

around the most different systems, there is no reference to the criteria for including specific states within the research. On the other hand, as shown in the literature, left and right have different substantive meanings in the regions and countries observed and may limit the comparability of parties. In spite of these drawbacks, the clear and sharp style, good analytical tools and wealth of information make *When Political Parties Prosper* a valuable resource and framework for further analysis in party politics.

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**Architect of Global Jihad: The Life of Al-Qaida Strategist Abu Mus'ab al-Suri** by **Brynjar Lia**. London: C. Hurst & Co., 2007. 510pp., £27.50, ISBN 978 1 85065 856 6

Brynjar Lia's biography of al-Qa'eda strategist Abu Mus'ab al-Suri tells the story of this influential Salafist-Jihadist thinker and surveys the global movement of which he was an active member. Al-Suri, whose real name is Mustafa Setmariam Naser, was born in Syria in 1958. Lia traces his life from his early years in Syria, Jordan and Afghanistan to eventually gaining Spanish citizenship and finally his mysterious arrest in Pakistan in 2005.

This book is also a biography of the global Salafist-Jihadist movement, within which al-Qa'eda is only one player, albeit a significant one. For this reason, Lia's narrative draws the reader's attention to some key personalities who are often overlooked in the more sensational accounts of al-Qa'eda; men such as Abu Qatada, one of the most important spiritual leaders of the Salafist-Jihadist movement, and Abu Dahdah, al-Qa'eda's operational contact man in Europe until his arrest and imprisonment in Spain after 11 September 2001. Currently in custody, al-Suri's ideas and activities remain largely unknown beyond counter-terrorism and academic circles, but he plays a no less significant role than al-Qa'eda's better-known celebrities such as second-in-command Ayman al-Zawahiri.

Lia, a university professor and noted expert on radical Islamist movements, forgoes the kind of sensationalist reporting that characterised recent books by journalists, but still manages to tell a compelling story of a life lived without regret inside this violent, global movement. For this reason alone, Lia's book should be essential reading

for anyone who seeks to understand the global Salafist-Jihadist movement, including academic researchers and policy makers. For added value, the book contains Lia's own translation of key excerpts from al-Suri's most important work, the 1,600-page *Global Islamic Resistance Call*, the only known English translation available to the general public.

Marisa Urgo  
(Independent Scholar)

**The Global Politics of Contemporary Travel Writing** by **Debbie Lisle**. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. 299pp., £48.00, ISBN 0 521 86780 0

In her engaging treatise, Debbie Lisle shows why political scientists should not perceive popular travelogues such as the charming BBC series by Michael Palin as mere entertainment, but as a source for understanding global politics. By contrasting the writings of Bryson and Theroux she explains how the latter's *colonial vision* has been replaced by a *cosmopolitan vision* in travel writing, thereby referring to writers focusing on the harmonising effects of globalisation paired with a celebration of difference. Yet this seemingly superior approach is similarly apt at reproducing the logic of empire, hence Lisle's main argument 'that the cosmopolitan vision embedded in contemporary travel writing ... is not as emancipatory as it claims to be; rather, it is underscored by the remnants of Orientalism, colonialism and Empire' (p. 5).

After a discussion of travel writing's ambiguous literary status, Lisle demonstrates how travel writers engage in the production of difference, revealing a Foucauldian logic of identity/difference. Moreover, travelogues often fail to overcome the home/away distinction, which to this day is often matched by the dichotomies of civilised/uncivilised or safe/dangerous without questioning the notions of territory and border. In these instances, Lisle tries to show how dominant conceptions of power can be transcended by travel writers. Simultaneously, however, she argues that potential transgressors often end up reproducing these traditional dichotomies and thus the logic of empire. In this regard, it is particularly worthwhile to study her analysis of authors who, due to their gender, sexuality or descent, had previously been excluded from the guild of travel writers and thus now occupy the role of both the coloniser and the

colonised. Following Tété-Michael Kpomassie as *An African in Greenland*, Lisle retraces how even those writers bound to break the confines of the identity/difference framework do not escape it.

Appealing to researchers in both political science and literary studies, Lisle's book does not just succeed in unmasking the colonial heritage which guides the reasoning of cosmopolitan writers; she also shows how travelogues shape our perception of the state of affairs in a country, and may even co-determine the pursuant actions of decision makers. The famous example of former US President Clinton's reference to Kaplan's *Balkan Ghosts* as a justification for his non-intervention policy is proof enough that political scientists definitely cannot disregard travelogues as a pastime read – and Lisle provides the ideal start for serious study of the genre.

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**Basic Income: The Material Conditions of Freedom** by **Daniel Raventós**. London: Pluto Press, 2007. 230pp., £14.99, ISBN 978 0 7453 2629 0

The idea that all citizens have an unconditional right to a minimum income has gathered considerable momentum over the past 25 years. This book represents an accessible and thorough overview of the debates surrounding the basic-income proposal. Raventós examines the proposal in terms of its normative justifications and policy implications. In the first case, he considers the libertarian, real freedom and republican arguments for a guaranteed minimum income. While not rejecting the first two arguments, he places particular emphasis on the ability of a basic income to help ensure that individuals are not subject to the discretion of another. In the second case, Raventós considers the impact that a basic income will have on paid and unpaid work and the ability of a basic income to tackle poverty and, thereby, avert dependence and enhance self-respect. In addition, he devotes considerable attention to showing the advantages of an unconditional basic income over rival policy prescriptions such as means-tested subsidies, reduced working hours, a negative income tax or stakeholder grants.

One of the virtues of this book is that it does not shy away from responding to the charge that a basic income is not a viable proposition. Thus in one of the chapters we are presented with a careful analysis of the tax rates

required to finance a basic income and the resulting effect on income distribution. Raventós concludes by responding to a number of objections to a guaranteed basic income, including the charge that it encourages some to free-ride in a way that increases the costs borne by others and the concern that it will accelerate immigration from poor to rich countries. It seems almost churlish to pick holes in this otherwise excellent book, but it should be pointed out that Raventós does not explicitly respond to the claim, made by Amartya Sen and others, that resources represent an impoverished metric of human well-being. If that claim is correct, then it should lead us to question the merits of evaluating the basic-income proposal solely in terms of its impact on income poverty and income distribution. That quibble aside, this book offers a powerful defence of the basic-income proposal and it should be of considerable interest to policy makers, academics and students alike.

Simon Wigley  
(Bilkent University)

**Masters of Illusion: American Leadership in the Media Age** by **Steven Rosefielde and D. Quinn Mills**. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. 540pp., £25.00, ISBN 0 521 85744 9

**Media, War and Postmodernity** by **Philip Hammond**. Abingdon: Routledge, 2007. 175pp., £18.99, ISBN 978 0 415 37494 1

Both of the books under review here refer to the formative effects of mass media on politics; however, they differ greatly in scope, approach and their general ambition. Rosefielde and Mills offer an easily accessible agenda, where media criticism only serves the bigger argument. In essence they present a manifesto, an urgent call for a strategic recalibration of US foreign policy in the run-up to the 2008 presidential elections. The main strength of their thought-provoking, but ultimately flawed, 'postneoconservative book' (p. xix) is their scathing criticism of central aspects of the Bush administration's foreign policies which they think have been guided by the naïve assertion of global democratic convergence and the simplicity of state building.

To restore leadership, they argue, a profound 'realist' turn is needed, i.e. a fundamental break with the alleged belief in the harmony of interests of nations. Instead, the United States needs a strong leader who is capable of