

other hand, some prophecies propounded in the book, such as the approaching unification of the 'Arab' world (p. 122), have not (yet) materialised.

The big picture, however, remains. The seeds of contemporary American political incompetency, Kolko asserts, were sown long ago, in the first decade following the Second World War, at the latest; George W. Bush – considered by many as one of the worst US presidents ever – did not initiate the decline but simply exacerbated it (p. 165). The core problems of the US, the author argues, are its self-centred political system and its old-fashioned, useless military apparatus, which make it repeat the mistakes it made in Vietnam – now in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Chapters 2 and 3 may be of special interest to students of American history in the twentieth century. The analysis in chapter 6 would probably interest those studying the art of intelligence and political decision making. Chapter 4 ('Israel: A Stalemated Accident of History') should be read by citizens of that political entity, as it may provide them with an external perspective on their state's international situation.

By its very nature as a collection of articles, *World in Crisis* does not fully knit together all of its threads – financial, technological, political and economic. But it certainly lists the symptoms of the current situation, which in itself is an important thing.

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Appeals to Interest: Language, Contestation, and the Shaping of Political Agency by **Dean Mathiowetz**. University Park PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2011. 228pp., £53.95, ISBN 9780271048505

The conceptual poles that orient *Appeals to Interest* by Dean Mathiowetz are, on the one hand, an insistence that 'interest' ought to be brought back to the fore of political thought and, on the other, that the rich constitution of the concept be rendered active by revitalising its layered linguistic meaning. Given this outlook, the key argument made by Mathiowetz turns on the claim that the 'impulse of political philosophy ... has been to remove the question of interest from politics and quarantine it instead in the realm of theory' (p. 4). The author then draws attention to the ways in which our understanding of interest can be deepened through encounters

with language, a possibility that he suggests has slipped through the net of contemporary political discourse.

In the spirit of a hermeneutic method that is indebted to the likes of Michel Foucault, Charles Taylor and Hans-Georg Gadamer, Mathiowetz suggests that one of the key conditions of possibility accruing from the linguistic turn is to provide students of politics with the tools to reinvigorate the language of interest. As it turns out, Mathiowetz's real objection is not to the notion of interest per se; rather, he believes we should be enlarging the terrain of the meanings associated with it. The word 'interest', he contends, 'is the best way to study the concept interest, because the historical and analytical study of language must emphasize heterogeneity and account for, or at least be open to, the variegated and even contradictory uses of words in political discourses' (p. 13).

This leads to another aspect of Mathiowetz's objective, which is to critique – and move beyond – the usual refrain of calculating self-interestedness associated with discourses of interest and lay claim to its agentive potential. So what is at stake in this call for agency as an integral part of interest and the refusal of the limited vocabulary of self-interest? Mathiowetz urges a move back to the framework of identity, specifically political identity, as the foundation of political action. This sort of approach, he argues throughout, opens up the space for an alternative genealogy and imaginary of interest as action oriented in terms of its juridical and plural bearings and attuned to the realities of conflict and contestation. In sum, *Appeals to Interest* is a meticulous work, compelling and full of insight. It provides a resoundingly astute analysis of *how* and *why* appeals to interest depend on agency, specifically in terms of 'who' an agent is. There is no doubt that this book has the potential to add substantially to our understanding of the ever-evolving realm of politics.

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Democracy, Equality and Justice by **Matt Mat-ravers and Lukas H. Meyer (eds)**. Abingdon: Routledge, 2010. 262pp., £85.00, ISBN 978 0 415 59292 5

Of the many endeavours to restate the central aspirations of contemporary political philosophy through a