

Book Reviews



Stuart A. Cohen and Aharon Klieman, eds., *Routledge Handbook on Israeli Security* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 350 pp. Hardback, \$220.00.

In this wide-ranging publication, spanning 350 pages and 27 chapters, editors Stuart A. Cohen and Aharon Klieman offer a detailed and impressive picture of Israel's national security, revealing a vast array of topics and issues connected to it. They challenge a commonly held assumption—namely, that Israel is a unique case of a democratic state subject to severe and complex security threats without any analogue on the world stage. In the introduction, they pose the question, “Is Israel in a category of its own, exceptional in the nature of its security dilemmas?” (38) They conclude that Israel's claim to exceptionalism has served to prevent relevant comparisons between Israel and similarly situated democracies. I find this argument wholly legitimate and even welcome. However, the volume falls short of offering useful comparisons to other countries, focusing largely on the Israeli experience instead.

The book is organized into five thematic sections, each corresponding to a central question that the editors aim to address. The first section—“The Israeli Security Prism”—addresses the question, “Which circumstances particular to the Israeli context might account for its singularity, and what, at times, might appear to be an excessive preoccupation with security?” (11). The second—“Debating Security”—treats the question, “How has the primacy of national security impacted the country and been interpreted by the different elements of society?” (49). The third—“Framing Security Policy”—considers the question, “What coping mechanisms enable Israel and Israelis to debate, formulate, and execute security related policies?” (147). The fourth—“Pursuing Security”—deals with the question, “Can a preliminary and tentative balance sheet be drawn up that displays the costs incurred and the benefits accrued by Israel as a result of continuously being compelled to seek out reasonable assured security?” (223).

