

## **Fighting to be tops**

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From The Economist print edition



### **Politics and current affairs**

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#### **[Dangerous Nation: America's Place in the World from its Earliest Days to the Dawn of the Twentieth Century](#)**

By Robert Kagan. *Knopf*; 544 pages; \$30. *Atlantic Books*; £25

An absorbing and eye-opening interpretation of American foreign policy which argues that even before America was a nation its leaders anticipated that it was destined to be the dominant global power. Highly readable and full of information that will be new even to specialists.

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#### **[The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11](#)**

By Lawrence Wright. *Knopf*; 480 pages; \$27.95. *Allen Lane*; £20

An impressive addition to the over-crowded world of al-Qaeda studies. Thoughtful and vividly written, this book traces the history of Islamic fundamentalism and brings to life the jihadists who conceived the attack on the twin towers and the officers of the CIA and FBI whose rivalries undermined efforts to thwart it.

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#### **[Guantánamo and the Abuse of Presidential Power](#)**

By Joseph Margulies. *Simon & Schuster*; 322 pages; \$25

A sober, and sobering, look at the policies and practices that have led to the internment of hundreds of men at Guantánamo Bay, without legal rights, and subject to degrading interrogations. Mr Margulies shows how the interrogation techniques echo those used by America's bitterest enemies, the North Koreans, and later the North Vietnamese, on American soldiers.

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**The One Percent Doctrine: Deep Inside America's Pursuit of its Enemies Since 9/11**

By Ron Suskind. *Simon & Schuster*; 384 pages; \$27 and £18.99

A well-written, fast-paced account of the Bush administration's so-called war on terror, filled with fascinating new material on the key figures, including their fighting and feuding.

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**Sacred Causes: The Clash of Religion and Politics, from the Great War to the War on Terror**

By Michael Burleigh. *HarperCollins*; 576 pages; \$27.95. *HarperPress*; £25

A clever, honest and often funny analysis of the confrontation throughout the 20th century between religion and politics. It will bring comfort to neither the religious nor the secular.

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**[China Shakes the World: A Titan's Rise and Troubled Future-and the Challenge for America](#)**

By James Kynge. *Houghton Mifflin*; 288 pages; \$25. *Weidenfeld & Nicolson*; £18.99

With a fresh perspective and a fine eye for arresting detail, James Kynge brings alive all the complexities, contradictions and characters that are the features of China's whirlwind development.

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**[In Spite of the Gods: The Rise of Modern India](#)**

By Edward Luce. *Doubleday*; 352 pages; \$26. *Little, Brown*; £20

India's strengths lie not in its religious traditions, but in its history of pluralism and the vibrancy of its democracy, argues Edward Luce. A perceptive and witty book that is set to become the definitive generalist's account of India's political, economic and social development and its future prospects.

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**[The J Curve: A New Way to Understand Why Nations Rise and Fall](#)**

By Ian Bremmer. *Simon & Schuster*; 320 pages; \$26 and £17.99

How to turn authoritarian regimes into stable, open democracies. Ian Bremmer, whose Eurasia Group advises on political risk, sums up the challenge in a simple graphic that is this year's tipping point.

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**[Seize the Hour: When Nixon Met Mao](#)**

By Margaret MacMillan. *John Murray*; 384 pages; £25. To be published in America as *"Nixon and Mao: The Week That Changed the World"* by Random House in February

In an impressive follow-up to her magisterial "Paris 1919", Margaret MacMillan presents the grand vision and petty deceits that accompanied Richard Nixon on his visit to China in 1972.

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**[White Man's Burden: Why the West's Efforts to Aid the Rest Have Done So Much Ill and So Little Good](#)**

By William Easterly. *Penguin Press*; 448 pages; \$27.95. *Oxford University Press*; £16.99

A compelling examination of the failure of foreign aid. William Easterly argues that "big pushes", such as those proposed by Jeffrey Sachs and the UN, never work, and argues instead for a series of "little pushes". You need only look at what drives some of the poorest parts of Africa.

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**[The Trouble with Africa: Why Foreign Aid Isn't Working](#)**

By Robert Calderisi. *Palgrave Macmillan*; 256 pages; \$24.95. *Yale University Press*; £18.99

Robert Calderisi has worked for the World Bank for more than 20 years, and is equally at home in Ouagadougou or Washington. Differing in style, if not in substance, from William Easterly's book on the same subject, Mr Calderisi's is a fluent, deeply personal account of how aid has failed Africa, and how Africa, so often, has managed to fail itself.

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## **Economics and business**

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**[The Wal-Mart Effect: How the World's Most Powerful Company Really Works-and How It's Transforming the American Economy](#)**

By Charles Fishman. *Penguin Press*; 304 pages; \$25.95. *Allen Lane*; £12.99

The store that everyone, except shoppers, loves to hate. This is the best account of one of the most extraordinary business phenomena of our time.

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**[Myself and Other More Important Matters](#)**

By Charles Handy. *William Heinemann*; 213 pages; £18.99

Author of a string of books about organisations and their organisers, Britain's closest equivalent to Peter Drucker turns autobiographical in this charming opportunity for his usual audience of top executives to think not so much "outside the box" as way beyond it.

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**[Joe Wilson and the Creation of Xerox](#)**

By Charles D. Ellis. *John Wiley*; 396 pages; \$27.95 and £18.99

Chester Carlson's invention of xerography would never have become the hugely profitable Xerox photocopying business were it not for what Charles Ellis calls the "extreme entrepreneurship" of Joe Wilson. A fine analysis of what Wilson brought to their partnership.

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**[Mavericks at Work: Why the Most Original Minds in Business Win](#)**

By William C. Taylor and Polly LaBarre. *William Morrow*; 336 pages; \$26.95

The authors ask five questions of would-be mavericks, each of which focuses on winning the increasingly fierce war for talent. Why should great people join your organisation? Do you know a great person when you see one? Can you find great people who aren't looking for you? Are you adept at teaching great people how your organisation works and wins? Does your organisation work as distinctively as it competes? Food for thought.