

in serious economic and political difficulties, the way forward for Iran is unclear, with the author positing two possibilities: a more open and pluralistic political system contributing to reconciliation with the outside world or closed and centralized domestic politics tied to a more aggressive and destabilizing regional approach.

As with the US-led intervention in Afghanistan, the author is critical of the US-led occupation of Iraq, arguing that the US approach in Iraq has replicated many of the strategic failures that characterized the war in Afghanistan. In particular, he argues that the US reconstruction strategy, or the lack thereof, 'entirely overlooked the obstacles to state-building and democracy promotion that emerged from Iraq's authoritarian and fragmented historical legacy' (p. 157). Like Iran, the way forward for Iraq is uncertain, with the author suggesting several possible scenarios, including an Islamic democracy or a 'consociational structure' (p. 176) in which Shi'i Arabs, Sunni Arabs and Kurds enjoy proportional representation.

Considering Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran and Iraq as part of a continuous geostrategic zone, Saikal concludes that the most important lesson to emerge from this study 'is the interconnectedness of the West Asian region' (p. 184). Political decisions taken in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran or Iraq often ripple across the landscape to surrounding nations, with intentional or unintentional effects on the zone and beyond. At the same time, local actors are frequently caught up in a larger game that ultimately may determine the fate of the region. In the *Zone of crisis*, Saikal provides fresh insight into and a deeper understanding of the political and strategic trends in individual countries and the region. His book is strongly recommended for anyone interested in one or more of the four countries he discusses.

Ronald Bruce St John

**Fighting to the end: the Pakistan army's way of war.** By C. Christine Fair. New York: Oxford University Press. 2014. 347 pp. Index. £23.00. ISBN 978 0 19989 270 9. Available as e-book.

Readers nonplussed by the caption 'Marry go round' which accompanies the cover of Christine Fair's astute and meticulously researched new book need only look again at the image. A gaudy carousel decked with coloured bunting, some bearing the crescent and star reminiscent of Pakistan's national flag, holds our attention. Sitting astride its horse-shaped seats are Pakistani army officers, whose smug expressions and rich uniforms captivate us until the eye is drawn to their cheaply sandalled feet. One way to read this curious juxtaposition would be to see those sandals as symbols of Pakistan's impoverished state—including the state of its national education, which speaks volumes for the comic confusion between a 'marry go round' and a 'merry-go-round'—and an indictment of the callousness of Pakistan's circulating elites led by its dominant institution: the military. Another, and more unusual, interpretation would be to regard the sandals not as symbols of national humiliation, but as markers of what Fair denotes as Pakistan's 'strategic culture' resting on the premise (if not the promise) of the country's enduring challenge in the face of overwhelming odds against the might of India.

Calling attention, as Fair does, to the fundamental importance of India in determining the conduct of Pakistan and the policies pursued by its most powerful political force—the army—is hardly new. Nor is her claim that Pakistan's strategic policies are almost entirely dictated by the country's obsession with gaining recognition, at home and abroad, as the equal of India. What is original, and for the most part persuasive, is her understanding of Pakistan as a praetorian state typified by an agenda of 'persistent revisionism', whose unrealistic objectives and at times suicidal calculations continue to mystify international

policy-makers. Fair takes on the job of clearing their minds. Pakistan's strategic choices, she argues, cannot be understood without first appreciating them as extensions of an ideologically driven culture, where the Indian threat is defined in terms that are both civilizational and military, and where military defeat in war is cancelled 'by seeing victory as the ability to continue fighting' to the end (p. 7), to deny India its claim to regional ascendancy (Pakistan's comprehensive military defeat by India in 1971 serving as a case in point).

To sustain these claims, Fair draws on history and here it is a rare treat to encounter a western security studies expert with the kind of firm grasp of Pakistan's history and culture that Fair brings to her analysis. Its heart lies in her deconstruction of Pakistan's founding logic—the so-called 'two-nation theory', which holds that India's two main religious communities, Hindus and Muslims, constituted two separate nations—and its impact on the Pakistan army's strategic culture. But Fair, unlike many of her peers, is not content merely to highlight the military implications of Pakistan's national ideology. Instead, she argues strongly that 'Pakistan's apprehensions about India are more ideological than security driven' (p. 4). With the extensive use of internal army publications (some perused for the first time) and a wide range of secondary sources, she demonstrates how the conduct of the Pakistan army, whether in seeking 'strategic depth' in Afghanistan or calling on Islamist proxies for use against Indian forces in Kashmir, has been shaped and profoundly influenced by the 'two-nation theory' with Islam at its core. Together, they have served to mould an 'ideological army' that is dedicated both to militarily resisting India and to mounting a civilizational challenge in defence of 'Muslim Pakistan' against 'Hindu India'. The fact that much of this discourse is self-serving, historically distorted and cynically manipulated by the army is irrelevant. What is important is the power of this discourse in the hands of a military-dominated establishment and the purchase it enjoys across vast swathes of Pakistani society. This is also what accounts for the ceaseless and futile quest for strategic and civilizational parity with India which underpins Pakistan's revisionist agenda.

The policy implications of Fair's thesis are significant and, one might add, hopelessly gloomy. Her very brief discussion of possible internal and external factors that could force the Pakistan army to abandon its 'persistent revisionism' clearly suggests that such expectations are unfounded. Indeed, everything points to Pakistan veering ever closer to a condition of 'unreasonable revisionism' (p. 279), symptomatic of a 'greedy state' (p. 12), as formulated by Charles Glaser, that cannot be appeased. Neither territorial concessions over Kashmir, nor security guarantees along the lines of a civilian nuclear deal would satisfy Pakistan's insatiable appetite. On the contrary, such policies of appeasement might even encourage rather than diminish Pakistan's 'greediness' and pose a greater threat to regional and international security. Fair pulls no punches: 'the United States and others should stop attempting to transform the Pakistan Army, or Pakistan for that matter' (p. 281); instead, 'the United States and its partners should seriously consider what it means to contain the threats that emanate from Pakistan, if not Pakistan itself' (p. 282).

And herein lies the fatal flaw in this otherwise bold and valuable study. For while it may be true (and a well-worn truism) that in Pakistan the army has a country (rather than the other way round), it is far from true that in Pakistan the army is the country. Yet most readers would be forgiven for thinking that Fair often comes close to conflating the two. Pakistan is, without doubt, a country in deep and dangerous flux, but it is also changing in ways that Fair tends to ignore. Few would quarrel with her claim that the ideological narrative promoted by the army is widely shared, but a few would certainly want to question her portrayal of a country today marked by unremitting hostility to India—indeed, popular hostility is now arguably more directed at the United States. There are also signs, more

perceptible today than at any other time, of mainstream political parties prepared openly to distance themselves from the military's revisionist world-view and press for a less conflictual relationship with India. But for that to continue Pakistan—the country, not its army—needs international engagement rather than the strong arm tactics of international containment which would surely serve as more grist to the army's mill.

*Farzana Shaikh, Chatham House, UK*

**Karachi: ordered disorder and the struggle for the city.** By Laurent Gayer. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2014. 336pp. £23.70. ISBN 978 0 19935 444 3. Available as e-book.

In a little over 100 years, the city of Karachi has been transformed from a small port on the Arabian sea coast to a chaotic megacity of over 20 million people, the largest in Pakistan. It also has the dubious distinction of being dubbed 'the most dangerous city in the world'. Yet the complexity, vitality and contradictory nature of Karachi and its inhabitants are often missed or oversimplified in most narratives about the city. Laurent Gayer's successful attempt to dig deeper into the multilayered and contradictory city politics of Karachi reveals how, despite all the violence and lack of governance, there remains an 'ordered disorder' to the city—one which has 'stood the test of time' (p. 275). His central thesis revolves around how certain demographic, strategic and economic developments reinforce this ordered disorder. The question he aims to tackle is how a city such as Karachi which has been 'subjected to successive cycles of violent escalation and polarization over the past three decades somehow avoided a fully fledged explosion' (p. 13).

Karachi's importance to Pakistan cannot be overestimated, strategically, politically, socially or financially. In many ways, it is a city that has been left to its own devices (and fate) through selective engagement from the state, while also being an arena for national conflict. Gayer's account underscores how the forces of crime and violence have made an indelible imprint on the political fabric of the city. He explains this 'enigma of violence' as 'that of a megacity confronted with endemic forms of collective and targeted violence that remain contained within certain bounds, and thus, do not preclude the existence of a democratic order and a thriving economy' (p. 11).

So how does Karachi still manage to function? Gayer puts forward four mutually reinforcing phenomena to explain this precarious equilibrium. First, no one actor is able to totally dominate the city, although one predominant party (the Muttahida Quami Movement or MQM) is able to cause instability because it does not depend on other actors as much as they depend on the MQM. Second is the ability of the predominant party to cause disorder and create order—they have power over the disorder. Third, the advent of coalition politics has created an environment of competition between different groupings for state power and resources. Finally, the repeated intervention of the state to establish new, if not unstable, compromises between 'public and private aspirants to sovereignty' have all, in some way, contributed to the ordered disorder of Karachi (pp. 13–14). I would argue, however, that the role of the state has been more detrimental, because of not just the interventions, but also the lack of intervention; this also reveals the tension between the centre and provincial governments in Pakistan.

While much of the violence in Karachi is targeted, as Gayer argues, Karachiites now live and breathe violence and crime with little choice. No one is spared, regardless of how much or little money they have. The rich are able to buffer themselves marginally better but they still have to leave their homes and it is here, on the streets of Karachi, that the city's volatility is experienced. Anxiety, or suppressed anxiety, is fast becoming the norm. As