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Book Reviews

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Book Reviews

South Asia
Teresita C. Schaffer

Choices: Inside the Making of India's Foreign Policy
Shivshankar Menon. Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2016. $26.00. 159 pp.

Shivshankar Menon is one of the most gifted people to lead the Indian Foreign Service, both in terms of his intellectual grasp of strategy and foreign policy, and in his diplomatic skills. In this slim volume, he uses five complex decisions in which he participated as examples of the way Indian policy deals with the inevitable competition among its foreign-policy goals. The 1993 Border Peace and Tranquility Agreement with China drew on his background as one of India's 'China cadre'; the others – the US–India nuclear agreement, India's response to the bloody attacks on Mumbai in 2008, the end of the Sri Lankan civil war in 2009 and India's decision to adopt a no-first-use policy for nuclear weapons – occupied the later parts of his career, including his time as foreign secretary and as India's national security adviser.

Menon's basic argument is that India is on its way to becoming a great power, and that, at this stage, its policy combines bold goals and cautious tactics. As a practitioner, he recognises that serious policymaking is rarely black and white, and usually involves trade-offs among important national goals. His title, *Choices*, reflects this.

Those who have dealt with India from the outside often observe that choices do not come easily to India's diplomatic establishment, especially when, as often happens, they pit some of India's idealistic goals against its more hard-nosed geostrategic interests. In that case, as this book illustrates, realism usually has the edge, though policy continues to be articulated in the

idealistic language that India gave the world in the 1950s and has modulated gradually ever since.

As India's power expands and its international profile becomes more prominent, India's preferred policy stance – non-alignment or, as one hears more frequently nowadays, strategic autonomy – and its geostrategic requirements are likely to be in tension with increasing frequency. Relations with China in particular are likely to generate more than their share of competing objectives, with the strategic challenge from China pulling India in one direction and the increasingly important India–China economic relationship in another. I would have welcomed a bit more discussion of this prospect. Menon's book is an excellent and authoritative guide to how some of the stars in India's foreign-policy leadership think about the inevitable trade-offs they deal with.

Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate: Covert Action and Internal Operations
Owen L. Sirrs. Abingdon: Routledge, 2016. £110.00/$155.00. 317 pp.

Owen Sirrs is a professor at the University of Montana, and his CV lists stints with the US Defense Intelligence Agency and the US military in Afghanistan. His book on *Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate* has pulled together material previously discussed in an enormous number of books and articles by participants in Pakistan's intelligence adventures, both from Pakistan and from other countries, as well as by observers of them. Sirrs paints a picture of an agency that has from its inception been an important player in Pakistan's troubled security policy – but also in 'black operations' in its domestic politics. Known as ISI, the agency famously reports both to the army chief and to the prime minister or president of Pakistan. Thus, when the national leadership is civilian and weak, it becomes an instrument of military domination.

The book has some interesting material, but also curious gaps and mistakes. The maps are practically unusable, for example. While his bibliography is long, it omits some surprising sources; some of his juiciest stories are unsourced; and there is no mention of interviews even though a number of the dramatis personae would surely have been willing to be interviewed. All told, he paints a picture of an agency that operates within the army's orders but largely outside the legal and judicial framework. He argues that ISI's poor understanding of the dynamics of East Pakistan contributed importantly to Pakistan's ultimate loss of Bangladesh, and that the agency similarly misunderstood the Kashmiris, leading to the debacle of Pakistan's attempted conquest of Kashmir in 1965. He credits ISI with a better understanding of Afghanistan – and with relentless

pursuit of the army's, and former president Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq's, goal of a subservient government in Kabul, while running roughshod over the 'strategic partnership' with the United States. He correctly acknowledges that the United States and Pakistan had significantly different strategic objectives in Afghanistan. This is still true.

One well-connected Pakistani friend commented to me that 'there is a great deal we simply don't know about ISI'. This book doesn't change that – indeed, it illustrates the problem. By pulling together the main features of the story, this book represents a useful resource for scholars. But it will inevitably leave them with a great many unanswered questions.

Half Lion: How P.V. Narasimha Rao Transformed India
Vinay Sitapati. Guragon: Penguin Random House India, 2016.
₹699.00. 391 pp.

Vinay Sitapati begins his account of the complex and contradictory political career of P.V. Narasimha Rao, India's ninth prime minister (1991–96), by citing a story from the *Bhagvata Purana*, one of the ancient writings that have shaped India's cultural traditions. Narasimha, half-man and half-lion, is able to slay a mighty demon because of the ambiguities and contradictions he embodies. Sitapati's book is an admiring account of how this ancient hero's namesake was able to be, by turns, fox, lion and mouse, and in the process to transform India's economy, politics and military power.

It is widely believed that Manmohan Singh, a PhD economist and skilled technocrat who would himself become prime minister in 2004, was the architect of India's transformation. Sitapati sets out to challenge this conventional wisdom. The author rightly credits Singh with developing the intellectual framework within which India's economic transformation took place. But he makes a good case that only the prime minister could supply the political cover Singh needed to put in place a major deregulation, and that Rao, however improbable his selection as prime minister may have been, did the job with a level of Machiavellian guile, cunning and sometimes concealed decisiveness that few believed him capable of.

Rao himself was not a natural choice to introduce and sustain such dramatic changes in India's state-centric economic management. He had been an enthusiastic participant in the earlier system. Nothing in his previous career suggested that he would have much interest in upending the 'license permit raj' that was so central to India's economic management and political deal-making. And yet, once convinced that this was necessary, Rao was able to take decisive – and sometimes devious – action, resulting in the greatest growth spurt

independent India had known. Sitapati goes on to describe how Rao introduced elements of a welfare state and used these to strengthen the political consensus behind deregulation. He credits Rao with preserving the option to test a nuclear device, which his successor, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, actually implemented. His major failure, in Sitapati's eyes, was the destruction of the Babri Mosque in 1992, carried out by operatives of the Bharatiya Janata Party who essentially betrayed a bargain Rao believed their leaders had struck with him.

At the time of these events, Rao did not come across as a heroic figure. I remember, as a US diplomat, calling on him when he was out of office, and finding him worn down with cares and rather taciturn. A few months later, in the wake of Rajiv Gandhi's assassination, he had manoeuvred his way into the prime ministership – and power had put a new spring in his step. He had admirers among Indian political analysts and historians, but he was not widely liked. His cautious style generally served him well, but did not make him popular. The poignant story of how his erstwhile colleagues in the Indian National Congress shunned him when he died illustrates how lonely he had become. They forced the family to move the funeral out of Delhi, to his original hometown of Hyderabad; newly minted prime minister Dr Manmohan Singh promised to have a memorial built in Delhi, but nothing came of it; and most conspicuously, the funeral cortège leaving Delhi stopped outside the locked gate of the Congress party headquarters, but contrary to other former leaders, the body was not brought inside.

Nonetheless, Rao certainly deserves to be remembered as one of those who created today's India. Sitapati's lively and readable account will help to make this happen.

When Crime Pays: Money and Muscle in Indian Politics
Milan Vaishnav. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2017.
£25.00/$40.00. 410 pp.

Milan Vaishnav tackles the tantalising issue of corruption in Indian politics on three levels: as a storyteller, a political scientist and a policy thinker.

The most compelling, in my view, is the story he tells through the eyes, careers and fans of such colourful politicians as Pappu Yadav, Ateeq Ahmed, Mohammed Shahabuddin and Arvind Kejriwal. He starts by highlighting the stunning number of Indian politicians who have been charged with crimes. By 2014, 34% of India's national parliamentarians had pending criminal cases against them, and for 21%, these involved serious offenses (p. 10). The trend in recent years has been relentlessly upward, in both categories. The core of Vaishnav's argument is that this does not represent an information gap on the

part of India's voters. Rather, it reflects the voters' judgement that their politicians' criminal pedigrees put them in a position to provide better services to constituents and, in places marked by ethnic or caste rivalry, to help their confrères beat out their ethnic or caste competitors. The main characters are unforgettable. The logic of the 'market' for criminally tainted politicians is distressingly strong, and very persistent.

The most ambitious level of this book is Vaishnav's political-science analysis. He works over the numbers with great care, demonstrating with multiple approaches to statistics what his anecdotes illustrate.

His policy recommendations are the most depressing feature of the book. Vaishnav has put together an impressive and quite creative list of policy measures that might eventually change voters' calculus about whether criminal muscle really is a prerequisite for providing constituent services. But these reforms – even those that draw on institutions already in use in India – promise to be difficult. He argues, for example, for putting in place 'smarter regulations', and for starting from scratch to reinvent and modernise a panoply of laws dating from the mid-nineteenth century and drafted by the British imperial authorities. He makes an excellent case for both recommendations. But reading these proposals as the US Congress struggles to tackle the future of healthcare, tax reform or even the ordinary annual budget, one wonders how many of these extraordinarily difficult tasks the Indian legislature would be able to tackle during any given five-year electoral cycle. The goals make one want to stand up and cheer; the complexity of actually achieving them is daunting.

This is an important book. Milan Vaishnav has gotten deeply into the weeds of Indian politics, and presents in granular detail a remarkable picture of how India's political machinery works. His depiction of the people involved alone makes it a must-read for anyone who cares about the political future of the world's largest democracy. Vaishnav closes with some observations on other countries in which the same problems might recur. Political junkies interested in other countries as well should read and ponder this book.

Rivers Divided: Indus Basin Waters in the Making of India and Pakistan
Daniel Haines. London: C. Hurst & Co., 2017. £35.00/$45.00. 264 pp.

As a US diplomat specialising in South Asia, I came to this book as an admirer of the Indus Waters Treaty, signed in 1960 between the governments of India, then headed by Jawaharlal Nehru, and Pakistan, under Field Marshal Ayub Khan – the most enduring agreement ever signed by those two hostile neighbours.

Only once had I been exposed to the contrary point of view. Toward the end of a conference on Kashmir, I found myself sitting at dinner next to Roger Fisher, whose slim volume *Getting to Yes* has introduced generations of Americans to the art of negotiation. Fisher had assisted the World Bank president with the Indus treaty negotiations early in his legal career. I asked him if anything about the negotiations had surprised him.

His response surprised *me*. Fisher was disappointed that the agreement had not adopted the optimum usage of all the Indus Basin water. The Indus Waters Treaty provided for a 'divorce', with Pakistan taking all the water in the three western rivers and India having predominant rights to the three eastern ones. To me, that was brilliant. The two hostile riparians would not have to interact on contentious issues on a daily basis. In my view, this contributed to the treaty's survival through three wars. Fisher, who had hoped for a 'joint custody arrangement', found the treaty a waste of water resources.

Daniel Haines takes us behind the curtain. He not only provides a lucid account of the ingredients that went into the treaty, including the ecology and economy of the river basin and the negotiating history both within and between the two countries involved; he also deals at length with the philosophical difference I discovered in talking to Roger Fisher. The American lawyer David Lilienfeld had pushed – successfully at first – for a 'whole basin' approach, hoping that the experience of cooperating in an agreement where the scientific data drove everything else would yield not just economic but also political benefits.

Haines's account makes clear that this model was too difficult for either country to pull off. India and Pakistan started with incompatible positions on how rivers figured in national sovereignty, views that were intensified by their mutual hostility and need to defend their nascent independence. Moreover, the earlier history of dealing with Indus Basin-related issues when the British ruled the subcontinent had yielded ample disagreements between central and local authorities, which played out in some degree in the treaty negotiations.

Haines goes one step further and argues that the treaty was an expression of Cold War politics. I don't altogether accept this. Certainly, US interest in peacemaking between India and Pakistan, and in promoting economic development in the Third World, was partly motivated by a desire for strengthening US influence. But this general goal would not necessarily have required a deep US involvement in treaty negotiations.

Haines is fascinated by Lilienfeld and his influence on the early stages of the process. I was fascinated by his account – but unpersuaded that Lilienfeld had the right answer. Pursuing the hydrologically ideal solution would, in my view,

have been a classic case of the best being the enemy of the good. Haines does not explicitly say so in the book, but I believe he would agree.

The Indus Waters Treaty has been back in the news for the last decade or so, with active disputes over Indian proposals to construct waterworks along the upper reaches of the rivers the treaty allotted to Pakistan. Anyone who wants to understand the possibilities and limitations of dealing with these disputes should read Haines's book. I suspect, however, that they will come away feeling, like me, that a good riverine divorce is better than a bad joint river-custody arrangement.

Middle East

Ray Takeyh

The Six Day War: The Breaking of the Middle East
Guy Laron. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2017.
£20.00/$28.00. 368 pp.

The 50th anniversary of the 1967 Arab–Israeli war has brought forth a slew of new books. The Six-Day War was certainly one of the most lopsided conflicts in the annals of the modern Middle East, with Israel managing to triumph over the collective militaries of Egypt, Syria and Jordan. The results of the war may be clear-cut, but its origins are murky. It was a war that no one wanted, and yet a series of actions and reactions caused the region to once more descend into violence. Guy Laron's *Six Day War: The Breaking of the Middle East* is a detailed and impressive account that does much to illuminate the origins of this elusive conflict. Michael Oren's *Six Days of War* has long set the bar for the field, standing alone over a mass of largely mediocre accounts. Laron offers a thoughtful diplomatic counterpoint to Oren's military history.

In 1967, Egypt's aged and exhausted revolutionary leader, Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser, was being assailed by younger militants in Syria and taunted by conservative monarchies. The radical Syrian republic wanted Nasser to redeem his Arab-nationalist pledge to wage a decisive battle against the Jewish state. The Ba'athist leaders in Damascus, who had little or no direct experience with Israeli armour, seemed to believe their own rhetoric and did much to inflame the region by facilitating Palestinian infiltrations of Israel. Nasser knew better. He wanted to lead the radical camp without following through on its promise to push Israel into the sea. In the meantime, the conservative monarchies – under attack by Nasser's propaganda machine for insufficient resolve – were

asking why the lion of Arabism was shielding himself behind UN peacekeepers. Ironically, one of Nasser's mockers, King Hussein of Jordan, would eventually ally with him and thus lose substantial portions of his kingdom.

Laron's study draws on a multiplicity of archives, making good use of Soviet and Eastern European depositories. He highlights a neglected dimension of the war: tensions in civil–military relations. It appears that in all the nations involved, the generals wanted war more than the civilians did. This was especially the case in Israel, where prime minister Levi Eshkol had to constantly beat back demands from his army chiefs for war. But such pressures were not limited to Israel. Nasser also faced rivals in the armed forces who seemed to relish the chance to punish Israel. The Israeli generals' desire for war may be understandable given their decisive military edge, but it is hard to see why the commanders of the sluggish Egyptian army thought they could hold their own.

The role of the United States in this conflict seems curious by its absence. By 1967, Lyndon Johnson was drowning in the morass of Vietnam. America preferred not to have another crisis on its hands, but seemed incapable of mustering the necessary diplomatic muscle to stop it. Eshkol hoped that Johnson would somehow come to his aid and help him fend off his generals, but to no avail. The war that followed continues to cast a long shadow over the region.

Nasser's Peace: Egypt's Response to the 1967 War with Israel
Michael Sharnoff. Abingdon: Routledge, 2017. £85.00/$100.00.
233 pp.

The unresolved Palestinian question is often seen as the legacy of the 1967 war. Suddenly, Israel was in possession of both the West Bank and Gaza, bringing it into direct rule over a large Palestinian population. The other side of the story is that the war, ostensibly launched by the Arab states to achieve Palestinian self-determination, did much to undermine that cause.

In his commendable new book, Michael Sharnoff examines Nasser's last years in power, offering a critical portrait of the champion of Arabism, whose tenure was marked by disastrous wars, domestic mismanagement and incompetent tyranny. Nasser was not without his gifts, of course, mesmerising crowds with his soaring rhetoric and manipulating Westerners with private assurances of pragmatism. The fact that his public face often contradicted his private pledges comes across vividly in these pages.

In a sense, Nasser was a tragic figure, imprisoned by forces that he himself had unleashed. It was Nasser's strident pan-Arabism that was used against him by Syrian radicals, who taunted him into a war with Israel that he did not want. That same Arabism also prevented him from forging a peace with Israel that

he knew was necessary. Yet even though the war shattered his economy and destroyed his military, he was still not prepared to relinquish the mantle of Arab leadership.

Sharnoff chronicles Nasser's confused moves in the aftermath of the war. On the one hand, the most important priority for Nasser was no longer to liberate Palestine but to reclaim the territories that he had lost to Israel. This necessitated limiting his horizons, settling with conservative Arab monarchies and dealing with the United States. He achieved some of these objectives in part. The reconciliation with Saudi Arabia came easily, as Riyadh was prepared to offer Nasser a way back so long as he left the country alone – the price for Saudi petro-dollars was Nasser's acquiescence to the reactionary forces he had always mocked. The Egyptian colonel may have been effective at manipulating Dwight Eisenhower during the Suez Crisis, but Lyndon Johnson, distracted by the war in Vietnam, needed assurances that Nasser would make peace with Israel before getting involved in the talks. This would become the land-for-peace formula that has guided the talks between Israel and its Arab nemesis ever since.

Nasser was ultimately unable to entirely abandon his ideological identity, eventually adopting an Egypt-first posture. The implementation of this policy would be left to his more enterprising successor, Anwar Sadat, who waged a more successful war than Nasser had and regained the territory that he had lost. Unlike Nasser, Sadat was prepared to pay the price of being ousted from the ranks of Arab radicals. To be sure, Nasser's guile was still on display, as he made promises to both American and Soviet emissaries that his spokesmen decried in public. But this was not the 1950s, and there was no one to take the place of the Bandung generation of neutralists who had successfully manipulated Cold War rivalries. The Americans were too wise, the Soviets too cynical and the Israelis too powerful for such ploys to work. Nasser had to sue for peace, something he refused to do. He died with his revolution exhausted, his army shattered, his land occupied and his successor ready to abandon his legacy.

The Future of Leadership in the Shiite Community
Mehdi Khalaji. Washington DC: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2017. 124 pp. Available at http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-future-of-leadership-in-the-shiite-community.

The political wrangling to determine who will succeed Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei has begun in earnest, yet the backroom dealings and subtle signals coming from Tehran are lost on most Western analysts. Mehdi Khalaji is an exception: a one-time seminarian, he knows his way around Iran's clerical

estate. *The Future of Leadership in the Shiite Community* reflects his experience, erudition and unparalleled knowledge of one of the Islamic world's more opaque institutions. The monograph's endnotes should put paid to the claim that a paucity of sources makes research in this area difficult to carry out – Khalaji has dug up memoirs, religious texts and press interviews to buttress his arguments.

As for the question of who will succeed Khamenei, Khalaji seems to identify a leading candidate, Mahmoud Shahroudi, the former head of the judiciary. As the monograph attests, he is a problematic choice. Shahroudi was born in Iraq, still a sore point for Persian nationalists who do not share their clerical elders' transnationalism. In the past, he expressed scepticism of the *Wilayat al-Faqih*, the notion that a single religious jurist should assume political power. (Despite Iran's experiment with clerical rule, the idea of a single ayatollah wielding temporal powers was at once a contentious idea in the seminaries.) He is also known for his corruption, having indulged in his share of financial misconduct. And yet, among the coterie of clerics that Khamenei has cultivated, Shahroudi does have a measure of theological learning. He also has experience with the bureaucracy, and his background in supporting anti-Saddam guerrillas demonstrates his dexterity in dealing with paramilitary forces. He is reliably anti-Western and has little use for the democratic trappings of Iran's constitution. Still, if the best the Islamic Republic can offer as a successor to Khamenei is a corrupt cleric imported from Iraq, the regime seems headed for rough times.

Khalaji concedes that the succession process may yet yield some surprises. But his impressive monograph leaves little room for doubt that the 1979 revolution has done real damage to the Shia clerical order. The intermingling of faith and politics has sullied the reputation of the men of God, hollowed out the seminaries, and created a measure of public apathy toward Shi'ism and hostility toward its clerical guardians. This is surely not how the founder of the revolution, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, expected the system to evolve, but the experience of the past three decades illustrates that even the best-laid plans can still go awry.

Democracy and the Nature of American Influence in Iran, 1941–1979
David R. Collier. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2017.
$44.95. 448 pp.

As documentary evidence has become available, scholars have begun to re-examine the Pahlavi dynasty in Iran and its tumultuous tenure. A number of outstanding biographies and books on the 1953 coup that restored Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi to power have provoked a lively debate. David

Collier's comprehensive but uneven book is the latest addition to the genre. The author gets some of the big themes right: the shah's relentless quest for absolute power did prove his undoing; Iran did have nascent democratic movements, often led by wise aristocrats who might have skilfully guided the ship of state; and the United States did at times subordinate its values to the need for Cold War stability.

The author's account is weakest where he assesses the first two decades of the shah's rule. Collier has an evident fondness for the word 'control'. According to him, America controlled Iranian politicians, sought to control Iran's oil and did much to control its destiny. For a book that insists on assigning agency to the Iranians, the locals frequently fade from the scene, functioning mostly as the pawns of malevolent forces beyond their influence. This is a shame, especially given that a series of colourful Iranian prime ministers did much to save their country in the 1940s and 1950s. It was Ahmad Qavam who coaxed Josef Stalin out of Azerbaijan in 1946, and Mohammad Mossadeq who reclaimed Iran's oil from Britain in 1951. Thus, two great powers that had historically abused and exploited Iran were gently ushered out by its politicians. The shah should have trusted this establishment instead of eviscerating it.

Collier's assessment of the oil-nationalisation crisis seems regrettably conventional. The Truman administration's many efforts to resolve the crisis through diplomacy are largely ignored, and Dwight Eisenhower is superficially presented as a dullard easily manipulated by the devious Dulles brothers (secretary of state John Foster Dulles and CIA director Allen Dulles) into supporting the coup that overthrew Mossadeq. All this to take over Iran's oil, with anti-communist rhetoric serving to conceal mercantile motives. Such polemics fail to address the complex origins of the events and their lasting consequences.

Collier is at his best when assessing the 1960s, a remarkable decade usually overlooked in favour of the coup and the revolution. John Kennedy emerges as one of the outstanding personalities of this period: he and his enterprising aides, Walt Rostow and Robert Komer, seemed to have appreciated the necessity of reform in Iran. The shah responded with the White Revolution that made land reform its central ambition. Although these reforms suffered from poor planning and were haunted by the spectre of the authoritarianism that was gradually descending on Iran, they still led to the empowerment of numerous peasants and workers.

The final decade of the shah's tenure is given surprisingly short shrift in this account. The archives of the Nixon and Carter administrations seem not to have been explored, with the book's final chapters relying mostly on secondary sources. The Iranian revolution, which must stand as one of the great revolts of

the twentieth century, is given little attention. Those who wish to learn why Iran had a revolution, and why the revolutionaries succeeded, must look elsewhere.

In the end, Collier's account is an important reminder that the Pahlavi dynasty offers historians much scope for exploring the many tensions and contradictions that eventually provoked the demise of one of the Middle East's seemingly formidable monarchies.

From Independence to Revolution: Egypt's Islamists and the Contest for Power
Gillian Kennedy. London: C. Hurst & Co., 2017. £25.00. 262 pp.

With its intact borders, important cultural and educational institutions, and even a vibrant press, Egypt, the most populous Arab country, was once considered the epicentre of Arab politics. The notion that religion should inform politics is not unique to Egypt, but the Muslim Brotherhood – which has proved to be one of the most consequential Islamist organisations in history – originated there. Since then, the organisation's branches have popped up throughout the Middle East, with its proxies and emulators seeking to replicate the Egyptian experiment. Gillan Kennedy's compact and judicious study of Islamism in Egypt during the reign of the Free Officers is an important addition to the evolving literature on this subject.

The author begins her study with the familiar terrain of Gamal Abdul Nasser's revolution, which pragmatically reached out to the Brotherhood to begin with, only to relegate it to the margins of society later on. This was the age of Arab nationalism, with its presumptions of modernity that left little room for religious activism. Nasser's ambitions were not limited to displacing his erstwhile Islamist allies, but stretched to dominating Egypt's politics as a means of establishing its hegemony in the Middle East. As with most Third World leaders, Nasser saw in socialism a way of not just controlling the means of production but establishing a personalised dictatorship. The state nationalised industry and agricultural lands, took over the banking system and promised employment for all college graduates in the burgeoning bureaucracy. The result was economic stagnation and a heavily bureaucratised state that provided poor services and low wages for its servants. Islamists were not the only ones repressed, but unlike some they managed to maintain a measure of activism in Nasser's enveloping dictatorship.

In an ironic twist of history, it was Israel that came to the rescue of Egypt's beleaguered Islamists. The Six-Day War devastated Nasser's military, discredited the shibboleths of Arab nationalism and led to cries for authentic solutions to Arab problems. No group had railed against imported ideologies more than the Islamists, who now experienced a revival of their fortunes. Their message

seemingly validated and their rivals all but discredited, the men promising salvation stepped forth to claim their moment.

The Islamists were granted an additional advantage when Anwar Sadat rose to the presidency determined to displace his leftist rivals by making common cause with the forces of tradition. As Kennedy deftly demonstrates, Sadat's pragmatism empowered the Islamists while further radicalising the movement. The Muslim Brotherhood responded positively to Sadat, approving of his privatisation measures and his more successful war against Israel. In the process, however, the organisation's complicity with power paved the way for even more radical Islamists to emerge, proffering their own critiques of the state and its Muslim enablers.

The question that lingers through much of this account is whether the experience of wielding power moderates the Islamists. Before the advent of the Arab Spring, academics assured themselves that Islamist radicalism was caused by the exclusion of its adherents from power. Once vested with the responsibilities of state, they would yield to the mandates of governance and eschew ideological experiments. Having since had the opportunity to observe the rule of ideologues who claim to know the mind of God, the proponents of such notions would be well advised to discard them.

Economy

Erik Jones

Public Debt, Inequality, and Power: The Making of a Modern Debt State
Sandy Brian Hager. Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2016. £27.95/$34.95. 157 pp.

Public debt has increased dramatically in recent decades, and particularly in the aftermath of the economic and financial crisis. Income inequality has increased as well. These two developments have overlapped insofar as the top income earners have come to hold an ever-greater concentration of the public debt. In turn, this concentration represents a twofold challenge: control over the public debt gives high-income households (and large corporations) potential influence over public policy, as well as substantial claims on current tax revenues. In a worst-case scenario, the rich will push governments to structure their fiscal accounts in ways that transfer resources from society at large into the pockets of those who are well off.

According to Sandy Brian Hager, the worst-case scenario may already be upon us. Pulling together disparate data series to reveal who holds outstanding US government bonds, he shows that debt holdings have become more concentrated in the hands of wealthy households and corporations. He demonstrates how this concentration is correlated with the growth in income inequality and the decline in effective marginal tax rates. He suggests that foreign holders of US government-backed instruments give big domestic bondholders even more leverage over politics and policy. And he uses textual analysis of the annual 'Economic Report of the President' to argue that bondholder interests have become increasingly predominant in public-policy discourse.

There is much to like about this volume. It is clear and concise. It points to policy measures that have done much to resolve the recent crisis – such as quantitative easing – and that would do much to improve public finances – such as a more progressive effective marginal tax-rate structure. Most importantly, it seeks to translate the arcana of public finances into the more familiar language of policy discourse that any interested reader should be able to decode.

Nevertheless, the argument has problems. The 'bondholder class' is presented as a kind of singular entity that knowingly manipulates government policy for its own gain. The fact that rich people have many of the same political inclinations does not give them awareness or coherence as a 'class' (in the Marxist sense). Moreover, their intervention is not required to make the story hold together. The government can either tax the rich or borrow from the people who have savings (also known as 'the rich'). The US government does both. And while the effective marginal tax rate has declined for high-income earners, the overall tax taken from that group has increased both in absolute terms and as a share of total revenue. This is the admittedly tarnished silver lining of rising income inequality.

Moreover, the government is not giving the rich much in terms of interest rates (or yields) on the money it has borrowed. On the contrary, the more the government borrowed during the recent crisis, the higher the price it charged for its bonds. This was not in the interests of bondholders, who were not in the market for short-term gains, but the alternatives were worse – witness the growing pressure in the US to raise taxes and the brinkmanship in Congress over the debt ceiling. There is no conspiracy here, just interdependence. The rich only gained their wealth because of the relatively smooth functioning of the financial economy; they will only benefit from that wealth if the financial economy does not collapse. Meanwhile, the American people show little appetite for entitlement reform. There seems ample reason to expect further debate on the possible reintroduction of more progressive effective marginal tax rates.

The Power of a Single Number: A Political History of GDP
Philipp Lepenies. Jeremy Gaines, trans. New York: Columbia University Press, 2016. $30.00. 186 pp.

In order to determine how much tax can be extracted from a group of people, some understanding is needed of how much money they have and how much they make. To increase wartime production, it is necessary to ascertain how productive resources are being used and identify the potential implications of any redeployment. To escape from an economic crisis, it is important to know how that crisis began in the first place. And to promote economic development, some way of measuring progress must be established. As Philipp Lepenies explains, the calculation of what is today called the 'gross domestic product' (GDP) lies at the intersection of all these ambitions. That 'single number' serves as a tool for the state to determine how much money it can raise, how big a military it can field, what to do when things go wrong and how to make the world a better place.

The almost cult-like status of GDP in modern politics is understandable given the usefulness of having a reliable measure of national income, output and expenditure. Far more surprising is the fact that, less than a century ago, standardised national accounting did not really exist – a point made to great effect by Lepenies. And while there were political economists who recognised the need for some reliable measure of economic performance dating back to the emergence of the modern state in the early seventeenth century, the intellectual effort needed to justify, create and agree upon an accounting standard was immense. Moreover, most of the great innovators either died before their preferred measures were adopted, lost important battles over how the data would be collected or disappeared into relative obscurity despite their success.

This story is important because it explains many of the deficiencies of the 'single number' in use today. As Lepenies describes it, the gross domestic product is an instrument of state that gives pride of place to manufacturing output and market prices, because these are better proxies for what can be taxed. It treats military expenditure on a par with consumption and investment because such equal treatment (rather than regarding military expenditure as a deadweight loss) is necessary to plan a war effort. It relies on three different techniques for calculation (output, income, expenditure) because so much of what should be measured is not recorded directly and thus needs to be estimated and cross-checked. It ignores a large number of cultural and social factors that would only complicate the task of making comparisons across countries or providing recognisable benchmarks for achievement. And it focuses more attention on aggregate performance than on the distribution of wealth or income. GDP is not neutral, it is functional. At its core, it relies on a political arithmetic.

The implication, Lepenies concludes, is that the needs of the present may extend far beyond the capabilities that the gross domestic product represents. The number will continue to attract cultish devotion, and yet its usefulness will diminish. Indeed, that may already have happened. We should not expect, however, to see another magic number rise up to take its place. The gross domestic product was centuries in the making. It rests on a complex nest of compromises that are both substantive and methodological. And its emergence was historically contingent on a peculiarly Anglo-American synthesis of economic traditions and political imperatives. It is as difficult to imagine replacing it as living without it.

The End of Theory: Financial Crises, the Failure of Economics, and the Sweep of Human Interaction
Richard Bookstaber. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017. $29.95. 226 pp.

Imagine two worlds. In one of them, people with the best of intentions nevertheless interact with one another in ways that no one likes; try to learn from their mistakes, but accept that they cannot predict the future; and realise that sometimes there are no short cuts to getting things right. In the other, people never interact in ways that conceal their underlying motivations; do not learn from their mistakes because they never make 'mistakes' (in the conventional sense of the word); trust that they can make the future predictable by working to make people's motives more transparent, including by revealing any institutional incentives; and believe that such predictions can be achieved through mathematical shortcuts, with no need to rely on lived experience. The first world is the one we live in. The second is the one economists imagine. That is why, as Richard Bookstaber argues, economists systematically fail to anticipate and understand meltdowns and crises.

The solution, Bookstaber insists, is to embrace the world as it is rather than imagining something that is more tractable for mathematical modelling. The goal is not to submit ourselves to the tyranny of lived experience, but rather to embrace a modelling strategy that takes advantage of, rather than ignoring, the basic elements of the human condition. The models would start with real-world agents, describing how they navigate the world in terms of their relationships and the simple decision rules they deploy in the face of changing circumstances. It would assess the many different iterations of their interaction to suggest a universe of possibilities – both intended and unintended. By analysing these scenarios as unfolding narratives, it should be possible to isolate the crucial elements that place our real-world agents in jeopardy. The institutional environment can then be tweaked in ways that help fend off calamity.

There is much promise in this line of argument. Economic theory does rest on unrealistic assumptions, and it did fail to anticipate the most recent economic crisis – not to mention crises past. Meanwhile, evolutionary biologists have made great strides in showing how simple, rule-based models that focus on individual agents as they interact with one another can reveal patterns that mirror what we see in the world around us, and yet would be hard to identify using an alternative set of modelling conventions. If we could find a way to use this kind of agent-based modelling to illustrate dynamics that would otherwise remain hidden from view until we experienced them, it would be well worth the effort of re-engineering the way we study finance and economics to reflect this approach.

Contrary to its title, however, *The End of Theory* does not replace mainstream economics. Sure, economists have their failings, but they also have their successes. Any reasonable replacement theory should be able to acknowledge and replicate those insights. Yet Bookstaber's analysis does not do so, and the agent-based modelling he uses in his illustrations cannot do so. As for the ability of these models to predict the next crisis, I remain dubious. We do not need a multi-agent adaptive model to spot the problem of portfolio contagion, whereby crises spread from one market to another because portfolio managers need to meet ever increasing liquidity requirements. Bookstaber offered a more compelling account of that phenomenon in his previous book, which antedated the recent crisis. Much of the emphasis he places on liquidity management can be justified using lived experience as well. The recent crisis was expensive in terms of jobs lost and capital destroyed. If Bookstaber is arguing that we need some sophisticated model to convince policymakers to learn from this painful episode, I might have to reconsider my assessment of the world we live in.

Adaptive Markets: Financial Evolution at the Speed of Thought
Andrew W. Lo. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017.
$37.50. 483 pp.

Andrew Lo's adaptive-markets hypothesis demonstrates the promise of evolutionary biology and multi-agent adaptive modelling more fully than does Bookstaber's *The End of Theory*. Like Bookstaber, Lo begins with a critique of economists' fascination with mathematical modelling and the strong professional consensus surrounding the belief that financial markets are efficient. The difference is that Lo is more willing to admit that the efficient-markets hypothesis works. Financial-market participants can absorb huge amounts of information

in vanishingly short periods of time; their pricing decisions can communicate that information in a streamlined format; and the results can be verified independently through comparisons with other information-harvesting techniques, such as in-depth surveys (for consumer products) or public-opinion polling (for voting intentions and hence election outcomes).

Just because the efficient-markets hypothesis works, however, does not mean it is 'right' – any more than Newtonian physics is a true depiction of the material world. Human behaviour departs from the assumptions underpinning the financial-markets hypothesis in a number of ways. Many of these deviations – for example, the phenomenon of loss aversion – have been catalogued by behavioural economists. The problem is that observed behaviour does not constitute a predictive theory. We can see bias, but determining how that bias contributes both to the 'normal' functioning of the economy between crises (as anticipated by the efficient-markets hypothesis) and to the sudden onset of a crisis (when predictions based on the efficient-markets hypothesis break down) is more difficult. As Lo insists, 'it takes a theory to beat a theory' (p. 75). A new theory should be able to capture all that its predecessors have to offer while adding new features.

Lo's adaptive-markets hypothesis is just such a replacement. The essence of the theory is the same as that outlined by Bookstaber: human beings make decisions based on shortcuts; those shortcuts evolve to fit a particular context; and when people use those shortcuts out of context, bad things happen. Lo uses this simple framework to reveal the conditions under which the efficient-markets hypothesis would appear to hold, thus validating the contributions of mainstream economics as a special case. He then shows how the same framework can be used to explain the evolution of the various quirks identified by behavioural economists in terms of loss aversion, risk aversion, framing effects and the like. Critically, Lo shows that such quirks are not 'irrational', but they may be 'maladaptive', depending upon the environment (p. 189). Finally, Lo shows how the context of such assessments varies depending on whether all market participants experience the same shocks or whether the experience of some participants is idiosyncratic.

The notion of idiosyncrasy is important because it allows Lo to draw on the experience of hedge funds as a kind of natural experiment. According to the efficient-markets hypothesis, hedge-fund managers should not be able to beat the market. Experience shows, however, that some fund managers are successful for extended periods. Lo uses his adaptive-markets hypothesis to explain why market pricing does not follow a random walk. He reveals how hedge funds have emerged to exploit systematic deviations using various strategies

and techniques. And he shows how the success of those funds invites both imitation and competition until the original deviation no longer exists. The process is not always a smooth one; sometimes whole groups of hedge funds collapse. The important thing is to understand the underlying pathology as the key not only to fixing finance, but also to harnessing financial markets to tackle the world's most significant problems. This book is essential reading.

Warnings: Finding Cassandras to Stop Catastrophes
Richard A. Clarke and R.P. Eddy. New York: Ecco, 2017. $29.99.
416 pp.

For any given crisis there is always someone who saw it coming, who may not have known the precise date on which it would arrive, but who had a sense of the mechanism at work and the magnitude of the coming impact. Such people do not rely on guesswork – they are typically experts using hard data and proven models to illustrate cause and effect. Their predictions are usually made publicly and repeatedly, but all too often, no one sees fit to listen or, if the message is received, to take steps to avoid the catastrophe or mitigate its effects. In many cases, serious crises might have played out differently if only the people responsible for protecting the public interest had paid attention to the warnings and reacted accordingly.

Richard Clarke and R.P. Eddy present two sets of case studies to demonstrate that Cassandra, the prophetess of Greek myth who can see the future and yet is condemned to be ignored, is always with us. One set focuses on past crises, including the Fukushima nuclear disaster, the subprime-mortgage debacle, the collapse of Bernie Madoff's fraudulent investment scheme, Hurricane Katrina and the emergence of ISIS. The other set focuses on crises that have not yet come to pass but involve foreseeable threats such as meteor strikes, global warming, artificial intelligence, nuclear winter and genetic engineering. All of these cases feature an individual who uses publicly available information combined with extensive training and experience to identify a problem as it is emerging. These individuals commit themselves to the cause of avoiding catastrophe, but find themselves confronting a mixture of opposition and indifference. This narrative structure makes for engaging reading. Each chapter unfolds like a blockbuster movie – many of which have already been made.

The book's individual stories are less interesting, however, than its overall message as a collection. The effect of the ensemble is to reveal that the world is an unbelievably dangerous place, with problems unfolding both in plain view and out of sight, over a range of time horizons, and requiring not just

immediate but sustained attention. Moreover, each hazard poses its own complications, even if the impact is almost always the same in terms of loss of life, social disruption and economic hardship. It is easy to sympathise with those policymakers who, like the authors in their previous role as public servants, are responsible for setting priorities and allocating resources. It is also possible to understand, although much harder to sympathise with, those policymakers who find themselves wishing the world were a simpler place, and that some of its more intractable problems would just go away.

Clarke and Eddy stress the dangers of ignoring the warnings of experts, no matter how inconvenient or out of step with the prevailing consensus. Their solution is not to chase every possible problem but to make sure that each is at least acknowledged – both at the highest levels of government and by the many departments and stakeholders, including the public, that would be implicated in forging a response. Such acknowledgement is the first step in creating accountability. Politicians and policymakers can and must set priorities; they should also be held responsible when the threats they ignore manifest. In Clarke and Eddy's telling, Cassandras only exist after the fact. Governments need to develop their capacity to listen more carefully before crises break out.

Cyber Security and Emerging Technologies

Thomas Rid

The Hacked World Order: How Nations Fight, Trade, Maneuver, and Manipulate in the Digital Age
Adam Segal. New York: PublicAffairs, 2016. $26.99. 306 pp.

For a quarter century now, cyber security has been creeping up the list of national-security priorities. In 2016, the issue even broke into US presidential politics in unprecedented and unforeseen ways. Russian interference in that year's election involved no high-tech cyber war, but a relatively simple hack-and-leak operation adapted from the Cold War's active-measures playbook. The cyber-security debate is only just beginning to take stock of this momentous event.

Adam Segal's *The Hacked World Order*, published a few months before the leaks started, serves as a useful snapshot of where things stood around the time the computers of the Democratic Party's National Committee were being breached. Segal provides useful historical and conceptual background to a reinvigorated discussion. Although it contains a certain amount of unhinged

hyperbole – Segal approvingly quotes Henry Kissinger to the effect that 'cyberspace challenges all historical experience' (p. 10) – this ambitious book has much to offer.

'Year zero', for Segal, runs from June 2012 to June 2013. That year, nation-states 'visibly reasserted' their control over data in search of power, wealth and influence, 'laying to rest the already battered myth of cyberspace as a digital utopia' (p. 1). During those 12 months, the US admitted to developing Stuxnet; Iran mounted a counter-attack against US financial institutions; tens of thousands of hard drives owned by Aramco, Saudi Arabia's oil giant, were destroyed; and unprecedented volumes of classified documents that had been exfiltrated from US National Security Agency (NSA) networks were leaked by Edward Snowden. In Segal's post-2013 hacked world order, new strategic cultures of 'cyber power' are emerging. This power can be seen in four areas: in a country's infrastructure prowess, which allows it to contribute to the running of the internet itself; in a government's ability to leverage its private sector; in its possession of tech-savvy intelligence agencies and armed services; and finally, as Segal boldly argues, in the state's control over 'an attractive narrative of cyberspace' (p. 38). The author is one of the foremost authorities on China's technology policy, and he is particularly convincing on this subject.

Occasionally, the analysis would benefit from better attention to detail. Quantum computing would not, even in theory, 'enable the decryption of any information' (p. 228). The NSA announced in 2015 that it is preparing for the 'upcoming quantum resistant algorithm transition', and there are even public-key algorithms that are currently invulnerable to quantum computing. Disappointingly, *The Hacked World Order* also trades in too many clichés ('physical space matters much less in the cyber age', p. 10). This problem is to some degree unavoidable in a short introductory text with such a vast scope. Still, intelligence agencies cannot, as Segal claims, 'go to Google [and] Facebook' to 'gather huge amounts' of private data 'with little effort' (p. 119). The NSA and Britain's Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) did not do so before 2013, and attempting to do so has become even harder since then. For most users, personal-communication apps are more secure than ever. This is, ironically, at least partly the result of the Snowden leaks and Silicon Valley's reaction to the often exaggerated press coverage of the NSA revelations. The Snowden files were keenly studied not only by journalists, pundits and privacy activists – adversarial intelligence agencies also took careful note. The most aggressive ones will surely have realised how easy it would be to hack the world order — and open societies with a free press in particular — through leaked dumps of controversial documents.

Der Desinformant: Erinnerungen eines DDR-Geheimdienstlers
Horst Kopp. Berlin: Das Neue Berlin, 2016. €16.99. 254 pp.

In late 2016, just as active measures were making a comeback, a remarkable book appeared in Germany: *Der Desinformant* (The Disinformant), by Horst Kopp. The 83-year-old author served as an officer in Abteilung X, the infamous active-measures department of East Germany's Ministry of State Security (Stasi). For more than 20 years, Kopp helped deceive and influence West German politicians and journalists. The goal of the Stasi's 'active measures', according to a ministerial memo from 2 January 1963 quoted by Kopp, was 'to hit [the adversary] at the base and in the hinterland, to expose him, to disturb his power, to fracture and to paralyze' (p. 93). Perhaps no intelligence agency was more masterful at disinformation than the Stasi. Certainly, Kopp and his colleagues benefited from their geographic, cultural and linguistic closeness to their target.

Kopp ran 27 agents during his time at Department X, most of them journalists, and almost all of them under false flag, meaning these individuals did not know they actually served the Stasi. His career-defining accomplishment – tipping the first-ever vote of no confidence in the West German Bundestag in late April 1972 – was one of the most brazen and successful disinformation operations of the Cold War. The Christian Democrats (CDU), then in opposition, should have been able to oust Chancellor Willy Brandt, a Social Democrat, with some promised help from the Liberals. But Kopp and his colleagues deceived and bribed two CDU MPs into defecting from their own party. Thus, the Stasi secretly shaped the outcome of a historical Bundestag vote, keeping Brandt in power and humiliating the CDU. Kopp ran one of the defectors, Leo Wagner, through an intermediary, and meticulously prepared contacts, arguments and the transfer of funds.

Kopp himself was never a defector. His organisation simply ceased to exist. The Hauptverwaltung Aufklärung (HVA), the Stasi's foreign-intelligence arm, saw itself as relatively uncorrupted by the excesses of domestic surveillance. Nor does the author write as if admitting some mistake, or condemning the HVA's disinformation operations as morally wrong. Kopp confidently documented his work. So how does he justify the lying and deception? When I asked him this in person during an interview in Kyritz in May 2017, he passed me a handwritten note stating 'A.–M. Examples, FAZ, 20/2/2004, page 11'. 'Look it up', he said. 'The other side did it too.' Kopp's oblique note, it turned out, referred to a tame story of West Germany trying to lure Eastern defectors.

The Disinformant is the second book to emerge from the Stasi's Department X. The first – *Auftrag: Irreführung* (Mission: Deception) by Günter Bohnsack

and Herbert Brehmer, published in 1992 when memories were still fresh – has become something of a classic among the small group of historians working on active measures. The book confirmed, for example, the German intelligence community's attribution and analysis of major Stasi active measures from 1985. Sergey Kondrashev, who led the KGB's active-measures efforts, praised it as one of the two best books ever written on influence operations. Remarkably, it has never been translated into English.

Such operator accounts of disinformation campaigns are invaluable at a time when disinformation is making a comeback. The Stasi books illustrate the depth of experience in Eastern bloc intelligence organisations, and demonstrate how long it can take for the most sophisticated operations to see the light of day. They also sound a note of warning, echoed by the historical debate surrounding Stasi operations in Germany: not even the testimonies of the perpetrators can resolve the finer points of attribution, vulnerable as they are to self-interest, fading memory and, alas, disinformation.

Drone: Remote Control Warfare
Hugh Gusterson. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2016.
£19.95/$24.95. 199 pp.

The irony is bitter: the administration of Barack Obama, a thoughtful law professor and reluctant warrior, forged and fine-tuned a terrifying assassination machine, only to pass it on to Donald Trump. But even under Trump's more democratically minded predecessor, America's extraordinary drone programme was kept as secret as possible. Today, the data and the future of 'remote control warfare' are more obscure than ever.

Hugh Gusterson is an anthropologist at George Washington University who focuses on nuclear weapons. In the past, he has been fiercely critical of the US military's use of anthropologists in counter-insurgency. With *Drone*, he applies his anthropological toolset to an analysis of the changing nature of warfare itself. Hackneyed notions of American 'empire' and drones as a 'colonial' technology notwithstanding, this book is an inspiration.

According to Lieutenant-General David Deptula, a US Air Force pioneer of remotely piloted aircraft, 'the real advantage of unmanned aerial systems is that they allow you to project power without projecting vulnerability' (p. 22). President Obama found these weaponised platforms attractive for precisely that reason — they promised to help keep the US out of quagmires. If a drone crashed in Helmand, its pilot could still pick up some groceries on his way home from work in Nevada. Drones meant more precision strikes in theatre, at lower risk for American operators.

But the effects of drones on warfare have been profound. Drone technology, Gusterson argues, has 'remixed' war (p. 29). Before the technology was invented, war consisted of what Gusterson describes as a tightly packed and spatially concentrated ensemble comprising weapon, weaponeer and target. He cites Carl von Clausewitz's notion of war as a 'duel' or 'competition' as the best expression of this classic view of armed conflict (p. 45). Remote-control warfare 'disarticulated' this assembly – spatially, temporally and conceptually. With logistics and command-and-control chains spanning literally the entire planet, and multiple agencies in different bases taking advantage of unmanned 'platforms' circling remote skies, drones expand the space of war for the weaponeer, even as they compress space for their targets, who cannot escape the machines' humming omnipresence. Drones also expand time for the weaponeer, requiring never-ending hours of observation and reconnaissance, and causing operators to report experiencing hits 'in slow motion' (p. 46). For their targets, meanwhile, *Hellfire* missiles strike like a flash from the blue.

Finally, remote-control warfare, according to Gusterson, 'remixes' the concept of war itself. If war, as classically understood, involves the mutual exchange of death blows, are drones even weapons of war? 'With the help of the drone', Gusterson concludes, 'war is fragmenting into something else for which we do not yet have a good name' (p. 44). In his view, a duel without the opportunity for 'reciprocal injury' is no longer a contest, and thus no longer war.

For a slim book, *Drone* has remarkable range: Gusterson provokes on a conceptual level, yet displays good attention to detail throughout, contrasting, for example, the experience of landing piloted aircraft with that of landing an aircraft remotely, without the subtle physical and visual feedback that airborne pilots receive from the machine and its environment. It may be that a certain ethnographic empathy helped him to make some surprisingly nuanced and helpful observations on the controversial issues of valour and post-traumatic stress disorder as well.

The Red Web: The Struggle Between Russia's Digital Dictators and the New Online Revolutionaries
Andrei Soldatov and Irina Borogan. New York: PublicAffairs, 2015. $17.99. 370 pp.

Andrei Soldatov and Irina Borogan are two of Russia's best-known investigative journalists. Their previous book, *The New Nobility*, chronicled the evolution of Russia's intelligence and security establishment in the years following the Cold War. *The Red Web* tells the story of the struggle for the Russian internet, with the state's powerful forces pitched against a group of online activists.

On 17 August 2009, the Sayano–Shushenskaya hydroelectric power station on the Yenisei River in Siberia suffered a catastrophic accident that killed more than 70 workers. Keith Alexander, while still director of the NSA, once cited the incident as an example of what a 'cyber attack' could achieve, even though a material failure, and not a cyber attack, caused the accident. Soldatov and Borogan discuss the Sayano–Shushenskaya dam incident for a more hard-hitting and less hypothetical reason: in the incident's aftermath, Russian authorities, for the first time, expelled an Interfax agency journalist for being too critical — and brought in an independent blogger to cover the relief operation in a more sympathetic way. Two months later, the LiveJournal blogger was invited to join the Kremlin press pool.

Soldatov and Borogan are storytellers as well as, occasionally, protagonists. This set-up works well, making *The Red Web* even more engaging. The chapter on Edward Snowden's association with Russia is particularly intriguing. 'Snowden may not have known or realised it', the authors write, 'but his disclosures emboldened those in Russia who wanted more control over the Internet' (p. 209). His arrival in Moscow from Hong Kong in 2013 coincided with a 'large-scale offensive' against internet freedom led by the Kremlin. Vladimir Putin was quick to see that the NSA defector was a political godsend, not just internationally but also domestically. Moscow's security agencies soon acquired more investigatory powers over internet communications under the pretext of protecting the personal data of Russian citizens against the excesses of American snooping that Snowden had allegedly exposed. 'Snowden could have done good things globally,' the authors quote one of Russia's most prominent internet activists as saying, 'but for Russia he was a disaster' (p. 220).

The authors' discussion of Russian internet ideals in the late 1990s and early 2000s is a welcome antidote to the vision being espoused by Silicon Valley in those high-minded times, and which lingers to this day. Russian activists simply wanted a free press and freedom from corruption, whereas utopians in the United States were looking to transcend the laws of physics in a 'virtual reality' and to homestead the new frontier of 'cyberspace'. At first glance, Russia's version of internet utopianism may appear mundane. At second glance, it may have been ahead of its time.

The Red Web elegantly blends technology, history and politics. If this indispensable book admits to any flaw, its lack of depth on the late 1990s in Russia, especially the fateful year of 1999, might qualify. It was during this crucial and fascinating period that age-old active measures and *kompromat* operations were brought online for the first time. The goal was to bring down some of the Kremlin's domestic opponents by creating dedicated websites to serve up a time-tested brew of part-fact, part-forgery.