Helge Holtermann
Journal of Peace Research 2009; 46; 455
DOI: 10.1177/00223433090460030906

The online version of this article can be found at: http://jpr.sagepub.com

Published by:
SAGE
http://www.sagepublications.com

On behalf of:

International Peace Research Institute, Oslo

Additional services and information for Journal of Peace Research can be found at:

Email Alerts: http://jpr.sagepub.com/cgi/alerts

Subscriptions: http://jpr.sagepub.com/subscriptions

Reprints: http://www.sagepub.com/journalsReprints.nav

Permissions: http://www.sagepub.co.uk/journalsPermissions.nav
a brooding presence throughout – the subject of people’s private thoughts and the ultimate instigator of many of their personal successes and disasters. Montefiore has based his biography of Stalin’s early years on archived documents found in Georgia. In particular, he is to be commended for locating surprisingly frank personal memoirs written by Stalin’s friends, family and associates that were collected and suppressed by the Georgian communist party. His book certainly debunks the two very different myths produced about Stalin’s origins – his opponents, and particularly Trotsky, painted him as a boorish nonentity, while in power he seduced his way from one affair to another across Russia. Stalin’s past also provides a clue to the origins of his paranoia while in power. In the world of revolutionaries, everyone was under suspicion, and some of his most trusted comrades did turn out to be police informers. Figes instead concentrates upon the private lives of Russians from all social strata, and his book is based upon oral history and personal archives of diaries, letters and photographs. Figes has written a moving and detailed account of how people coped with the terror of the purges and the hardships they endured after they were sent to the Gulag. More interesting is his treatment of the supporters of the new regime. Some were motivated by idealism, while for others (particularly those from peasant families), the Soviet Union offered social advancement, education and much improved employment opportunities. He also highlights how some people from persecuted backgrounds turned themselves into model citizens, such as graduates taking manual jobs, in order to purge the stain on their character caused by having a privileged background. In other cases, it is somewhat disheartening to read about how people would inform on their neighbours (often for exaggerated or false reasons) and condemn them to years of imprisonment in order to gain some furniture or a few square metres of living space. In all, his book provides a fascinating insight into how tyrannies are maintained – partly through fear, resignation, avarice and ambition. Figes also concludes with a note on the advantages of using oral history instead of relying upon documents (as Montefiore does). He states that a historian can ask a witness for confirmation and clarification while documents cannot be questioned. In all, both are remarkable books that provide startling and often moving portraits of a crucial period in world history.

Nicholas Marsh


This book lays out a grand institutional theory of governance in democracies and tests this with cross-national time-series data. In essence, the argument holds that democratic institutions which concentrate political authority in the centre lead to better governance. Three institutions are highlighted: configuration of sovereignty, type of executive and electoral system. The authors argue that governance is improved by adopting a unitary rather than a federal configuration of sovereignty, a parliamentary rather than a presidential type of executive and a closed-list PR rather than a majoritarian or preferential-vote electoral system. These three ‘centripetal’ institutions are said to affect governance through three causal mechanisms: strengthening political parties, mediating conflict and improving policy coordination across different political institutions. Better governance, it is assumed, should favour political, economic and human development in the long term. This far-reaching argument may seem overly ambitious. However, the authors do a fine job of formulating the argument, testing it empirically and defending their endeavour to investigate such a grand theory. Although the empirical analysis leaves much to be desired in terms of direct testing of the suggested causal mechanisms, it does succeed in demonstrating that the argument is empirically plausible. There is particularly strong evidence that parliamentarism has a positive effect on a range of ‘governance outcomes’ such as infrastructure, tax revenue and economic development. Future studies will hopefully shed
more empirical light on this issue. This book should be of great interest to most political scientists: the theory has very broad scope and applicability, and the study is both well crafted and well written.

*Helge Holtermann*


There are few subjects today that evoke as much emotion and, at times, controversy as that of refugees. As such, texts often concentrate on how forced migration affects security, domestic policy and identity. Emma Haddad’s welcome and timely publication, based on her award-winning PhD thesis, provides a new conceptual framework for refugee study and ensuing policy. At its core, the book endeavours to redefine and reconceptualize the refugee as an unintended yet inexorable by-product of the present international system. Utilizing the English School perspective of international society, Haddad argues that with the formation of the nation-state, identities, belonging and, ultimately, sovereignty are forged through an us (we) and them (‘the other’) dichotomy. The formation of citizens and outsiders is not just mutually exclusive but mutually reinforcing. Those outsiders who fall beyond the ‘state-citizen-territory trinity’ become refugees. While the book is normative and theoretical in approach, the latter half provides an intriguing analysis of the interwar years, the Cold War and the modern era. By highlighting its dynamic and arbitrary nature, Haddad illustrates the politicization of refugeehood in both its construction and application. Mirroring the Eurocentric origins of ‘the refugee’, the text relies on a European approach to the concept — as one would expect from someone who worked at the European Commission. The author does, however, leave some pertinent questions unresolved relating to process and the intellectual origin of refugees at the point of creation. Furthermore, Haddad’s definition of the refugee is rather insufficient and provides as much scope for criticism as the 1951 Convention definition she is attempting to improve. That said, the text provides a well-written, illuminating and thoroughly researched evaluation of the refugee and international society.

*Mark Nafialin*


British historian Alistair Horne’s intimately detailed and expansive volume has long been regarded as a definitive study on the Algerian War of Independence. It presents an erudite narrative on an anti-colonial war of national liberation, initiated by the resistance guerrillas of the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN) against the French army, with an analytical perspective and clarity of context that is a masterclass in the historian’s craft. Horne’s skilled handling is welcome given the prolonged, complicated and messy nature of this brutal conflict that was fought over eight exhausting and costly years; *la guerre d’Algerie* claimed a million Algerians lives and the political scalps of six French prime ministers and precipitated the collapse of the Fourth Republic. Horne is comprehensive in his explanation of the roles of various groups and individuals that defined the conflict — from the curious case of the *pied noirs* and France’s betrayal of the Harkis to an understanding of FLN leaders such as Ahmed Ben Bella and Houari Boumédiene, who led a clandestine insurgency that displayed an unyielding and relentlessly bloody resolve, ultimately forcing an end to 132 years of French colonial rule, finally negotiated under Charles de Gaulle’s political stewardship. This account is also a cautionary tale of how an increasingly intractable war led both sides to descend into a spiral of violence and torture that pushed the boundaries of humanity for the sake of incremental political and military gains, which in hindsight seems obscene. This legacy was summed up with ominous understatement by Algerian-born French philosopher Albert Camus: ‘Everything fades, save memory.’ Horne’s book is still as infinitely readable and compelling as it was at its original publication in 1977.

*Farrid Shamsuddin*


As Kool’s third book on the subject of nonviolence, this latest addition to the field of peace psychology provides a valuable overview of important psychological works that are relevant for the study of peace and conflict. Kool focuses on