MacDonogh mentions that the signing of the Munich Agreement in September obliterated any chances to remove Hitler from power because of 'opposition in the army and the Wilhelmstrasse' and 'the reaction against Canaris and Kleist-Schmenzin and all those who had implied that Britain would fight' (p.228). The Munich Agreement entailed the weakening of the internal opposition to Hitler. Consequently, there would be no further major attempts to undermine the Führer's authority until the failed coup of 20 July 1944.

The book pays particular attention to the plight which befell the Jewish population in Austria after the Anschluss, something which became the first statement of intent in Hitler's desire for a *Judenrein* Europe. The author points out that the annexation of Austria provided Hitler with the opportunity to implement the eradication of Jewish life by means of emigration, the plundering of Jewish businesses and, remarkably, through 'an end to assimilation' (p.116).

The author works on the premise that until 1938, Hitler could be dismissed as a ruthless but efficient dictator, a problem to Germany alone; after 1938 he was clearly a threat to the entire world. MacDonogh succeeds in mapping the most relevant indicators of Hitler's strategy and the events that were to plague the continent of Europe a year later. Although somewhat broadly tackled, it constitutes a revealing account of Hitler's opening moves to war.

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Patrick Porter, **Military Orientalism: Eastern War Through Western Eyes**. *New York: Columbia University Press*, 2009. Pp.256. $25.00, HB. ISBN 978-0-231-15414-7.

The 'orient' is a diffuse idea. Oriental was what lurked beyond the boundaries of civilised Europe, unknown and fascinating. It stood for the East, sometimes for the South, always for the unknown other. Ideas of the oriental other have not just influenced, and sometimes dominated, Western perspectives toward the East. As Patrick Porter's fine new book shows, orientalism has also affected Western views of its battles and wars.

On the face of it, the scene is predictable: Western armies are made for industrial battles, decisive plots of organised force, and orchestrated manoeuvres. They are rational, orderly, calculated bureaucracies with a sophisticated division of labour, high-tech weapons systems and clear lines of authority from civilian politicians. They develop plans in institutionalised general staffs, and their strategic and operational

thinking guided by post-Enlightenment intellectual craftsmen like Antoine de Jomini or Carl von Clausewitz.

Easterners, so the popular stereotype goes, fight altogether differently – as martyrs and kamikazes. They are deceitful, cunning, irrational, emotional, chaotic, and spiritual, their raw violence seemingly triggered by primordial ethnic or tribal hatred, vendettas, and blood feuds. Some of these juxtapositions are very much alive today. Patrick Porter sees the orientalist world view come to the fore in popular culture, for instance in films like *300*, *Black Hawk Down*, *Rambo II and III*, and *The Last Samurai*. But such an argument would be trite. *Military Orientalism* is shrewder.

Porter's critical thrust goes against the 'cultural turn', the revived focus on culture among those who make and study strategy. The United States land forces have turned their attention to understanding alien cultures – counter-insurgency's 'human terrain' – and away from the high-tech hype of the 1990s. Europe's armies, with the usual delay of a few years, are chasing after what some critics see as an American fad. In academia and strategic studies, likewise, anthropologists and counter-insurgency theory is in; Clausewitz is out. Yes, seeing the relevance of culture is a step forward, Porter agrees. But seeing culture as rigid and stable can be 'naive'.

Instead, *Military Orientalism* analyses culture 'in motion'. The book's objective is to marry better models of culture with the world of military policy and analysis. The thesis is radical only at first glance: in strategy, where all sides in a conflict apply almost all means at their disposal to succeed, culture becomes more dynamic and more volatile. When facing battle, actors change traditions, violate norms, and they innovate in order to gain an advantage. 'At war', Porter writes, 'even actors regarded as conservatives may use their culture strategically, remaking their worlds to fit their needs.' Culture does not just shape ways of war; war shapes culture.

Four chapter-length case studies furnish the argument.

The first deals with British military observers of the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–05, who linked Japan's prowess to its social setup, political values, and concept of citizenship. Yet British observers claimed that the Japanese way of war and the Far Eastern warrior values offered advice that could help improve the British Empire's mastery of battle, as Britain's own fighting ethos was diluted by urbanisation, modernisation, and liberalism.

The second case study explores Western perceptions of Mongol warriors, who roamed Central Asia's endless steppe in the first half of the thirteenth century. European and American observers came to see Genghis Khan's mounted warriors as roaming nomadic predators, laying waste to civilisation on its path with chilling virtuosity. But the

Mongols' mobility and aggressiveness, in turn, have long inspired European, Russian, and lately American strategic thinkers.

Then Porter moves on to more recent examples, the Taliban and Hizballah. Both enemies have in common that they are 'cultural realists' – they may change long-established behaviour, their time-honoured traditions, and their accustomed cultural dispositions in order to fit their strategic and operational needs, to guarantee survival if not success on the twenty-first-century battlefield. The Taliban, he argues, therefore exhibit a characteristic ambiguity between stasis and change. At first glance, the Islamist purists appear as tribal warriors, driven by extreme – and extremely conservative – values and worldviews. Yet, at closer view, the Taliban are highly adaptive enemies, with innovative methods in education, public outreach, and modern tactics that embrace the latest high-tech innovations.

The book focuses on two issues simultaneously, Western views and Eastern war – on both counts *Military Orientalism* has some shortcomings. It somewhat selectively uncovers 'orientalist' attitudes in scholarly articles and policy documents. As a result, the book sometimes seems to overestimate the strategic relevance of perceptions, including oriental perceptions. The Second Lebanon War (2006), for instance, was highly damaging for Hizballah, no matter its short-term public relations advantage in some quarters.

Second, the book's criticism of cultural notions is right most of the time, but not all the time. The remarkable increase in suicide bombings, to give just one example, is hard to explain without reference to spirituality and features that seem genuine to specific cultures. Orientalist views, in short, may sometimes be wrong and irrelevant, but sometimes they may be correct and relevant. But the author recognises these problems and admits that his book may be 'tinged by the very images and myths that it seeks to challenge'.

Politicians view the armed forces as instruments of state power. Armies often see themselves as surgeons, methodically administering a certain treatment until an operation is accomplished successfully. Both like to imagine the enemy as 'still, pliable, and visible'. In Porter's potent analysis, reality is not as neatly cut and stable. The most endurable element may be the Western views of its oriental enemies. Here, Porter's notion of 'cultural realism' is designed to create better strategic visibility: attention to cultural fluidity, to contradictions, and to 'our own assumptions', he hopes, may help realise, for instance, how the Taliban of today differ from the Taliban of 2001, or how Hizballah's tactics have changed between 2000 and 2006.

War, Porter writes in Clausewitzian fashion, is a 'deadly reactive dance', and culture is subject to its volatile nature. The cultural landscape cannot be accurately 'mapped' with the help of

anthropologists, because that human 'terrain', unlike geography, is ever shifting. Herein lies the danger of the cultural turn in strategic affairs: it is not just that it may 'restate old bigotry in the language of political correctness'. It may ignore and deny something much older and much more fundamental: the dynamic nature of war.

THOMAS RID © 2010
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Steven R. David, **Catastrophic Consequences: Civil Wars and American Interests**. *Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press*, 2008. Pp.204. $25.00, PB. ISBN 0-801-88989-8.

Steven David has written an important and serious book on how internal wars can harm American strategic interests. Focusing on China, Mexico, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia as the 'most dangerous' possible sites of civil war (p.153), David argues that state collapse and internal rebellions can generate unintended but devastating spillover effects that include loose nuclear weapons, massive refugee flows, and global economic shocks. *Catastrophic Consequences* is valuable both for its cogent, straightforward analysis and for bringing together a set of important cases that are rarely compared to one another. The book builds on David's excellent previous research on the links between internal and external security.

David argues that the United States is highly vulnerable to the effects of foreign civil wars. He analyzes China, Mexico, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia in terms of the potential danger their collapse or disarray would pose to the United States, the likelihood and causes of possible civil war within each state, and the possible results of this instability. Escalating unrest in Pakistan carries with it the most alarming risks, with the possibility that a fractured or overwhelmed Pakistan Army loses control of nuclear assets to Islamist radicals who could then attack the US. He rightly notes that full-scale state collapse in Pakistan would pose 'a uniquely horrific threat to American interests because it brings together a witches' brew of capability and instability' (p.50).

In Saudi Arabia, rebellion against and conflict within the royal family could lead to the destruction of crucial oil infrastructure that would badly damage the American, and global, economy. David correctly identifies the current obstacles to rapid US adaptation to a massive and prolonged oil shock.

The dangers presented by violence and instability in Mexico are found in flows of refugees to the US, shocks to the American economy, and the safety of Americans in Mexico. This focus on Mexico is