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Book Review

Global Security in the Twenty-First Century: The Quest for Power and the Search for Peace

Sean Kay

Third Edition, Rowman & Littlefield, USA; 2015, 415 Pages
\$54.00, ISBN 13: 978-1-4422-4802-4

Reviewed by Kyle Mangrum

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Global Security in the Twenty-First Century: The Quest for Power and the Search for Peace by Sean Kay is now in its third edition. Published in 2015 and thoroughly updated from the second edition, this version is an excellent primer on contemporary issues related to global security.

Kay is the Robson Professor of Politics and Government at Ohio Wesleyan University. His previous books include *NATO and the Future of European Security* and *America's Search for Security: The Triumph of Idealism and the Return of Realism*. He served as a foreign policy advisor for Barack Obama's 2008 presidential campaign and was invited to be an advisor for Bernie Sanders's 2016 presidential campaign in the role of national co-coordinator of informal foreign policy. Kay has become a go-to expert media source in the United States and internationally. This experience and expertise are evident in *Global Security*.

Kay's scope in the book is expansive without sacrificing depth of analysis or specificity of focus. The book is divided into ten sections detailing distinct aspects of contemporary global security. Section titles include "Great Powers and Grand Strategy," "Asymmetric Conflict," and "Human Security." Kay sharpens his focus by concentrating not just on these general concepts, but specifically on the ways in which these issues of global security have been impacted and altered by new technologies and ideas in the twenty-first century.

Kay's prose is active and engaging, and he consistently uses convincing hypothetical examples and interesting anecdotes arising from his wide experience. Throughout the book, he deepens the reader's knowledge and understanding of international relations and global security questions by introducing concepts that build on each other with increasing levels of complexity, so that even readers with limited background knowledge of the subject can remain actively engaged. For example, when discussing hotbeds of global security problems—areas including the Middle East, Asia, and Eurasia, which Kay dubs "flashpoints"—he breaks down specific areas where flashpoints occur, focusing first on potential causes for those flashpoints, then on the types of issues that arise within flashpoints, and finally on the way responses to flashpoints can shape global security and global politics. Kay argues that because solutions to flashpoint-related issues will tremendously impact the rest of the world, flashpoints should be the most concentrated focus for global security. Among other issues, Kay discusses how nuclear weapons and

revolutions affect flashpoints. Accommodating readers with little or no prior knowledge of these issues, Kay consistently provides detailed concept explanations and analyses that gradually build in complexity—in this section and throughout the other sections of the book.

In my opinion, Kay sometimes takes a too-optimistic view about solving the world's problems, and this perspective occasionally clouds his view of the general state of global security issues. After spending the entirety of the book detailing various contemporary challenges and threats to global security and discussing how those threats could best be resolved, Kay concludes, "The good news is that all of the global security challenges covered in this book have solutions. It is not really an issue of 'Yes, we can' – as Barack Obama's campaign slogan stated in 2008 – but rather 'Will we?'" Given the state of global politics in 2018 and how intractable and deeply rooted many security issues are, it is not always easy to share Kay's sense of optimism or agree with the idea that he implies: if a problem exists, it must have a ready solution.

Overall, though, *Global Security in the Twenty-First Century* serves as an excellent introduction to the broad field of global security. Kay's relatable, easy-to-understand examples enhance the book's accessibility for readers across many fields. He keeps jargon to a minimum, and he explains concepts without assuming prior expertise—while maintaining depth of analysis. *Global Security in the Twenty-First Century: The Quest for Power and the Search for Peace* is a good read and a valuable resource.