The publication of *Europe Knows Nothing about the Orient* is a timely challenge to the state of the world in the twenty-first century. This book would appeal to students and scholars of Middle East studies, history, art and cultural studies, the core curriculum, and the general reader.

**Mitchell, Jolyon, and Joshua Rey. War and Religion: A Very Short Introduction.**

The late decades of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries have witnessed several wars in which religion and war are imbricated. This concise Oxford edition, titled *War and Religion*, is a good introduction to this old phenomenon that seems to remain historically relevant to humans. The book is in six chapters with two lists: one for further reading and another of 16 historic and artistic visual illustrations. Chapter 1 explores the question of remembrance and memorialization in Muslim, Western, and Native American cultures, to explain the significance of religious rituals and symbolism to human life. Mitchell and Rey state that humans employ such acts to mourn and remember the horrors of war; commemorate loss and death; and promote a sense of duty, sacrifice, and connections with the dead. Rituals and shrines signify the multi-faceted and ambiguous relationship between war and religion (p. 14).

The authors launch the subject by plunging into the discussion of *The Martyr*. This video representation of Karbala, the Shiʿa ritual of Ashura, memorializes the Karbala battle over the rightful caliph-successor to the Prophet in 632. The battle ended in the defeat of the Shiʿa (the followers of the Prophet’s cousin Ali) and the victory of the Sunni (the followers of Abu-Bakr). Since 680, the Sunni Muslims have dominated the Muslim world, marginalizing the Shiʿa. The Iranian-produced video links the recent sectarian war between Iran and Iraq (1980-1988) with the historical, political past of the battle that had initiated the schism within the Muslim community. Since the 1979 rise of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Shiʿa Republic has been vying for recognition by (and domination of?) the Muslim world. The invocation of the battle of Karbala, which seems to have had a domino effect, appropriately signifies the current entanglement of war and religion in this part of the world.

Chapters 2-5 explore the larger links between war and religion, beginning with the ancient and classical worlds, and moving into the modern and contemporary periods. In the ancient and classical worlds and across the continents, the gods played direct roles in everyday life and partook in the wars among humans. Since the rise of Islam after 610, and with the Islamic Age of
Conquest in 623, the concept of holy war, *jihad*, comes to the fore. Basing their analysis on the Quran and Hadith (the Prophet’s sayings), the book provides a concise, accessible discussion of the Muslim valorization of martyrs and Muslim warriors—“defenders of Islam” (p. 25). The authors concede that other religions, such as Christianity, continued to thrive under Muslim conquests (p. 24). The Crusaders’ wars against Muslims receive equally objective analysis. The crusades, Mitchell and Rey suggest, may have begun as holy wars by taking up the holy cross, obeying “the command of Jesus Christ” (p. 29), and bringing Jerusalem under Christian control. But there were also economic and realpolitik motives behind those wars. How do we distinguish between a holy and an unholy war? Are there wars that are waged in the name of religion, but are not really holy? Mitchell and Rey answer the former question by saying that the answers remain controversial. The latter question can be clarified when one explores modern “holy” wars, such as the ones launched by al-Qaida, whose wars culminated in the 9/11/2001 attacks on the United States, and other organizations, such as Daesh (ISIS). The wars waged by these two organizations can be described as unholy, the authors emphasize, for they have distorted religion and have not been endorsed by the large majority of Muslims.

The division between holy and unholy war is fluid and may shift depending on the historiographical perspective of the times, according to the authors. For example, the Shinto in Japan is more philosophical and less religious, but it is rich in ritual, shrines, and deities. In fact, Shinto is basically “rooted in nature and the community” with no specific value system (p. 39). When Japan opened its doors to the West in 1860, however, Shinto was transformed into a “religion” to distinguish it from Buddhism. The state appropriated Shinto as the official and secular religion (p. 40) and proceeded to achieve Japan’s targeted aggressive, expansionist wars against countries in East Asia. And Shinto is connected with kamikaze whereby Japanese fighters met their death at Pearl Harbor rather than surrender to the enemy. In the aftermath of World War II, Christianity and Buddhism, the authors add, collaborated with Shinto for patriotic reasons, “to foster unity of national purpose and sustain a martial spirit” (p. 41). Thus Shinto may qualify for being an unholy religion that has been utilized in holy wars. This protean nature of religion applies to Buddhism as well, a religion that spread from India to many Asian countries.

*War and Religion* is written in a clear, accessible style that offers concise, informative details. It would be a useful introductory text for undergraduate students in political science and war and religious studies, as well as the core program.