

BOOKS ON INTERNATIONAL POLITICS. INTERNATIONAL HOT SPOTS: FROM THE KOSOVO TO AF- GHANISTAN

Aschot Manutscharjan

The large number of hot spots in today's world is reflected in the publications of German publishing houses. The fact that the USA and Europe have recognized the Kosovo's right of secession is one subject of discussion; others are Russia's recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states and the destabilizing potential of secession-related conflicts as such. It is all about the fate of Israel and the Arab-Israeli conflict, the USA and its fight against terrorism, the Balkan and the Caucasus, Iraq and Afghanistan.

The current crisis revolving around the renegade Georgian province of South Ossetia cannot but entail geopolitical consequences. Written against this background, the book *Das Recht auf Sezession als Ausfluss des Selbstbestimmungsrechts der Völker (The Right of Secession as a Consequence of the Nations' Right to Self-determination)* by Martin Ott explains that Moscow's recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states necessarily results from the Kosovo policy of the USA, NATO, and the EU, as Russia had clearly spoken out against Kosovan independence before. According to Ott, these states have been striving for secession ever since they came into being. Diverse new states were founded in Europe on the ruins of Yugoslavia. The secession efforts of the Chechens in the Caucasus as well as those of the Turks in Northern Cyprus, on the other hand, remained unsuccessful as these countries were not recognized on the international plane. Given the potential dangers associated with the large number of states that might attempt to secede worldwide, Ott demands 'at least generalizable statements' on the justification of secessions.

In his work *Langfristiger Frieden am Westbalkan durch EU-Integration. Der EU-Integrationsprozess als Chance für die Überwindung des serbisch-kosovarischen Konflikts (Longterm Peace in the Western Balkans through EU Integration. The EU Integration Process as a Chance to Overcome the Serbian-Kosovan Conflict)*, Arben Hajrullahu pursues the question of how a majority of states could ever come to recognize the Kosovo's right of secession. The author depicts the political development of the Serbian province and its status in the Yugoslavian constitution, casting some light on the objectives of the players who led the conflict that erupted later on. Moreover, he illustrates the changes in the attitude of the UN, the EU, and NATO that ultimately led to the Kosovo's independence.

After the Russian-Georgian war about the renegade provinces broke out in August 2008, the EU entered the game and achieved a cease-fire. *Konflikt-*

beilegung durch Europäisierung? Zypernfrage, Ägäis-Konflikt und griechisch-mazedonischer Namensstreit (Conflict Settlement through Europeanisation? The Cyprus Question, the Aegean Conflict, and the Greek-Macedonian Name Dispute), a study worth reading written by Heinz-Jürgen Axt, Oliver Schwarz, and Simon Wiegand, addresses the question of what the Union can do to help solve secession conflicts, not only in the South Caucasus. They say that the Stability Pact for Southeast Europe, for instance, did not only promote peace and regional cooperation among the Balkan states but also paved for them the way towards EU accession. Does an orientation towards Europe have a peacemaking potential?

Tom Segev, author of *Die ersten Israelis. Die Anfänge des jüdischen Staates (The First Israelis. The Beginnings of the Jewish State)*, is no stranger to the German public. As in his earlier publications, he again addresses the years of the establishment of the state of Israel and the achievements of that time. Adhering to his usual policy, however, he not only praises the courage of the founding generation but also denounces the foundation myth decreed by Ben Gurion. The fact that he casts doubt on whether the slate of his fellow countrymen really was clean in the war of independence will certainly not be appreciated by all Israelis. In *1967. Israels zweite Geburt (1967. Israel's Second Birth)*, Segev again looks at the fifties and sixties. The euphoria reigning in Israel's army and society after the blitzkrieg of 1967 prompted him to raise the question of whether the triumph back then was a Pyrrhic victory.

HAMAS. Der islamische Kampf um Palästina (HAMAS. The Islamic Struggle for Palestine) revolves around the long path of development of the Hamas, from its origins as a branch of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood and the intifada to its election victory of 2006. Its author, Joseph Croitoru, a historian from Haifa, accuses Israel's leadership and the occupying military of having had no concept for Palestine's future and directing the Palestinians' anger against the state of Israel instead of the terrorism of Hamas.

In *Mit dem Islam gegen den Terror (With Islam against Terrorism)*, the former Israeli diplomat Avi Primor advocates negotiating with Hamas, arguing that in 2005 Ariel Sharon entered into secret negotiations with this organization which, despite its dreams about Israel's annihilation, really did favour talks. According to Primor, one way to resolve the conflict in the Middle East would be for the global community to strengthen the moderate forces of Islam.

Death will find you. Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11, penned by US journalist Lawrence Wright, certainly is a standard work on Islamic terrorism. It addresses not only the origins and development of this terrorist movement but also the failure of the US administration to identify and fend off the threat emanating from al-Qaeda.

State of Denial: Bush at War, Part III is not the first book written by the legendary journalist Bob Woodward on American security policy in the context of the terrorist attacks of 2001. Once again, Woodward is anxious to expose the lies the US government spread prior to the alleged war against terrorism in Iraq and Afghanistan, and to lend a voice to all those whose analyses were dismissed back then because they interfered with the strategy pursued by Washington's politicians.

In his book *Curveball. Spies, Lies, and the Con Man Who Caused a War*, journalist and Pulitzer Prize winner Bob Drogin portrays the innumerable manipulations of the public on the eve of the US mission in Iraq, concentrating specifically on the question of the alleged proof of ABC weapons existing in the empire of Saddam Hussein.

As depicted in his work *Der falsche Krieg. Islamisten, Terroristen und die Irrtümer des Westens (The Wrong War. Islamists, Terrorists, and the Errors of the West)*, there are two errors Olivier Roy regards as the basis of the US strategy pursued by George W. Bush after September 11, 2001. For one thing, it was a mistake to design a 'global war against terrorism'; for another, it was disastrous that Mr Bush made the intervention in Iraq a pillar of the US policy of values for the 21st century. In his book, Roy offers a brilliant synthesis of his earlier insights into political Islam and the situation prevailing in the Middle East.

Geliebtes dunkles Land. Menschen und Mächte in Afghanistan (Beloved Dark Country. People and Powers in Afghanistan) written by Susanne Koelbl and Olaf Ihlau certainly is the best German publication on Afghanistan and terrorism. It focuses on the complex relations between the Afghan provinces as well as on loyalties in the country. The reader experiences a world in which the word of tribal chiefs is more important than that of the president and his governors.

Thanks to Annette Ramelsberger, a valuable depiction of Islamist terrorist activities in Germany is now available. In *Der deutsche Dschihad (German Jihad)*, the journalist describes what path German activists take to become followers of Jihad and how they prepare concrete plans of attack, impressing the reader with her profound knowledge of the field and an uncompromising attitude.

Jason Elliot's *Mirrors of the Unseen: Journeys in Iran* focuses on Persia, its wonderful architecture and its people. Although there is no political opposition in the country, the reader of this superb work will realize that the everyday life of the people living in the largest state of the Middle East is dominated by widespread discontent with the political system and the power of the mullahs.

In the Rose Garden of the Martyrs: A Memoir of Iran written by Christopher de Bellaigue is dominated by the former mayor of Tehran, Mr Ahmadinejad, who came to power by populist means. Thanks to his excellent knowledge of the language, the author conveys an authentic image of the Iranian people, their culture, and their society that lives in a 'never ending grief for their imam', indulging in and enjoying their sorrow.

Christiane Hoffmann, a German who had to submit to Islamic-Iranian laws for five years, gives us a remarkable work on the transformation processes in Iran's society. In *Hinter den Schleiern Irans (Behind Iran's Veils)*, the reader experiences the efforts of a woman to portray a culture which to her primarily means fear, danger, and conflict.

Last but not least, *Persian Fire* must not be left out. Tom Holland's key proposition is that, contrary to what is being prophesied, civilisations need not inevitably confront one another. Rather, he argues, the recent conflict is rooted in a very old division of the world that occurred even prior to the crusades. Even the Greeks and Persians had been asking themselves: 'Why do they hate us?' And Herodotus wrote that the Asians had always thought of the Greeks as their eternal enemies. The book by Tom Holland, who regards the Battle of Arathon as Europe's actual hour of birth, sheds some light on the issue. Making ancient times popular, it arouses our interest in history.

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