Qa'ida, nor Hizballah, nor the Hizb-ul-Mujahedin, nor the Taliban, nor a large number of other lethal groups are hounded wherever they try to set up shop. On the contrary, they are hosted, protected, financed and armed by sympathetic governments. International terrorist organisations survive, prosper and reap destruction in large measure because states support them.

As a former RAND analyst and government consultant and present-day teacher and scholar, Daniel Byman has been a frequent contributor to the literature of counter-terrorism. *Deadly Connections* is both his most recent and perhaps his most compelling piece of work. A product of the author's current association with the Walsh School at Georgetown University and the Saban Center at the Brookings Institution, this study of state-sponsored terrorism is first and foremost an impressive piece of scholarship. It is meticulously and exhaustively researched, theoretically informed, conceptually clear, carefully organised and accessibly written. Byman mines and combines voluminous monographic literatures on terrorism, counterterrorism and the activities of terrorist groups. He carefully examines the official documents of governments, keeps a running tally of terrorist associations and attacks, and offers a narrative that relates the massive extent to which states abet terrorism. Byman also explains why they do this.

The book has notable strengths. For one thing, the volume of detailed information offered in the book concerning the activities of international terrorist groups and the ways in which national governments support them is encyclopedic. This reporting is also disheartening to any who might wish to believe that protecting innocent lives and promoting world order rank importantly among governments' priorities. In a succession of chapters, Byman examines and explains Iran's sponsorship of Hizballah, Syria's continuing support for a number of anti-Israeli groups, Pakistan's involvement with Muslim terrorist organisations operating in Kashmir, Islamabad's role in the rise of the Taliban and the Taliban's subsequent lavish hosting of al-Qa'ida. The analysis in *Deadly Connections* also takes account of passive state sponsorship because looking the other way while groups bent on violence organise, raise

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money, recruit, train, arm and hide out on their territory certainly abets international terrorism and it also implicates many more governments. The extensive list of passive sponsors includes Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Somalia, Libya, Greece, several of the Central Asian successor states to the former Soviet Union and, with respect to the IRA, the United States.

In explaining why states sponsor international terrorism, Byman resists simple answers. State-sponsored terrorism is a highly complex phenomenon because governments support terrorist organisations for a variety of reasons; in a variety of ways and under a variety of domestic and world political conditions. Sponsoring governments look upon terrorist groups as instruments to be used for pursuing foreign and domestic policy goals. States 'support terrorist groups for three general reasons: to advance their international political and strategic position; to further their ideology; and to bolster their position at home' (p.36). These groups attack state enemies that cannot be otherwise attacked, further revolutionary and ideological causes embraced by sponsoring governments and bolster domestic support for sponsoring regimes. In most instances using terrorist organisations as instruments of national policy is relatively inexpensive when compared to alternative means and measures. It is also 'deniable' to the fantastic extent that some of those governments who harbour and direct terrorist organisations face the world as champions of anti-terrorism. Of course, a main reason for using terrorist organisations as instruments of national policy is that supporting terrorism works: enemies are debilitated or destroyed; extremist ideologies are diffused and domestic constituents are enthralled.

For all of these reasons, and despite pitfalls involved in attempting to control non-governmental groups that have agendas of their own, state-sponsored terrorism is difficult to combat, and, in Byman's estimation, almost impossible to fully suppress. 'Terrorism is a weapon of the weak. Israel, for example, has a more powerful military and far larger economy than Syria; the United States is more powerful than Iran; India is more powerful than Pakistan, and so on. Yet these powerful countries cannot, or at least do not, marshal their economic and military power to stop terrorism. Indeed, they resemble helpless giants, unable to use their massive strength to defend themselves against an elusive and ruthless adversary' (p.259).

In a revealing analysis of 'the difficulties of stopping state sponsorship' Byman examines and more or less eliminates the conventional inventory of measures employed against sponsoring states, such as, economic sanctions, political isolation, exposure, harassment and condemnation, limited strikes and military invasions. None have proven particularly successful in dissuading states from sponsoring terrorist organisations, mainly because the benefits of sponsoring terrorism are perceived to outweigh the costs of penalties imposed by targeted regimes or the international community. Most coercive attempts at dissuasion or retaliation only fortify sponsors' resolve to continue abetting terrorism, and for ideologically driven sponsors no form or amount of external pressure deters.

If any part of Daniel Byman's book might be called disappointing this would be the last chapter titled 'Halting Support for Terrorism' where the author acknowledges that 'cutting the deadly connection between states and terrorist groups is difficult at best and impossible at worst' (p.273). The disappointment here is not with the

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author's analysis, but rather with the unsettling reality that the analysis displays. States are going to continue to support international terrorism and there is not a great deal that those destructively affected can do about this. Multilateral pressures on terrorist sponsors are more promising than unilateral ones, countermeasures that address the motives of sponsoring states are more promising than those that ignore such motives; diplomatic packages that mix appealing incentives with credible threats are more promising than threats alone. But the only really hopeful turns of events seem to be terrorist sponsors losing their zeal or interest for reasons mostly unrelated to pressures from the outside. In the end, Byman recommends that the international community should try to halt the state sponsorship of terrorism 'before it starts', by creating 'a strong norm against the sponsorship of terrorism' (p.310). His appeal is worth heeding. Yet doesn't this have somewhat of a hollow ring in world where governments are not even able to agree on a definition of 'terrorism'?

© Professor Donald J. Puchala
Byrnes Professor of International Studies
University of South Carolina

Counterinsurgency and the Global War on Terror: Military Culture and Irregular War, Robert M. Cassidy. Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2006, pp.211. $49.95 (hardback).

In this book Robert M. Cassidy, a Lieutenant Colonel in the US Army, seeks to draw on history to explore the challenges that face armed forces in coping with counterinsurgency. He argues that historical experience and, in particular, institutional culture help to explain different national approaches to counterinsurgency. The book makes some useful and important points, which deserve to be taken very seriously by US decision-makers; hopefully the author's position and experience will assist in this. However, it also has a number of flaws which significantly reduce its overall impact.

The book begins with two chapters considering the changing nature of insurgency and then the difficulties posed by small wars for great powers. These are followed by chapters on military culture and experience of counterinsurgency in the cases of Russia, Britain and the United States. A final chapter concludes by looking at success in counterinsurgency. There are copious references to the secondary literature on the subject but, irritatingly, most of the footnotes go on for at least a whole paragraph, making it difficult at times to locate the source of an idea or quotation.

Chapter one, the most significant and convincing chapter, rejects the term 'Global War on Terror'. It plausibly argues that Al Qaeda is best viewed as a global insurgency which presents the Western powers with similar problems to previous asymmetric opponents, albeit in an evolving and even more challenging form. This characterisation has important implications for policy, namely that, 'Although the counterinsurgencies in Afghanistan and Iraq certainly have military dimensions, the primary focus should be ideological, political and economic' (p.13). The same applies to the broader campaign against Al Qaeda. Crucially, Cassidy argues for a major culture change in the US military, to embrace counterinsurgency 'as a central and core competency for the long term' (p.19). He believes that such a

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change in culture is in fact underway. The second chapter sets out the problems encountered by big powers in small wars, in which their opponents tend to have the greater will. Large regular militaries inevitably find such foes difficult to counter and find the adaptation necessary both difficult and unpalatable.

The three chapters on military culture and counterinsurgency make an interesting point, but one that could have been established far more concisely. For example, the chapter on Britain devotes several pages to the evolving organisation of the British Army during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The broad argument is sound, namely that the imperial commitments of the British Army as well as its decentralised regimental system – which the author memorably describes as 'quasi-tribal' (p.86) – inclined it to take counterinsurgency (its principal role) seriously and to develop an effective policy for it. This flexible and pragmatic approach emphasised the need to integrate military and political means, to use minimum force (because more tends to be counter-productive) and to isolate the insurgents from the population.

The Russia chapter makes some plausible observations about the campaigns in Afghanistan and Chechnya but it does not seem to add much to the overall argument – not least because the conclusion does not return to any Russian examples. Indeed, since that chapter mentions the French experience in Indochina and Algeria, the chapter on Russian military culture and counterinsurgency might usefully have been replaced by one on France, not least to draw on the experience of the author who, the inside back cover informs us, holds a degree from the French Joint Defense College.

Cassidy is on surer ground in his chapter on American military culture where he reminds his readers that it is simply untrue that the US Army has lacked experience of counterinsurgency. Rather, like the British, the bulk of its experience has been in precisely this sort of warfare. However, the strong institutional preference for large-scale, conventional conflicts in which mass combat power can achieve unambiguous victory by annihilating the main enemy forces (as in the ideal of World War II) meant that counterinsurgency was simply something that the Army did not want to do. Rather than learn from experience, it rather tended to turn away from it and – paradoxically given the frequency with which it was encountered – conceived counterinsurgency as aberrant. The author writes tellingly about Vietnam: 'because the experience was perceived as anathema to the mainstream American military, hard lessons learned there about fighting guerrillas were neither embedded nor preserved in the US Army's institutional memory' (p.99). Cassidy is perhaps at his most convincing when criticising the wilful misinterpretation in some parts of the US Army of the reasons for the Vietnam defeat: anyone who found Harry Summers' *On Strategy* persuasive would do well to study this chapter. The US Army's marginalisation of counterinsurgency was exacerbated by the 'Desert Storm' in 1991, which was seized upon to sideline the more common post-Cold War experience of less intense conflicts. No mention is made in this chapter of the US Marine Corps – though their contrasting approach and the widely admired 1940 *Small Wars* manual are briefly cited in the final chapter; this is perhaps another missed opportunity.

The final chapter, 'Success in Counterinsurgency', feels rather mis-titled, as it focuses on the rather narrow issue of the use of indigenous forces in

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counterinsurgency rather than looking more widely at best practice, of which this is just one element albeit an important one. Even this narrow subject is not considered rigorously, with too little space given to a detailed analysis and comparison of the cases, let alone consideration of other relevant examples. The British experience, lauded earlier, is skipped over in just four pages – including one on Malaya and two on Rhodesia, but no mention of the Indonesian Confrontation or Oman, nor of Aden, which as a failure might have been particularly illuminating. As the author correctly states, Britain has unparalleled experience of waging small wars and could offer a great deal of useful lessons for the US military; yet this book does not provide the sort of systematic analysis that might further such a process. The French experience in Indochina and Algeria is covered in a more generous though still inadequate seven pages. Even the US experience in the Indian Wars, the Philippines, Nicaragua and Vietnam receives less than ten pages.

At times, the book seems to be trying to cover too much ground. There is much extraneous material that adds little to the core argument and which could usefully have been cut, replaced by a more systematic and in-depth analysis of the case studies to support the core argument. The historical examples are not well tied in with the contemporary analysis which leaves the central theme sometimes seeming a little lost. The main message of this book is clear and compelling, yet it could have advanced its case far more effectively with a different structure and a more disciplined and focused analysis. It was, overall, a bit of a disappointment and a lost opportunity.

© Dr Tim Benbow
Defence Studies Department
Joint Services Command and Staff College
UK Defence Academy, Shrivenham, England

The Norms of War: Cultural Beliefs and Modern Conflict, Theo Farrell. Boulder, CO, and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2005, pp.xii + 225. $49.95 (hardback).

‘Ideas shape the way humans make war’, writes Theo Farrell, Reader in War in the Modern World at King’s College London, at the beginning of this important study of how culture and war interact. As Farrell’s many references throughout his text to the works of leading scholars in the field and his extensive bibliography attest, to examine the causal dynamics and motivations generating war and influencing its conduct is far from new, but it has been a very disparate field of study. Farrell, one feels, has very likely changed all that. Rarely can the diverse strands of analysis necessary for comprehending the human recourses and responses to the phenomenon of war have been so comprehensively yet clearly mustered and assessed. Farrell’s book will make scholars in his field sit up.

As the title indicates, it is through a study of norms, the ‘ideas that prescribe or proscribe behaviour’ (p.1), the institutionalised beliefs that define identities, frame perceptions and guide actions, that Farrell navigates his readers through a breadth and depth of experience and academic interpretation. A major strength of the book is its synthesis of ideas not only from international relations literature but also from that of the new institutionalism of sociology, that addresses the institutionalising

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of norms in 'transnational professional and policy communities'; the literature of the 'social and cultural history of warfare'; and that of 'public international law'. Drawing thus upon the work of specialists in international relations, political science, sociology, international law and history, the book identifies a number of varied but specific norms and assesses them through some well-considered and articulated case studies. 'The picture that emerges from this interdisciplinary overview and historical analysis' offers Farrell, 'is one that subverts the neorealist notion that war is a pure brutish test of strength in which beliefs and values have no place. Instead what we find are norms operating at multiple levels to profoundly shape modern military practice' (p.2). We do indeed, and Farrell makes and supports his case well. What we also find through his work, and rightly and inevitably so in this reviewer's opinion, is a great deal of complexity at the heart of modern war, its decision-making and conduct. Interpretations gained through lenses too-coloured by the experiences of earlier conflict models may offer tantalising glimpses of the familiar but may be led astray by assumptions of a rationality at work that is more apparent than real. Such interpretations may prove at best inadequate and unconvincing and at worst irrelevant. It is to Farrell's credit that he cuts through this complexity with a very sharp analytical knife and ensures that his readers are not allowed to fall into this trap. The focus upon the enduring relevance of experience is sharp throughout; the linkages firmly established.

The case studies are varied and interesting. In one deliberately chosen because 'norm transplantation was not driven by external imposition or inducement' (p.55), Farrell discusses how in Ireland in the 1920s an Irish Army evolved out of a guerrilla force to adopt a conventional force structure and posture, and submit to a degree of civilian control, both of which could well be termed as contrary to the Army's interests and the security needs of Ireland at the time. Farrell's conclusion, that 'Ideas, not power and interest, shaped Irish military development' (p. 56), is too convincing to be dismissed lightly, however provocative, and this is so throughout his book. As a good case study should, it tests various theories and also leads to an informative and thought-provoking examination of modern worldwide capital-intensive militarisation emphasising conventional war technologies that often appear to be at variance with the resources and security needs of states.

Other case studies include, under the heading of 'Mass Industrialized War', the norms influencing Germany's embarking upon war in 1914 and 1939 and the United States' conduct of the war against Japan between 1941 and 1945. Here Farrell identifies the 'interaction of imagination and technology on warfare', the distancing through mechanisation of those operating weapons systems and their human targets, and how technological demands obscure human consequences – the mass firebombing of Japanese cities being an example cited. The distorting influence of hatred of an enemy emerges very clearly in this discussion. Military campaigns are, of course, conditioned by more than imagination and technology, but they are important and perhaps still as yet too little understood factors. As Farrell observes, 'technology made the apocalyptic air war against Japan possible, both literally and psychologically' (p.86). It is a compelling point, and a sobering example of the disconnectedness between a society and its values and the imperatives under which it

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may, under certain conditions, wage war. Similar incisive treatment is accorded to the nuclear war thinking of the United States. This section is a useful and quite fascinating case study of what began as thinking around a weapon system about the effects of which little was known, moving through the early Cold War analysis of its utility to the sophisticated nuclear war-fighting concepts of the 1960s.

Farrell's work is by no means the only study that should be read by students who desire to understand how rational decision-makers can 'think about the unthinkable', but it certainly ought to be one of them. The Kosovo campaign is examined through the perspective of a possibly emerging new norm of humanitarian intervention, and the book closes with a discussion of what Farrell terms 'modern Western warfare' and a brief look at the war in Iraq in 2003. Complexity is acknowledged throughout but especially in these later chapters dealing with the wars of the late 20th and early 21st centuries, but some rules are suggested for negotiating it: 'Recognize that norms may act both as moral codes and technical scripts for war' writes Farrell; 'Be attentive to the causal mechanisms that make norms work, and look out for enabling conditions for normative change. Finally, home in on particular norms and track their causal effect through case studies' (p.183). It is good advice, from an expert whose clarity of exposition, engagement with his subject and crisp style cannot but assist and stimulate students in his field. Most certainly a book for the reading lists.

© Ian Gooderson
Defence Studies Department
Joint Services Command and Staff College
UK Defence Academy, Shrivenham, England

The Worlds of Herman Kahn: The Intuitive Science of Thermonuclear War, Sharon Ghamari-Tabrizi. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2005, pp.386. $26.95/ £17.95 (hardback).

American thinking on nuclear strategy reached a crescendo in the late 1950s and early 1960s as some of the best minds applied ideas from all sorts of academic disciplines. A new strategic environment called for new thinking. Looming large in this group – intellectually and physically – was Herman Kahn, the physicist who devoted himself to *Thinking about the Unthinkable* (the title of one of his major books on the subject). With this engaging study of Kahn's thinking, independent scholar Sharon Ghamari-Tabrizi has produced an engaging book which is almost as idiosyncratic and colourful as Kahn himself.

Another of Kahn's books which dealt with nuclear strategy was entitled *On Escalation*, but Ghamari-Tabrizi's study seems to take some while to match this particular metaphor. The opening chapters guide the reader to the social and intellectual context of 1950s America as a way of highlighting some of the broader reference points from which Kahn's very distinct thinking can be appreciated. Particular attention is paid to the general dread and unease which the nuclear age had introduced and to the role of the RAND Corporation (which Kahn had joined in 1947) in encouraging the imagination which seemed necessary for dealing with the dilemmas that the age was throwing up.

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This establishes a pattern for the remainder of the work which switches between Kahn's contributions to nuclear strategy (of which there is perhaps not as much as the reader might have anticipated) and that broader context. Soon it becomes clear that Ghamari-Tabrizi is not seeking to provide a conventional intellectual biography. Instead her interest is in discovering the 'motifs' in Kahn's work and connecting those to the 'motifs' in contemporary American popular culture. For example, the author explains that she views RAND methods that Kahn used such as systems analysis 'not as a science but as a style, a mood, and an aesthetic' (p.126).

Moreover, rather than doing so from an exhaustive account of Kahn's many writings, the author's focus is on his most notable (and noticed) volume – *On Thermonuclear War*. This was published by Princeton University Press in 1960, the year at which the profile of the civilian nuclear strategists was arguably at its zenith. That the main analysis of this important book comes after 200 other pages of text is testament to the priority Ghamari-Tabrizi gives to 'the cognitive and emotional palette' (p.85) of the period.

The author acknowledges and details the polarising effect of Kahn's speculations, scenarios and simulations of 'a range of postwar conditions whose degrees of awfulness were a function of prewar preparations' (p.219). For some his futurological approach and interest in often unfashionable options such as civil defence were refreshing, challenging and rich. For others, his frequent comparison of death rates from various nuclear scenarios were dangerously detached from empirical and ethical foundations. The author explains these contrasting reactions well, but her own explanation of Kahn's work is likely to prove similarly polarising. Some will be convinced by her treatment of simulation techniques as 'synthetic history' (p.165), her depiction of *On Thermonuclear War*'s resemblance to 'the herky-jerky of an epic poem' (p.203) and her judgement that Kahn 'eclipsed the ruin of war' (p.228). They may be fascinated by the connection Ghamari-Tabrizi draws between Kahn's confronting humour and Hitchcock's *Psycho* where 'Anxiety discharges in hilarity' (p.241).

Others may be less enamoured with the author's approach which she describes in one place as an 'attempt to conjoin the history of science with critical theory' (p.372). Her complaint that Kahn was 'Distracted, disorganized and mercurial' (p.78) could be seen as applying to parts of this book. Those readers might wonder whether they need to be told in quite so much detail about Khrushchev's jokes, the detective literature of the period, the radio horror shows which the author suggests 'Kahn must have listened to' (p.248) and the place of sick jokes in *Mad* magazine. Some may wonder at the suggestion that Kahn was the Allen Ginsburg beat poet of strategy and at the comparison with both Charlie Chaplin and Figaro.

But Ghamari-Tabrizi certainly approaches American strategic thought from an angle rarely seen in the existing literature. Whatever one's view of her methodology she most certainly makes the reader think. For this she should be congratulated. Moreover, given Kahn's subject's own gift for creative exaggeration and hyperbole, such an approach is probably best suited to analysing his work of all the nuclear strategists. One is reminded here of the connections the author draws to Stanley Kubrick's wonderful *Dr Strangelove*, for which Kahn's real life provided a good deal of the

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inspiration. But this example demonstrates the way that social idioms could be influenced by the thinking of Kahn rather than the reverse. Strategic ideas could thus be seen as an independent rather than a dependent variable and retain a critical (although not as in *critical theory*) degree of autonomy and influence.

© Robert Ayson, Senior Fellow
Strategic and Defence Studies Centre
Australian National University

The Psychology of Nuclear Proliferation: Identity, Emotions, and Foreign Policy, Jacques Hymans. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp.273. $75.00/£45.00 (hardback); $25.00/£17.99 (paperback).

Scholars and practitioners have extensively debated the question of why countries seek nuclear weapons. Three longstanding arguments are that security threats, domestic political factors, or pride and prestige reasons cause countries to pursue nuclear weapons. Jacques Hymans, assistant professor at Smith College, adds significantly to this debate about the causes of nuclear proliferation. Hymans argues that a country's 'big decision', or the decisive decision to pursue nuclear weapons (p.18), is based on the beliefs of its leaders, which are reflected in their national identity conception (NIC).

Hymans carefully defines and measures the NIC along the dimensions of solidarity (which can be oppositional or sportsmanlike) and status (which can be nationalist or subaltern). On solidarity, an 'oppositional' position generates fear about and a higher threat assessment of a rival, and leads to a strong commitment to increase defence arsenals and to seek nuclear weapons (p.35). In contrast, a 'sportsmanlike' position involves less fear of rivals, and causes decision-makers to refrain from building nuclear weapons. On status, a 'nationalist' position is closely tied to national pride. Such pride generates a preference for indigenous self-help solutions – such as nuclear-arming, or building up a nuclear infrastructure and attaining nuclear technological autonomy. National pride also causes countries to resist the 'discriminatory' aspects of the nonproliferation regime and to remain outside the treaties of the regime.

Hymans thus shows that a leader with an oppositional nationalist NIC is most likely to actively seek nuclear weapons; an oppositional subaltern is likely to seek a superpower nuclear umbrella versus a security threat; and a sportsmanlike nationalist is likely to pursue nuclear technological autonomy and resist the nonproliferation regime, but to not ultimately cross the nuclear weapons threshold.

Hymans tests his impressive theoretical framework on four important cases. In France, an oppositional nationalist who came to power in 1954 set in motion the path to nuclear weapons. In India, the 'sportsmanlike' Congress party leadership built the technological capability for a nuclear arsenal, but did not take India across the nuclear threshold – this only happened in 1998 under an oppositional nationalist right-of-centre Indian government, which had strong misgivings about Pakistan. In Australia, the one prime minister who harboured oppositional nationalism (John Gorton in the late 1960s) attempted to pursue the nuclear weapons path,

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but the change in Australian attitudes during the Vietnam War ended Australia's nuclear weapons ambitions. And sportsmanlike nationalism in Argentina attracted both military and civilian governments to an indigenous nuclear capability, and caused Argentina to oppose the nonproliferation regime and remain outside the NPT, but these government leaders were not oppositional nationalists. Thus, Argentina never made a concrete determination to build a nuclear bomb.

Hymans's rigorous analysis is augmented by a wealth of data on the cases. Hymans offers new and significant details about France's 1954 nuclear decision, Australia's 1968–71 moves towards a nuclear weapons capability, Argentina's once-secret nuclear enrichment programme, and India's 1995 decision to refrain from nuclear testing – a decision which, 'far from proving that an Indian nuclear breakout was inevitable in the late 1990s, demonstrates the continuing resilience of the policy of remaining just shy of the nuclear threshold' (p.195).

In short, Hymans provides a very valuable and well-tested explanation for national proliferation decisions. Still, nonproliferation specialists may take issue with Hymans' arguments about the nonproliferation regime. Hymans' findings suggest that if national decisions about nuclear weapons are most closely tied to the NIC, then the NIC, rather than the global nonproliferation regime, may be most crucial in stemming proliferation. Hymans' theoretical model is more persuasive if the unit of analysis is national rather than systemic. Thus, for any given country, the leaders' NIC may be more influential than the constraints of the regime in determining its nuclear decision. Yet for the international system as a whole, while the NIC for individual countries cannot be dismissed, a stronger nonproliferation regime remains crucial to stemming nuclear proliferation.

Hymans' related policy suggestion is worth examining further. Hymans notes that countries could be permitted to 'join the international regime at the level of commitment with which they...feel most comfortable' (p.221). The level of commitment is reflected in their NIC. National leaders with a sportsmanlike NIC may seek nuclear technological autonomy while still being committed to the nonproliferation regime. This framework offers very useful insights into the nuclear situation in Iran. If Tehran's leaders are sportsmanlike nationalists, this explains why they are strongly seeking technological nuclear autonomy via a nuclear enrichment programme. It also suggests that their insistence on an enrichment programme does not imply that they have made the decisive decision to pursue nuclear weapons. Thus, an understanding of Tehran's NIC offers useful clues about its nuclear intentions, which, in turn, could suggest ways to break the nuclear impasse with Iran. Further, a better understanding of North Korea's NIC may explain why it has insisted on a light water reactor in nuclear talks with the United States.

To conclude, *The Psychology of Nuclear Proliferation* makes a very important contribution to scholarship on nuclear proliferation and foreign policy. Its rigorous theoretical framework also has significant policy relevance. It is highly recommended for scholars and practitioners of international relations and foreign policy.

© Dinshaw Mistry, Assistant Professor
Department of Politics, University of Cincinnati

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Calculating Credibility: How Leaders Assess Military Threats, Daryl Press. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005, pp.161. $32.50 (hardback).

As American troops flowed into the Persian Gulf during the winter of 2002 and spring of 2003, periodic signs of a potential diplomatic solution caused much fear and loathing in the neoconservative pundit community. Saddam's permission to allow arms inspectors to re-enter Iraq in the fall of 2002 was met by desperate, shrill howls of protest from neoconservative commentators like Charles Krauthammer and Eliot Cohen, who argued that the United States couldn't very well build up its forces in the Gulf and then somehow allow Saddam to wriggle free once again. Such an outcome, it was argued, would damage American credibility and demonstrate weakness – when strength and seriousness of purpose were most needed.

Despite the plethora of books analysing the Bush administration's decision to invade Iraq, comparatively little of this analysis frames the role that 'credibility' had in building the assumptive framework that led the Bush administration down the path towards the Iraq invasion. This is surprising, since the architects of the Iraq invasion unanimously decried the supposed decline of American power and prestige under the Clinton administration, which, according to these analysts, had only emboldened transnational terrorists and rogue regimes like Saddam Hussein. Reasserting American power and influence using force if necessary to rein in actors like Saddam would, it was argued, restore America's standing in the world and serve notice to friends and foes alike of American intent to reassert its mantle of global hegemony.

In his book *Calculating Credibility: How Leaders Assess Military Threats*, Daryl Press, associate professor of political science at Dartmouth, takes on the concept of 'credibility' as a decision-making factor drawn upon by policy-makers in military confrontations. In this welcome addition to the literature, Press effectively strips away the intellectual and theoretical veneer surrounding this concept by determining the role that actor credibility played in guiding the bargaining process and policy responses during several notable 20th-century military crises. In so doing, Press provides an important added dimension to realist and neo-realist international relations theory, which argues that states are guided primarily by rational analysis and balance of power considerations.

Through extensive research from declassified archives and other primary sources, Press dissects three case studies to determine the role that credibility played in discerning actor intent: the 'appeasement' crises of Munich prior to World War II, US-Soviet interactions during the 1958–61 Berlin crises, and the 1961 Cuban missile crisis. Press looks at each of these crises in the context of the 'past actions theory' of actor credibility, which holds that that past patterns of actor behaviour provide an indication of how the adversary is likely to react during a military crisis and, as a result, serves as a guide to policy actions by other actors in the bargaining framework. According to this theory, for example, Hitler would have been emboldened by the West's allowing him to occupy the Sudetenland and to carve up Czechoslovakia. Moreover, the theory suggests that the United States and Britain would not have treated Khruschev's repeated threats to Berlin seriously as a result of the series of ultimatums that came and went in the crisis without Soviet action.

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Press's meticulously sourced analysis, however, shows that the calculations of Hitler and that of the Allies in Berlin were almost totally based on clear-headed calculations about the balance of power and that perceptions of actor credibility based on past actions played little or no role in crafting their responses during the respective crises. In other words, the evidence indicates that Hitler's decision to invade Poland was shaped not by the demonstrations of allied weakness at Munich but by his calculations of the balance of power that gradually grew to favour Germany during the late 1930s. Hitler overcame the opposition of a sceptical German general staff not with arguments about weakened allied credibility, but with clear-headed geopolitical and balance of power arguments. Likewise, the approach of American and British officials to the Berlin crises were shaped not by Khruschev's repeated missed deadlines, but by their analysis of the conventional and nuclear balance of power between the adversaries in which they recognised that escalation to a nuclear exchange was all but inevitable once hostilities started.

Press convincingly argues that the case studies support his 'current calculus theory', which suggests that actors are guided more by balance of power considerations that meld assessments of both military capabilities and actor intent. The Cuban missile crisis, according to Press, illustrates the utility of his current calculus theory in which US actions were shaped primarily by the realisation of nuclear parity with the Soviet Union and by Kennedy's desire to avoid escalation to a war he was convinced that nobody could win and which would result in the deaths of millions.

So what is the relevance of the book to foreign policy in the 21st century? Press argues that states should not use force as a tool to signal intent to protect vital interests elsewhere: 'Fighting unnecessary wars reveals one's weakness and reduces one's power for dealing with future crises over more important stakes (p.159)'. Consistent with this analysis, for example, the US now approaches the Iran nuclear crisis in a weakened state as a result of the unnecessary Iraq war.

In addition to the interesting case studies, the book is well written and approachable by military historians, political scientists and students interested in framing the issue of actor credibility in an easily-understood, commonsensical light. This reviewer highly recommends it for the bookshelves of all academics, students and policy professionals with an interest in these issues.

© James A. Russell, Senior Lecturer
Department of National Security Affairs
Naval Postgraduate School

War and Human Nature, Steven Peter Rosen. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005, pp.211. $32.95/£21.50 (hardback).

Steven Rosen's *War and Human Nature* is simultaneously a trailblazing and frustrating book, one that opens exciting new perspectives on international relations while, at times, leaving us uncertain as to where, or how far, these paths actually lead.

The study of international relations in general, and war in particular, usually proceeds from either of two levels of analysis: the system of interacting states or the

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external behaviour of the individual state. Occasionally, it descends to the level of the individual, seeking cues in psychological dispositions for conduct that cannot be accounted for by set (e.g. utility-maximising) responses to external conditions. Steven Rosen directs his gaze at the behaviour of individuals (or aggregates of individuals), but explanations are offered at the level of biological mechanisms of the sort generally studied by neuroscience, rather than traditional cognitive psychology. The value of this approach, like all others, must be judged by the contribution it makes to our descriptive and analytic grasp of the relevant behaviours. The stated goal is not so much to displace models of decision-making associated with rational choice assumptions as to supplement them by indicating how processes other than conscious calculation shape human decisions.

Political psychology has become increasingly willing to address the role of emotions in human behaviour, and Rosen makes emotions an important part of his analytic framework., clarifying their biological foundations and the manner in which they may mould political decisions. They become increasingly important when decision-makers have neither much time to consider their options nor experience directly relevant to the problem at hand. Under such circumstances, actions are most likely to be guided by remembered patterns and close analogies, whereas the patterns that imprint themselves most deeply in their minds are those formed at times of intense emotional arousal, inclining them toward broad behavioural responses (e.g. dislike/resist/distrust). This, emotionally-driven, yields decisions very early in the decision-making process, before extensive information can be considered or alternative strategies weighed. This is more closely linked to the sensory organ-thalamus-amygdala-endocrine pathway than to the sensory organ-thalamus-cortex pathway, associated with conscious decision-making, and, when broad groups of people share similar emotional experiences, individual behaviour may become collective behaviour.

Another relevant pattern, with particular bearing on the assumptions of realpolitik (one that Hans Morgenthau would have been interested in) involves competition for status and dominance, which is rooted in drives that statesmen bring to the international arena and that may push foreign policy behaviour in directions unrelated to objective measures of the national interest. Such drives appear to have biological roots, as higher levels of testosterone are found in males engaged in successful struggles for social status, struggles that often prompt punitive responses to potential challengers. If, moreover, the mechanism of social selection that produces leadership elites preferentially selects high testosterone individuals, then the policies they favour could involve dominance-seeking and conflictual international behaviour, behaviour that conventional theories of decision-making might have no way of predicting.

Another interesting theme concerns the circumstances that might expedite conflict termination. Rosen questions the view, most closely associated with Geoffrey Blainey and James Fearon, that war, once underway, allows adversaries to form a more accurate estimate of their respective military capabilities, providing a basis for outlining a settlement. Instead, Rosen feels that combat may have the contrary effect – amplifying confusion about relative capabilities – and he suggests that the parties' levels of emotional exhaustion with war are a better predictor of the terms at which they will

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agree to stop fighting. The exposure to combat-related stressors produces a state of mind akin to depression, physiologically linked to high levels of cortisol in the bloodstream, affecting soldiers and non-elite civilians most immediately and, ultimately, influencing the decisions of leadership elites. One implication drawn by Rosen is that securing a favourable outcome in war is less a matter of aggregate military power and more a matter of the ability to undertake the kinds of actions that create the desired psychological impact on the adversary.

Yet another insight offered in this book is that absolute dictators (tyrants) not only operate without proper feedback concerning their own actions, but with a severely curtailed time horizon, a partial consequence of the constant state of insecurity surrounding their position but, in Rosen's view, also attributable to biological circumstances, in that, apparently, intelligence (in which tyrants are said to be deficient) is also related to self-control and the ability to operate with an extended time horizon.

These are the principal themes found in this intriguing book, but not all are equally useful or convincing, and we ask what, exactly, is its net contribution to our thinking on international relations and war? The answer is that the contribution is considerable but uneven.

There are, to begin with, propositions that, while certainly intriguing, are not backed by enough experimental (or other) evidence to provide an acceptably firm point of departure for further scholarly thinking – I refer, in particular, to the suggestion that tyrants have atypically low IQs, and thus shorter time horizons. There are, further, propositions that seem credibly true, and that add to our descriptive knowledge, but may not provide much value-added at the analytic level. Thus, knowing that war-induced demoralisation and anxiety are linked to cortisol levels in the bloodstream informs us about the physiological corollary of a psychological state, but adds little to the fact that combat induces this state, that it affects the further cost-tolerance of the fighting parties, and that, therefore, a favourable outcome for one side implies that it should undertake actions that produce the desired psychological/physiological state. But, for the most part, we already know this, and military tactics (e.g. the US Shock and Awe strategy and the thinking behind the Hiroshima bombing) reflect this understanding.

The most useful contributions borrowed from neuroscience are those that are both credibly true and that provide us with new ways of thinking about important issues. The insights about the way in which emotions shape decision-making are potentially path-breaking – and it is hard to underestimate the knowledge they pose to rational-choice models. Similarly, information regarding the physiological basis and implications for dominance-seeking behaviour of variations in testosterone levels may well revive debates on the need for power, allowing further refinement of classical realist thinking in international relations.

On balance, the book is intriguing; if its thinking is diligently pursued, new light might be cast on matters of international conflict and cooperation.

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University of California, Davis