

a comprehensive range of issues, but there remain some limitations in their approach. First, whether China's expanding capacities and interests are interpreted as defensive or offensive, as seeking revision or equilibrium, is substantially a problem of perception not just of fact. To put this in Christensen's terms, can China get the balance right between persuasive and coercive diplomacy, between encouraging compliance with its interests when appropriate and enforcing compliance when necessary? China's resort to coercive diplomacy around its self-defined core interests does seem defensive from the Chinese perspective, but is often not perceived as such by those in receipt of its sanctions. This suggests the largest and least predictable variable in China's security politics is China's identity, or more precisely the gap between China's self-perception of legitimate security interests and mechanisms, and others' perception of these. Nathan and Scobell do discuss the role of history, culture, ideology and nationalism as drivers of China's security identity, but these are only accorded 18 pages out of 400. Some readers may wish that the relationship between identity and behaviour was explored more fully. Secondly, as a compendium of security issues, there is some variance in the value of specific chapters. To give examples from the instruments of power section, the chapter on military modernisation is an excellent summary that covers doctrine, structure, technical up-grading and core missions. The preceding chapter considers China's global systems integration, focusing primarily on economic internationalisation but also pointing briefly to environmental vulnerability, information security, and proliferation issues. This chapter is less effective not because the right issues are not identified but because large and complex questions such as these cannot be adequately reviewed in a chapter. Having taken on the task of offering a comprehensive account of China's security behaviour, the authors' unavoidably find themselves having to compress certain key issues with some loss of value in consequence. These limitations aside, the contribution of Nathan and Scobell is likely to be widely read and used in debates about China's changing security roles.

Perhaps the most interesting thing about reviewing these two books together is that they reveal how large and diverse the field of Asian strategic politics has become. From quite different methodological approaches and problem areas they represent useful complementary perspectives on how a predictable peace for Asia might be secured.

**Female Soldiers in Sierra Leone: Sex, Security and Post-Conflict Development.** By Megan H. MacKenzie. New York: New York University Press, 2012. 187p. \$49.00.  
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Although the cover of the Megan MacKenzie's book suggests a stereotypical account of what it means to be a

soldier or combatant in Africa (young, black, poor and armed with AK47s), her thoughtful analysis in the pages that follow, based on rich and original qualitative data, is anything but typical or predictable. MacKenzie's powerful and complex account of women's and young girls' lived experiences in Sierra Leone during and after the civil war provides a much needed challenge to the oversimplified dichotomies regarding male warriors/female victims, orderly phases of conflict/post-conflict, and security policy/development policy that continue to dominate stories of war and peace in contemporary policy-making and popular media. MacKenzie pushes her readers to deeply and empathetically consider the varied and even contradictory ways that women and girls participate in and are affected by armed conflict and, in turn, how those experiences determine what post-conflict security and development looks like or has the potential to be like on the ground. In this way, while her argument is firmly grounded in a theoretical critique of Western, liberal and patriarchal approaches to international security and development, it also provides insightful, forward-looking, and most importantly, locally-derived ideas and genuine "bottom-up" approaches to security and development policy. What is more, she demonstrates how accessible local insights and ideas are to those that take the time to ask and really listen. In short, *Female Soldiers in Sierra Leone: Sex, Security and Post-Conflict Development* represents a critical piece of scholarship for anyone interested in armed conflict, post-conflict reconstruction, international security policy and global development work. It challenges scholars and practitioners to rethink the dominant and highly gendered narrative of wartime violence and to radically evaluate and transform the liber and imperial roots of development policy as it increasingly overlaps with security policy.

Central to MacKenzie's argument is the development of the concept of conjugal order, which she deploys "as an analytical tool to detect and examine the laws, regulations and norms that dominate a particular region or context" (p. 4). The conceptual lens is a particularly innovative and effective means for deconstructing the gendered, imperial and regulatory nature of development policy, security sector reform, and general intervention by Western state and nonstate actors in the Global South. In Chapter 3, for example, MacKenzie details the many instances where local and international organizations make every effort to label female soldiers as anything but soldiers. From "women associated with the fighting forces" to "unaccompanied children" to "bush wives" and "camp followers," the post-armed conflict programming presumes victimhood for women and girls, denying them any agency (and the resources that go along with that) when "reintegrating" them back into "normal society." Through the lens of conjugal order this process is better understood as "reordering" and "reinforcing" specific gender roles rather than

“reintegrating” or “reforming” these transitional societies (p. 73). As MacKenzie points out, this is problematic for a number of reasons, not the least of which include the moralizing message it sends about “female soldiers as exceptions rather than legitimate subjects” (p. 48). Such ordering logics are not only limiting but likely disempowering and potentially repressive.

As MacKenzie discovers through her many interviews with former female soldiers in Sierra Leone, this dominant Western narrative is quite disconnected from the actual lived experience of most women and girls. Many females fought in the civil war in Sierra Leone and those “associated with the fighting forces” define themselves as soldiers (p. 51). This is not to say they did not also identify themselves as sex slaves or abductees. In fact, the voices of Sierra Leonean women and girls that MacKenzie so eloquently shares in this book reveal the multiple and diverse roles that female soldiers owned during the conflict; they were both perpetrators and victims of violence and other crimes. The conjugal order lens helps explain how reintegration programs failed to recognize these complex roles and identities, and therefore, why these programs failed to attract women and girls or to reintegrate those they did attract in ways that were socially and economically beneficial. In Chapter 4, MacKenzie discusses multiple cases where female soldiers reported either not knowing about certain reintegration programs and how to access them, or if they did discover and access these programs, the female soldiers reported learning job skills, such as tailoring, that were not necessarily lucrative or appropriate given local market demands. These major limitations, in addition to the lack of funding, safe facilities and long-term programming, not only failed to empower women, but actually imposed gendered notions for women’s roles based on the Western-liberal nuclear family.

MacKenzie also applies conjugal order as a tool for better understanding rape as a weapon of war (Chapter 6) and the often ignored category of children born of war (Chapter 7) in Sierra Leone. In both discussions, MacKenzie brings to light how women, particularly those who have suffered wartime sexual violence, experience the post-conflict environment and the many ways such time periods are often more violent, abusive, isolating and painful than the time before the peace agreement was signed. In this context, both rape during war and the existence of war babies present serious challenges to embedded patriarchal norms associated with heterosexuality, marriage and childbirth—all essential aspects of the sexual relationships authorized by the accepted conjugal order. Thus, MacKenzie argues that working towards peace in Sierra Leone “requires a brave examination of these rooted norms and practices as well as radical redefinition of insecurity and instability” (p. 116) that challenges the artificial distinctions so often made between conflict and post-conflict, security policy and development policy.

In order to convincingly challenge these multiple narratives, MacKenzie takes great care throughout the book to allow the voices of the women and girls that she interviewed to be fully “heard” by the readers (p. 21). This means that she chose not to edit or disaggregate longer quotations but to rather include large sections of interview material and share with the reader as much of the primary research as possible. Her approach to the interviews themselves as well as the way she presents the interview material is a model of feminist methodology and will be of great value to those interested in conducting fieldwork in the most ethical, representative and inclusive ways. However, there were numerous points throughout the book where MacKenzie was too careful and not bold enough in inserting her own thoughts and analysis as they related to or reflected upon the direct quotes from the interviewees as she presented them. This line between allowing the voices to speak for themselves and integrating the voice of the researcher—and using the latter to interpret and make a theoretical argument about the former—is a tough line to navigate, particularly for feminist scholars. Nonetheless, it is a tension we must engage and grapple with. Thus, my only critique of the book refers to a few places where I desired to hear more of MacKenzie’s voice as the researcher who spent a significant amount of time in the region. Her research and analysis make important contributions to a number of subfields in International Relations and her writing should not shy away from making bold statements and conclusions.

Despite this minor criticism, MacKenzie makes a convincing case for the myriad of ways in which post-conflict programming prioritizes males as security concerns and females as social concerns. Her theories about conjugal order and its impact on gendered insecurity during and after armed conflict raises critical questions for all those involved in international security and development policy-making and its implementation. By integrating the stories from female soldiers in Sierra Leone into a sharp theoretical critique, MacKenzie is able to develop a significant disruption to the dominant African war narrative that shapes how the world sees that region, and more importantly how the international community chooses to intervene in armed conflict there. MacKenzie is aware of the practical significance of her research and keeping with feminist methodology, she clearly hopes that her work will make a difference in women’s lives. As she rightly points out, “identifying the ways in which the ‘post-conflict’ transition in Sierra Leone has been gendered might allow us to locate important sites of resistance and possibilities for change” (p. 5). This forward-looking, pragmatic approach in her research makes her book important and accessible for not only academics and scholars but for all policy-makers and activists concerned with war and security.