

While the search for 'win-win' scenarios and solutions goes on, there are various initiatives that seek to foster confidence and security building measures (CSBMs) to lower tensions, reduce fear of attack by both (or more) parties, and build relationships of trust and cooperation. A flurry of initiatives are taking place, fostering cooperation amongst scientists at a civil society level but encouraging further embedding in and integration of (mainly) China into multi-lateral international affairs, including policing against piracy in the Western Indian Ocean. This builds social capital, developing inter-cultural understanding and promotes joint visions and operations in the South China Sea, which, apart from being the channel of \$5 trillion of seaborne trade per annum, is also vulnerable to natural hazards (including risk of tsunami) and environmental degradation. It is such "non-traditional security issues" that form the focus of this interesting book. The co-editors and contributing authors of *Non-traditional security issues and the South China Sea* see an opportunity for de-escalation via regional cooperation in these 'soft' areas of diplomacy and international relations. A case in point is ASEAN, the Association of South-East Asian Nations, where Indonesia is the informal lead nation, and which holds regular '+ China' summits. Such CSBMs should hopefully lead – as the book's co-editors opine – to regional security and order (p. 13). In fact, energy related development cooperation has long been suggested as a possible way forward even for the East China Sea confrontation. The trouble here is the chicken-and-egg conundrum: yes, cooperation can build trust and good faith; but, trust and good faith are also needed to launch and develop cooperation, particularly at official levels; and such assets may be in very short supply as long as governments peddle and fan nationalism to solicit public approval for their policies.

These two books, both published by Ashgate, proffer important and timely information about the past and recommendations about the possible futures of a tense and sensitive region that has been catapulted to world attention. I recommend both volumes to scholars of international relations, East Asian studies and peace and conflict studies.

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John Urry (2014). *Offshoring*. Cambridge: Polity Press. Hbk (ISBN: 978-0-7456-6485-9; €62.50); pbk (ISBN: 978-0-7456-6486-6; €18.80) and e-book (ISBN: 978-0-7456-8462-8; €14.99).

What have Manchester United Football Club, Trafigura, the island of St Barts, pirates, hedge funds, Radio Caroline, the only seven star hotel in the world, The Waste Makers, Enron and extraordinary rendition have in common? They all find a place in this well-documented and impressive work, which unveils the networks of concealment, wealth, evasion, excess and power which lie at the root of the concept of offshoring. Indeed, Urry reserves some harsh words to his subject: "Offshoring erodes 'democracy' and, more generally, notions of fairness within and between societies" (p. 10). He also describes it as "an account that emphasizes avoidance, rule-breaking, irresponsibility, and secrets as the 'rich class' remade the world in its interests" (p. 14). Offshoring is about how the rich are allowed and encouraged to steal a couple of marches over the rest, which, at little cost, enable them to become even richer. The

writer also refers to the “dark side” of the new class warfare which is being waged, “enabling the rise and rise of the rich class”. (p. 1)

The book is divided into ten chapters each covering a different subject. It seeks to tackle the issue of offshoring in a broader fashion than is usually the case by extending its investigation into such unlikely and challenging areas as leisure, energy and waste. This is a bold approach which seeks to find a common thread that runs through all the various sectors reviewed: namely, the construction of a sophisticated, well planned and coordinated framework directed at enabling an elite to avoid and thwart normal regulatory and financial requirements and standards. In this exclusive, murky and opaque world, wealth, excess and tax dodging are promoted and protected by extensive layers of official complicity, manipulation, and an uncanny ability to remain out of sight.

It is impossible to critique each chapter individually since, in any event, the book merits being reviewed as a whole and not on the qualities of its individual chapters. The author investigates the development of new types of offshore, today no longer restricted to lighter corporate regulation, discretion, confidentiality and tax, along with financial advantages.

One intriguing chapter deals with ‘Leisure offshored’. This cleverly juxtaposes the pleasant sounds of Radio Caroline (a 1960s British pirate radio station) with the gated pleasure domes of Dubai and luxury cruise liners navigating in a world where the super-rich can and do avoid contact with the “merely rich” (p. 84). Here, the writer wryly observes that the “the little people” with their “little money” are still paying their taxes (p. 62), a clear indictment of the “offshore rich class” and its “upper class segregation” whose members are able to live practically everywhere and nowhere without paying anything close to an equitable amount of tax.

Chapter 2 deals with ‘Secrets’ and all the secrecy that money can buy. This topic is of vital significance as it sets the scene for the vital need of offshore beneficiaries and operators being capable of moving themselves or their assets easily and of transacting free from the prying eyes of authorities. The latter are themselves often complicit in creating the conditions whereby profitable offshoring can flourish. Concealment is indeed one of the major themes that run through all the pages of this study. The ability to hide assets and gains through legal and semi-legal nominee arrangements remains a key factor for the popularity of many financial, corporate and tax havens. In this environment, professionals and other practitioners risk being viewed as the agents of a rich elite, physically detached and mentally alienated from the concerns of humdrum, ordinary people. The last chapter enjoys the Dylanesque title ‘Bringing it all back home’ and deals with the difficult proposition of reining in and bringing offshore activities back onshore.

No reference is made to states which are pursuing aggressive, controversial and lucrative initiatives to sell passports to the super-rich, assuring them full secrecy, recently (in Malta) further defended even on supposed grounds of privacy and data protection. In a future edition, this subject could possibly merit a couple of pages seeing that offshoring seems to be on the rise in the selling of passports and spurious forms of citizenship, nationality and residency and visa arrangements. These would usually consist of government-sponsored schemes which make it easy for the ultra-rich to buy passports of foreign countries with which they may have the flimsiest of connections, or none at all. This allows them to shift from one location to another on the strength of multiple passports. These novel and often amazing offers warrant greater scrutiny. Malta has also been aggressively seeking to establish itself as a leading jurisdiction for the setting up of hedge funds, a subject briefly referred to on p. 178.

Book Reviews Section

Offshoring is an impressively original and intelligent work which, in its 200 pages, offers truly disturbing insights and warnings. The case for the democratic dangers of offshoring seems well made. The chapters are easily readable despite the daunting subject-matter. This book contains many useful references to further published material for the reader who may wish to know more on any particular topic covered in the different chapters. It takes into account a number of very recent important events such as the operation to assassinate Osama Bin Laden.

The book benefits from clarity of style and credibility of content and is well organized. It is recommended to all persons who are interested in better understanding the multifarious dimensions and threats of offshoring, in its various shapes and guises and in its massive scale. The style and layout are very reader-friendly, and are accompanied by extensive and useful footnotes. The work also appears to be well indexed. Scholarly and detailed, the book documents the rise and rise of offshore activities and is undoubtedly an important addition to studies on this subject. The paperback price is hugely attractive and puts it well within the pockets of many, including students.

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