

Book Reviews

South Asia

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Reconciliation: Islam, Democracy and the West

Benazir Bhutto. London: Simon & Schuster, 2008.

£17.99/\$27.95. 328 pp.

Benazir Bhutto wrote this legacy book just before she returned to Pakistan in October 2007, and completed the final edits the day before her tragic assassination two months later.

Reconciliation lays out, with almost desperate passion, Bhutto's vision of Islam, marked by judicious reason, compassion, gentleness, and above all toleration for the world's diversity. In what she terms 'the battle within Islam', she comes down resolutely on the side that favours democracy, moderation and finding common cause with the West. She bolsters this argument with a lengthy discussion of the historical and religious meanings of 'jihad', which she believes should properly be defined as 'struggling in the path of God'. Tracing the history of Islamic thought, she stresses that Islamic thinkers and rulers were ahead of their times in their early sensitivity to women's rights and potential. One chapter is devoted to Islam and democracy, with a series of brief descriptions of how different Islamic countries have dealt with their people's democratic strivings.

Bhutto devotes a full chapter to 'the case of Pakistan'. Not surprisingly, she is at pains to demonstrate that she and her Pakistan People's Party had the right answers all along, and that they were wronged by Pakistan's military and by misguided US policies. She blames Pakistan's intelligence services, the Inter-Services Intelligence, for the murder of her brother (her husband or over-zealous supporters have also been accused of this crime). Much of this material will be familiar to those who follow current events in Pakistan. It is a country

where history is a pageant of saints and demons, and this account runs true to form.

Bhutto's final chapter asks whether the clash of civilisations is inevitable. After setting forth her question, bolstered by extensive quotations from Arnold Toynbee, Oswald Spengler, Samuel Huntington and Bernard Lewis, she takes sharp exception to what she terms 'the self-fulfilling prophecy of fear'. She argues that the West can prevent the clash of civilisations by helping Muslim states create 'building blocks of democracy' and become more moderate and less extreme.

This is a sad book on many levels. Bhutto's argument offers a message of hope both for modernisers in the Muslim world and for Westerners who believe that the world will be a better place if the Muslim countries develop peacefully and democratically. She musters an impressive number of Muslim intellectuals in support of her arguments. But this kind of argument, and this particular array of experts, are unlikely to sway the minds of those who have spearheaded today's violent Islamic movements. Winning those hearts and minds will require the support of people whose ethos and identity have been formed in more traditionally Islamic settings than was the case with Benazir.

In the end she was killed, in all likelihood by assassins who saw her as an obstacle to their vision of Islam. Whatever flaws she had during her two terms as prime minister of Pakistan, her death left the country much worse off, and her vision of Islamic reconciliation with the West harder to attain.

Descent into Chaos: The United States and the Failure of Nation Building in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Central Asia

Ahmed Rashid. New York: Viking, 2008. £25.00/\$27.95. 544 pp.

Ahmed Rashid has been chronicling the agonies of Afghanistan, the Taliban, and the adjacent areas of Central Asia for a couple of decades, both as a correspondent for the *Far Eastern Economic Review* and as the author of two gripping best-sellers, *Taliban* and *Jihad*.

This latest book begins and ends with a plea for a radical and democratic transformation in Afghanistan and the surrounding countries. 'Initially', he writes on the book's first page, 'it seemed that 9/11 would ensure that the world addressed the social stagnation and state failure in South and Central Asia.' The failure to live up to this expectation, he argues, is the big strategic failure after 11 September 2001.

Rashid takes the reader behind the scenes in Washington, Islamabad, the Pakistan–Afghanistan border, many parts of Afghanistan, and more briefly in several Central Asian countries. His research included extensive interviews

with some of the key decision-makers in the countries he is writing about. The main thread of his story begins with the 11 September attacks and with the high-level contacts between the United States and Pakistan, and extends to mid 2008, by which time Pakistan and Afghanistan were at odds, the United States had become deeply suspicious of Pakistan's intelligence services, and nation-building efforts in Afghanistan and Central Asia appeared to have stalled.

It is a story with few if any heroes, a few villains (including Pakistan's President Pervez Musharraf), and a long list of inept dupes, including most of the key US decision-makers. Rashid traces the mixed motives that have long plagued Pakistan's approach to Afghanistan. His account of the inadequacies of the reconstruction effort is particularly telling. He criticises both the international community's financial contribution – \$57 per capita, compared to \$679 per capita in Bosnia – and the implementation, with heavy reliance on tribal warlords who were not trying to build a country. He is especially – and justifiably – critical of inconsistent US policies on narcotics in Afghanistan, which he argues were hamstrung by the conflicting demands of intelligence relationships in both Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The most original part of the book is Rashid's discussion of the tribal dynamics of the Pakistan–Afghanistan border areas, together with the way Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence sought to manipulate them to keep the United States in its corner. Rashid's on-the-ground reporting evoked the finest aspects of his two earlier books. I found myself wishing he had spent more time on this unique perspective, and less on re-telling distressing but familiar stories such as how the United States embarked on the disastrous policy of 'harsh interrogation methods'.

Alas, Rashid's argument is undercut by his surprisingly naive political analysis. He says he expected the world to give priority to democracy-building. Despite the Bush administration's rhetoric, democracy and institution-building were never the leading edge of its policy in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld – one of the dupes, as portrayed in Rashid's account – was never interested in nation- or democracy-building, and his was the primary voice shaping US policy. I share Rashid's sorrow about the opportunities the world and the region have missed as a result, but would have welcomed a more clear-eyed analysis of how the United States was actually approaching the region. There is plenty of blame to go around for what has unquestionably been a failure of nation-building. The real problem, however, is not so much villainy as conflicting priorities, in a part of the world where outsiders have never been very successful in calling the shots.

Crossed Swords: Pakistan, Its Army, and the Wars Within

Shuja Nawaz. New York: Oxford University Press USA, 2008.

£16.99/\$34.95. 700 pp.

Shuja Nawaz comes from an army family. His elder brother, Asif Nawaz Janjua, was Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff from 1991–93, and died in office under murky circumstances. Shuja himself worked as a journalist and then for many years for the International Monetary Fund. His book is thus the work of both an insider – not just in Pakistan but in the army – and an outsider. It is a valuable addition to the literature, and is particularly strong in its discussion of the role of the Pakistani military. In writing the book he had access to a remarkable array of documents and interviews from the Pakistani army.

Nawaz constructs his history of Pakistan as above all a history of its army. I believe this approach is appropriate. Nawaz is quite critical of the army, both in its civil and military roles. One sentence from the Introduction sums up his basic lament: 'Pakistan's existence has been marked by attempts to build a nation but without first building the institutional foundations that are needed to allow a stable federal entity to evolve in a democratic and pluralistic setting'. He acknowledges the army's professional pride and patriotic intent, but faults it for creating a 'culture of entitlement', a 'corporate structure and identity that appears to trump broader national interests'.

Nawaz asserts that while 'the army has generally performed well in its primary task of defending the country against external threats', overall, its record is spotty at best. Nawaz notes that the army's failure of political judgment and its ill-conceived military plans, in both 1971 and 1999, had devastating consequences for the nation. His accounts of the war in which Pakistan and Bangladesh separated and of the Kargil crisis, in which Pakistan tried to steal a march on India by sending troops into the Indian-controlled part of Kashmir, provide ample detail to back up this accusation.

Nawaz argues that the other major and, for the most part, baleful influence on Pakistan's history has been the United States. He complains that the United States has 'given its strategic and often short-term foreign policy interests preference' over sustaining democracy in Pakistan. At the same time, he argues that the volatile US–Pakistan relationship was 'between consenting adults', citing for example the statement in 1954 by then army chief Iskander Mirza that if the United States called on its new ally to honour its commitments to the common defence, 'Pakistan can limit her help to declarations in favor of the United Nations'. These statements have an uncomfortably contemporary ring. But his discussion of the US role is marred by some surprising errors of fact and by uneven use of documentary evidence.

The most original chapter in this book is the last, which describes, based on access to army documents, how Pakistan's army recruitment has changed, with the traditional military-recruitment districts of northern Punjab providing a dramatically smaller percentage of today's army, especially of the Other Ranks, than in Pakistan's first three decades of independence. This means that Pakistan's army 'reflects Pakistani society more than at any time in its history'. The overwhelming corporate culture of the military, however, will probably mute the impact of these changing recruitment patterns on the army's role.

The Madrassah Challenge: Militancy and Religious Education in Pakistan

C. Christine Fair. Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2008. \$14.95. 145 pp.

Christine Fair has produced a well-researched and carefully argued discussion that overturns much of the conventional wisdom about where madrassah education fits in to the recruitment and nurturing of extremist Islamic militancy in Pakistan. It is blessedly short (just over 100 pages) and should be required reading for anyone tempted to pontificate on this vexing subject.

Drawing on the literature about suicide bombing, quantitative studies on madrassahs and militant recruitment, and on her own field work, Fair concludes that while many students are exposed to some madrassah education, those who study full time in such schools represent a tiny minority, perhaps as low as 1%, of Pakistan's students. The largest concentration of madrassahs is in Punjab, Pakistan's most populous province. There is little difference in the economic profiles of madrassah students and those in state-run schools. Fair effectively rebuts the argument that these schools are recruiting centres for militants active in Kashmir. Studies of suicide bombers and other militant leaders suggest that their education is typically in non-religious institutions and up to the university level.

Madrassah attendance does, however, correlate with other tendencies that ought to worry us. Madrassah students are less likely than their counterparts in non-religious schools to support equal rights for women and religious minorities. Even more worrisome is the association of madrassahs with sectarian violence. And despite the lack of evidence connecting most madrassahs with militancy, a handful of these schools do have such links. If the number is indeed small, closing down the offenders might be a viable option for the Pakistani government, but any such action would be fraught with political risk.

This is primarily a descriptive work, but Fair does conclude with some discussion of what a sensible education policy might look like. Her emphasis, properly, is on beefing up non-religious education, and especially making high-quality girls' education available, with good female teachers. My research a couple of decades ago in Bangladesh suggests that there is a market for girls' education, and that country's experience in the intervening years would indicate this is an achievable goal.

Islamist Militancy in Bangladesh: A Complex Web

Ali Riaz. London: Routledge, 2008. £80.00/\$160.00. 172 pp.

For many years, Bangladesh was looked on as an inhospitable environment for Islamic extremism. The local Islamic culture is filled with pan-South Asian features, including rich poetic and musical traditions of the sort not usually associated with the kind of orthodoxy that normally spawns extremist movements. The country's largest Islamist party was stigmatised for decades because it opposed Bangladesh's independence from Pakistan in 1971. The two mainstream political parties, whose leaders have alternated in office for close to two decades, are also non-religious. But since at least the late 1990s, Islamic groups that seek to install an explicitly Islamic state that rejects many of the basic tenets of liberal democracy have been a prominent part of the political scene.

Ali Riaz's fine study contends that among the many reasons for this transformation, the most important is the relentless decline in governance in Bangladesh, what he terms 'the absence of the state', which has created a vacuum in law enforcement and the provision of basic services. This, in turn, has created a market for Islamist militant groups. His basic contention is that clandestine Islamist groups have little support, but are nonetheless a threat to Bangladeshi society and national security. Their access to weapons, largely through the Southeast Asian black market, makes them dangerous, the more so since none completely reject violence as a means of political change.

Riaz distinguishes among three types of militant groups. Two are participants, to a greater or lesser degree, in Bangladesh's political process; the best-known examples are the Jamaat-e-Islami and the Islami Oikya Jote. Riaz argues that organisations of the third type, clandestine organisations, consider violence the only means to achieve their political goals. The best-known example here is the Jama'at-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh, the group that claimed responsibility for a series of coordinated bombings in all but one of Bangladesh's administrative districts in August 2005. His thumbnail sketches of the major groups at the end of the study is a very valuable research aid.

Riaz contends that periods of military influence in politics have expanded Islamist influence. He cites numerous instances in which local administrations have looked the other way when radical groups apparently took the law into their own hands. He also argues that the relations among the South Asian states encouraged the worst tendencies of the clandestine groups. A complex series of relationships among militant groups across Bangladesh's borders with India and Myanmar, as well as the 'proxy wars' between India and Pakistan, are cases in point. A government crackdown in 2006–07 resulted in thousands of arrests from militant groups. These were a blow to the clandestine militants, but did not put them out of business.

Riaz's prescription for creating a better atmosphere is twofold: encourage economic and social development, and remedy the glaring governance problems that afflict the major non-Islamist political parties so that the democratic system can function as it was meant to. Bangladesh's foreign friends can help finance development, but political housecleaning is a job the Bangladeshis need to do. Riaz correctly identifies the pathologies the parties need to address: 'patrimonialism', a sense of entitlement, the family lock on the two major parties, the difficulty (some would say impossibility) of bringing in fresh party leadership. He has the right idea. How to actually change these things, however, is a conundrum neither he nor anyone else has yet figured out.

War, Conflict and the Military

H.R. McMaster

Counterinsurgency in Modern Warfare

Daniel Marston and Carter Malkasian, eds. Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2008. £17.99/\$27.95. 304 pp.

Counterinsurgency in Modern Warfare is one of the more recent additions to the burgeoning literature on the subject. The editors, Daniel Marston of the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre at the Australian National University, and Carter Malkasian of the US Center for Naval Analysis, have pulled together a high-quality and very useful collection of essays from a diverse group of authors. The book will appeal to a wide range of readers, but will prove most useful to students of counter-insurgency and defence officials desiring easy access to comparative perspectives that might help illuminate the dimensions of contemporary conflicts.

The editors focus on the history of counter-insurgency from the late nineteenth century to examine how different strategies were developed and to evaluate whether those strategies contributed to the success or failure of counter-insurgency efforts. In general, the contributors place each conflict in social, cultural and political context, and avoid sweeping conclusions and simplistic analogies. Taken together, these essays will help purposeful readers ask the right questions about contemporary conflicts while remaining sensitive to the complex causality of events.

A well-crafted introduction summarises modern counter-insurgency theory. The editors pose the question of how and why states fail to adapt to the character of conflicts and why overly militarised strategies are often employed. Answers that emerge from the essays include poor leadership, cultural misunderstanding and insufficient resources. The essays cover a broad range of counter-insurgency experiences: the British experience in Ireland and Palestine (1916–48), counter-insurgency in the Philippines (1898–1954), US Marines in Nicaragua (1902–12), German anti-partisan warfare in the Second World War, French Imperial Warfare (1945–62), the British experience in Malaya (1948–60), the American experience in Vietnam, the conflict in Aden, Northern Ireland (1967–2007), the Rhodesian counter-insurgency campaign (1962–80), the Israeli Defence Forces and the al-Aqsa intifada, and the ongoing conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq. Common themes include the tendency to underestimate insurgencies in their nascent stage, the slowness of institutions to adapt to complex missions, the importance of security-sector reform and the establishment of the rule of law, and the need for unity of effort between civil and military authorities as well as between indigenous security forces and those assisting them.

Counterinsurgency in Modern Warfare covers successful as well as unsuccessful counter-insurgencies. Richard Stubbs's essay on the Malaya emergency and James Joe's essay on counter-insurgency in the Philippines are particularly instructive, as the authors identify and explain the essential elements of success in those campaigns. Richard Iron, in a lucid and concise essay on the most recent conflict in Northern Ireland, stresses the importance of a nuanced political strategy consistent with the nature of the conflict. Ultimately, a political strategy that sought to move the Provisional Irish Republican Army leadership into the political process, and the subordination of military operations to that strategy, succeeded in ending a 40-year conflict. Reasons for failure in counter-insurgency include the lack of a suitable political strategy or credible political message, failure to subordinate military operations to clearly defined political goals, and the enemy's ability to maintain safe havens and support bases inaccessible to counter-insurgent forces.

In his essay on Afghanistan, Marston highlights persistent coalition shortcomings in the following areas: 'force numbers; adequate commitment to joint civilian-military led development; training of indigenous police and military forces; training of civilians; and coordinating security and reconstruction initiatives' (p. 239). He observes that a lack of unity of effort due to the decentralisation of responsibility to different coalition governments has made it 'difficult to implement a single, cohesive, consistent plan of action' (p. 240). Malkasian argues that the first years of the US counter-insurgency campaign in Iraq were marked by inconsistency of effort that 'derived from the decentralized command and control structure developed for conventional war'. He further argues that the conflict in Iraq evolved beyond the coalition strategy and leaders 'did not recognize that the two pillars of its counterinsurgency strategy – democratization and developing the Iraqi Army – could not circumvent [what had become a] civil war' (p. 255).

Because of the complexity of counter-insurgency operations and the tendency to underestimate the problem at the outset, the ability to adapt to unforeseen circumstances is essential to achieving any counter-insurgent force's objectives. In Stubbs's essay on Malaya, the author observes that 'the government fully recognized the kind of policy it was pursuing, but had little understanding of its effects on the general population' (p. 116). Cognitive dissonance stemming from a failure to place the population at the centre of counter-insurgency planning and a failure to consider fully the nature of the conflict impeded adaptability. Stubbs argues that adapting in counter-insurgency is difficult in part because 'senior politicians, military officials, and bureaucrats become tied to specific policies and find it hard to admit they may be wrong' (p. 129). Stubbs further observes that improving the situation in Malaya required an outside assessment, a new strategy and a new commander. In his essay on the American experience in Vietnam, John Nagl concludes that the 'US failed to adapt to the demands of counterinsurgency in Vietnam because the organizational culture of its military, in particular the Army, focused on conventional warfare as its primary purpose' (p. 146).

Marston's essay on counter-insurgency in Afghanistan and Malkasian's on Iraq demonstrate that ongoing conflicts, rather than representing a 'new generation' of warfare, reproduce the dynamics of previous counter-insurgency efforts. This volume makes clear that, insofar as counter-insurgency is to remain a strategic problem, studying the past may be the best starting point for thinking about the future. Those interested in evaluating and perhaps shaping political and military adaptation to contemporary security challenges will benefit from reading this high-quality collection of essays.

Organizations at War in Afghanistan and Beyond

Abdulkader H. Sinno. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008. £20.50/\$39.95. 352 pp.

In *Organizations at War*, Abdulkader Sinno observes that ‘ethnic groups, social classes, civilizations, religions, and nations do not engage in conflict or strategy interaction – organizations do’ (p. 3). He argues that because engaging in conflict requires ‘coordination, mobilization, and manipulation of information’, detailed studies of organisations are necessary to understand ‘how conflicts begin, evolve, and conclude’ (p. 4). He draws on organisational theory to develop an understanding of how structure affects the character and outcome of armed conflicts.

Sinno argues that centralised organisations are more capable of seizing the strategic initiative than decentralised ones because they can ‘implement complex multistep strategies that require careful coordination, strict discipline and concentrated decision making’. In contrast, non-centralised organisations are unable to seize the strategic initiative except in areas that weak rivals abandon. In the first chapter, entitled ‘Organizing to Win’, the author offers a cogent summary of organisational thought among revolutionary, insurgent and terrorist organisations. Sinno argues that the one contingency that determines whether an insurgent group adopts a centralised or decentralised organisation is whether it controls a safe haven.

In chapters two through four, Sinno discusses organisational theory and defines the key components of his argument. Those who doubt the authoritative-ness of social-science theory as applied to the study of war may be encouraged by the author’s precise use of terminology and his observation that ‘the words “organization” and “social structure” are at worst empty metaphors and at best simplified parsimonious models of sets of relations that generally function far less coherently and convincingly than the metaphor would imply’ (p. 25). Sinno goes on to analyse the relative advantages and disadvantages of centralised and decentralised insurgent organisations in the following areas: strategy; coordination; mobilisation; control and discipline; resilience; intra-organisational cohesion and competition; and generation, distribution and preservation of knowledge and information. Chapter four is a primer on the organisational theory of group conflict. The author observes that organisational structure, especially in connection with the degree of centralisation, must be consistent with the availability of personnel, resources and a safe haven.

In chapters five through nine, Sinno uses organisational theory to analyse Afghan conflicts from 1979 to the present. He argues that the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan was inevitable because the Soviets could no longer justify

their losses. The organisational structure of the mujahadeen gave it the resilience needed to continue inflicting losses on the Soviets while limiting the effects of Soviet strategic advantages. Ultimately, the resilient structure of the mujahadeen convinced the Soviets that they could not achieve their objectives in Afghanistan at an acceptable cost. During the period between the Soviet withdrawal and the rise of the Taliban (1989–94), Sinno identifies the mujahadeen's inability to adapt to new conditions that demanded a more centralised organisation than their patronage-based structures allowed as the principal reason why the regime of Soviet proxy Mohammed Najib survived for nearly three years. He goes on to argue that the main reasons for the Taliban's rise were its ability to use its centralised organisation to mobilise the Pushtu and the fragmented and therefore vulnerable organisations of its rivals.

In his assessment of the current situation, Sinno describes the NATO-based coalition as 'highly fragmented' and asserts that the coalition is 'incapable of meeting the challenges of sophisticated insurgency' (pp. 275, 276). He argues that the Taliban, due to an effective centralised organisation in combination with a safe haven in Pakistan, is able to prosecute a sophisticated insurgency that aims to exhaust coalition and Afghan government forces, undermine governmental development, intimidate the population and prevent improvements in services. He suggests that, if the Taliban reach a 'tipping point' in Pushtu areas, an ethnic conflict would ensue that would further complicate the security situation and the international effort to stabilise the country.

In the final chapter, the author argues that 'organizational theory explains organizational survival and outcomes of territorially based politicized group conflicts well beyond Afghanistan' (p. 19). He bases his argument on data from 41 conflicts and 133 participant organisations in the post-Second World War era. He concludes that non-centralised structures are superior to centralised structures for weak organisations, while centralised organisations are better able to co-opt resources and mobilise support to achieve policy goals. Moreover, he argues that organisational theory applies to the global confrontation 'between the United States and its transnational challengers' and suggests that the proper US response is to centralise rather than decentralise organisations engaged in countering them. Sinno believes that understanding today's 'grand global insurgency' as a struggle against a 'miniscule organization' rather than against an ideology or religion would not only clarify the nature of the conflict, but also undermine al-Qaeda's ability to mobilise support.

Sinno has produced an insightful book. His emphasis on organisational theory will arm those who study conflict with a valuable perspective. However,

Sinno's analytical method, as with other theoretical frameworks, may be best applied to war as part of a broad interdisciplinary approach that remains sensitive to the unique conditions and interactions that shape the nature of conflicts and their outcomes.

Asymmetric Warfare: Threat and Response in the 21st Century

Rod Thornton. Cambridge: Polity, 2006. £17.99/\$26.95. 256 pp.

In *Asymmetric Warfare*, Rod Thornton, a lecturer at King's College London and the UK Joint Services Command and Staff College, sets out to 'describe today's threats posed by the weak against the strong and answer the question, "what does asymmetric warfare look like today?"' He argues that Western states and their militaries must develop new responses to the threat from 'weak adversaries who make up for such weakness in their skill, dexterity, nimbleness, intelligence, and, above all, in their zeal, their will to win' (p. vii).

The term 'asymmetric warfare' often clouds rather than advances understanding. Indeed, there has been a great deal of debate over how to classify recent and ongoing conflicts between states, non-state actors and other armed groups. A recent US Department of Defense memorandum, for example, described 'irregular warfare' as 'a violent struggle among state and non-state actors for legitimacy and influence over the relevant populations. Irregular warfare favors indirect and asymmetric approaches, though it may employ the full range of military and other capabilities, in order to erode an adversary's power, influence, and will.' Thornton has produced a valuable book because he defines the 'asymmetric threat' with clarity and thereby provides a foundation for thinking about contemporary security challenges.

In his first chapter, Thornton answers the question 'what is asymmetric warfare?' by first examining Western vulnerabilities and constraints on which adversaries prey. These include the need to sustain popular support, a heavy reliance on technology, increasing dependence on information, aversion to casualties, susceptibility to enemy propaganda, and adherence to the law of armed conflict. He then describes the types of operations that typify asymmetric warfare, including attacks on infrastructure, deception, electronic warfare and psychological operations. In his second chapter he examines in detail the threat to international security from transnational terrorist organisations, which he describes as the 'archetypal asymmetric adversaries'. He argues that the contemporary threat from terrorists is particularly serious because of 'their increased fervour, their increased ability to implement attacks, and their increased ability to cause mass casualties' (p. 27). He advocates an inter-

national response to this international problem with the goal of *limiting* the threat; Thornton believes that efforts to eliminate the threat completely are likely to exacerbate rather than ameliorate the problem. Subsequent chapters consider asymmetry and its effects on information warfare, and on land, air and sea power.

The strength of Thornton's analysis lies in his treatment of the interaction between Western military capabilities, asymmetric countermeasures, and potential Western responses to those countermeasures. Thornton identifies traditional countermeasures that asymmetric adversaries employ as well as technological countermeasures under development. Moreover, he highlights how weather and geography, as well as the adversary, can limit the reach of Western military technologies.

Thornton's specific recommendations are consistent with his general idea that 'the powerful must become more like the weak in order to match their capabilities' (p. 148). He argues that the armed forces of liberal democracies are at a disadvantage relative to asymmetrical adversaries, and terrorist organisations in particular, due to their respect for borders, the conventional nature of their forces and bureaucratic inertia.

While his analysis of the limitations of technology is compelling, Thornton may underestimate the capabilities of surveillance, communications and precision-strike technologies that, when employed in the context of a sound strategy and in combination with sufficient ground forces, can have dramatic effects on the enemy. Indeed, asymmetrical approaches are often an adversary's only option because of a position of relative weakness; Western militaries may risk ceding important military advantages if they become too enthusiastic about replicating their adversaries' capabilities or organisational structures. The author may also under-appreciate the degree to which US and UK special and conventional forces, for example, have adapted to asymmetrical enemies and are conducting sophisticated counter-insurgency operations while fighting alongside indigenous forces and building indigenous security-force capabilities.

Nevertheless, *Asymmetric Warfare* is a useful primer for students of contemporary and defence affairs. Thornton provides a well-crafted rebuttal to the linear and technology-centric thinking that underlie much of the amorphous movement called 'defence transformation'. Defence officials ought to give careful consideration to Thornton's recommendations concerning how land, sea and air forces might adapt to asymmetric threats. It is difficult to argue with Thornton's call for the patient and intelligent use of force based on his thorough examination of the limitations of military technology.

Base Politics: Democratic Change and the U.S. Military Overseas

Alexander Cooley. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2008. £14.95/\$29.00. 328 pp.

Embattled Garrisons: Comparative Base Politics and American Globalism

Kent E. Calder. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008. £14.95/\$24.95. 340 pp.

The dramatic changes in the international security environment associated with the end of the Cold War had significant implications for US military overseas basing. Two recent books illuminate those implications and provide useful frameworks for thinking about basing strategies. Cold War basing in Europe was designed both to contain the Soviet Union and to keep the United States involved in European security. Bases in Asia served similar purposes. In the United States, debates over basing in the post-Cold War era reflect competing perspectives on national security. The Pentagon's Global Defense Posture Review has sought to establish bases to deter or engage regional threats while minimising the local friction that a large US presence can generate. From the host-nation perspective, the presence of US forces can be profitable, bind the United States to their security, strengthen the regime or ruling party, give the nation leverage with Washington, secure regional economic activity, and help improve the capabilities or interoperability of their armed forces. However, the overseas basing of forces can also create difficulties associated with host-nation or local opposition to the presence of forces, overextension of forces, cultural incompatibilities and increased tensions with countries that might view those forces as a threat. Alexander Cooley's *Base Politics* and Kent Calder's *Embattled Garrisons* will prove helpful to defence officials and analysts grappling with the issue of how basing strategies might best support security interests.

Cooley, an Assistant Professor of Political Science at Columbia University, and author of a previous book on state formation, imperial governance and territorial occupation, uses a 'theory of base politics to explain when and why bilateral military basing agreements become accepted, politicized, or challenged by host countries' (p. 3). His examination of host countries' domestic politics led to the conclusion that changes in a country's political environment or institutions have the greatest effect on base-related issues. Base politics, he observes, is a 'two-level game' in which the host regime can use 'base-related issues for their domestic political purposes but can also invoke domestic constraints in their negotiations with the sender' (p. 11). After a chapter that describes the various types of basing agreements, Cooley provides detailed

comparative case studies on the Philippines and Spain; South Korea and Turkey; Okinawa and the Azores; and Japan and Italy. In his final chapter on 'Central Asia and the Global Defense Posture Review', the author concludes that internal political dynamics rather than US strategy determined the fate of US bases in Central Asia.

In *Embattled Garrisons*, Calder, director of the Reischauer Center for East Asian Studies at the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies, argues that US overseas bases are embattled because the operational demands for bases are increasing, while host-nation pressures make these bases difficult to sustain politically. Calder observes that bases perform multiple strategic functions that shift over time in accordance with the international political regime (bipolar Cold War rivalry or British–German colonial rivalry before the First World War, for example) and at critical strategic junctures (for example the Second World War, the Korean War, the 11 September 2001 attacks). Once established, basing patterns tend to be resistant to change short of major host-nation political upheaval. Calder stresses that understanding sub-national pressures that influence base politics (such as NGO opposition, local-government pressures and bureaucratic politics at the national level) is important to understanding basing outcomes. After introducing four paradigms of base relations, the author's examination of base politics reveals that the standing of US troops abroad is under pressure from host-nation domestic politics and increasing demand for US and allied funding to sustain overseas bases.

Calder describes three generalised alternative approaches to basing: first, an off-shore balancing or 'fortress America' approach that minimizes major foreign bases based on technologies that permit global reach mainly through emerging communications, surveillance, and aerospace technologies; secondly, a 'classic pax Americana' approach that emphasises continued forward deployment of military forces, which many believe is necessary to communicate support for allies, deter aggression and promote regional security; thirdly, a conservative reduction of US foreign military bases, as advocated by an 'incrementalist' school, because of the limitations of technology, the need to position ground forces to deter or defeat an aggressor, and the need to maintain maritime bases for trade and energy security.

Both books are well researched and well crafted, and provide useful frameworks for thinking about base strategies. Cooley recommends that officials anticipate and accommodate democratic change in host countries rather than resist such change in a short-sighted effort to maintain access to bases. Calder recommends that the United States beware of overextension in connection with its overseas military presence and learn from the British experience of reducing

overseas basing. Cooley warns that even a small overseas presence can pressure officials to support harmful political practices of host-country regimes, and the stationing of forces in countries with illegitimate governments may lead to future democratic pressure against the foreign military presence and increase political instability. Consistent with Cooley's warning, Calder urges 'a much clearer and more sophisticated political strategy' that accounts for sub-national factors in addition to technological and geopolitical considerations (p. 253). Calder recommends further that the United States diversify basing arrangements to minimise the political risk associated with dependence on a particular base and clarify its intentions to avoid the perception of imperialism. Although both books are US-centric, their analysis and recommendations will prove useful to all defence officials and analysts interested in the subject. As Calder observes, overseas bases 'will likely continue to be crucial to global security' (p. 254).

Asia-Pacific

Lanxin Xiang

Social States: China in International Institutions, 1980–2000

Alastair Iain Johnston. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008. £14.95/\$24.95. 273 pp.

This is Alastair Johnston's new book after a high-profile 1995 study on China's strategic culture (*Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History*). It is typical of Johnston to use recently fashionable socialisation theories to try to explain China's international behaviour, which he describes as displaying processes of mimicking, social influence and persuasion. But his efforts, as before, fall short.

As in his previous work, Johnston seems to have overstressed his theoretical claim and the empirical evidence in building his socialisation model for interpreting Chinese foreign policy in the security arena. The book begins 'from a very simple and unoriginal premise: actors who enter into a social interaction rarely emerge the same' (p. xiii). This is indeed a rather banal premise, and no theory is needed to explain it. The predominant school in China studies founded by Harvard's John King Fairbank has made a more powerful claim that the entire history of 'Modern China' (i.e., the period after the Opium Wars) reflects a model of foreign impact and Chinese response. Johnston simply echoes this impact-response paradigm, but frames it with a much feebler theory.

Johnston's specific argument is more substantial: 'actors' behaviour that prior to social interaction tended to diverge may converge as a result of this social interaction' (p. xiii). The implication here is that China needs more socialisation in order to conform to international norms. But this leaves unanswered the question of why China should be interested in becoming a normative player in international affairs when the existing norms have been set by a West-dominated international system under which China has suffered a great deal.

Most Western scholars are in the so-called 'Rise of China School', hence too many books on China hitting bookshelves today miss an essential angle: there is no 'Rise of China' – at least, the Chinese do not see it that way. What they see is a long historical process of restoring China's position and influence. Whether that growing influence will remain benign is subject to debate, but international socialisation cannot change this mentality. In other words, China will not stay at the receiving end of current international norms, but will start contributing to new norms and institutions, and only then may we speak of the real effects of international socialisation.

Thus, the only value of this book lies in its political proposal of keeping China 'socialised', rather than relying upon the Westphalian mechanism to balance it. This is a position close to that of President Bill Clinton's Democratic administration, which coined the phrase 'constructive engagement', in contrast to the Republican line of making China a 'responsible stakeholder', to use the expression of Robert Zoellick, a former Deputy Secretary of State in the George W. Bush government. The difference is clear: the former makes an abstract promise with little operational value, while the latter is operational in the sense that the Americans could maintain a 'hedge position' if China became, in Washington's view, 'irresponsible'. The recent US presidential campaign suggests that this will be the US stance going forward, as key Democrats, particularly Hillary Clinton, have apparently cooled to the former position.

Asia's New Regionalism

Ellen L. Frost. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2008.
£17.50/\$25.00. 292 pp.

Ellen Frost has written a timely and interesting book about what she calls 'new regionalism' in Asia. At first glance, one might think that what is 'new' is the abandonment of the traditional Sino-centric international system in the region, but this is not what the author means. Frost essentially contrasts Asia's regionalism in action with the rhetoric that has been in currency for many years. In other words, she believes there is now real momentum toward regionalism.

Frost carefully dissects several 'circles' of regional action, and identifies the driver of the new regionalism in Asia as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), founded in 1967. Moving outward from this innermost circle are several outer layers. The next circle of action is ASEAN+3 (China, Japan and South Korea) – this grouping portrays itself as a harbinger of an East Asian Community. India, Australia and New Zealand become members of a wider circle, embodied by the East Asian Summit, which already consists of more than four dozen committees and working groups. The rhetoric is indeed becoming a reality.

Simultaneously, the new Asian regionalism is developing at the expense of the diminishing Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), in which the United States and other advanced nations have a large role. The West's unhelpful response to the Asian financial crisis sliced off the 'Pacific' part of APEC, and the responsible behaviour of China during the crisis encouraged the East Asian states to desire ever more Chinese cooperation. This is the 'ASEAN way' of engaging China, and is welcomed in Beijing. Indeed, ASEAN-led regionalism may do much to anchor Chinese power in a peaceful environment.

However, Frost prefers restoring a free-trade-oriented, cosmopolitan and flexible 'maritime Asia', which was divided by Western colonialism in the past. Making such an argument requires some courage, or as the author admits, the study had to be written 'in the spirit of adventure' (p. vii). She clearly rejects a new power politics in the region, concluding that the US military presence responds to some Asian concerns but is no longer sufficient. Traditional balance-of-power thinking is out of fashion in the region. Most threats facing Asian states are non-traditional and diffuse; thus, the new momentum towards Asian regionalism will have a positive effect, because the open and flexible nature of this movement will accommodate China's peaceful development while not necessarily depriving the United States of its competitive influence. Her analysis is a must-read for those interested in the seemingly amorphous and elusive Asian regionalism.

**Reluctant Restraint: The Evolution of China's
Nonproliferation Policies and Practices, 1980–2004**

Evan S. Medeiros. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press,
2007. £42.50/\$65.00. 376 pp.

Reluctant Restraint examines an important change in Chinese foreign policy: China's gradual transformation from a hostile outsider to an active player within the international non-proliferation regime. Evan Medeiros, a highly motivated young expert at the RAND Corporation, analyses how and why Chinese non-proliferation policies have evolved since the early 1980s. He pays particular

attention to the role of US diplomacy in changing China's behaviour and concludes that Washington's engagement strategy has by and large worked, but that US non-proliferation policy towards China faces new challenges now that the original purpose of alerting the Chinese to the danger of nuclear proliferation has been achieved. Today, the task is to encourage China to fully comply with the specific requirements of the non-proliferation regime.

This is the first major work on the subject, and provides comprehensive analysis grounded in international-relations theories. Medeiros creates three sets of independent 'variables': US policy intervention, China's acceptance of non-proliferation norms, and Beijing's foreign-policy priorities and institutional capacity. Medeiros is particularly good at explaining China's extraordinary balancing act to maintain a Third World perspective on the unfair nature of the international non-proliferation regime, whose norms are set by Western values and entail a certain double standard, while accepting the need to play a responsible role as a great power on the world stage.

Medeiros seems a bit uncertain about the origins of China's change of heart on non-proliferation, suggesting only that the United States had exerted 'major influence' in eliciting Beijing's first nuclear non-proliferation pledges in 1984 and 1985. But the Chinese had a logic of their own, independent of US pressure. As early as October 1982, Deng Xiaoping told Libya's Muammar Gadhafi, 'the Third World should not cooperate on nuclear weapons; we could fight the superpowers in other areas ... If we collaborate on nuclear weapons, we would end up with 100 disadvantages and not a single advantage at all.' (See *The Chronological Record of Deng Xiaoping's Thought*, The Central Literature Publishing House, Beijing, 1998). Deng's position was unequivocal, despite the fact that, two months earlier, the Americans suspended the bilateral Nuclear Cooperation Agreement (NCA) talks with China. Thus, Medeiros seems to have overstated America's influence, as if China mainly responded to pressure from Washington.

How should we interpret the lack of adequate measures for controlling Chinese proliferation activities after the mid 1980s? Medeiros's response is to analyse what he calls the variable of 'institutional capacity'. China was a newcomer to the international non-proliferation regime; it took a long time for China to digest, adapt and apply an overwhelming quantity of technical information and norms to its diplomacy. There was also the need, as there was in the West, to build a dedicated arms-control and non-proliferation community. The Chinese Foreign Ministry did not have experts in this area, and those who later turned themselves – seemingly overnight – into leading arms-control specialists were usually graduates in foreign languages who often translated international non-proliferation terminologies without much understanding. China's unregulated

nuclear-trade practices and procedures were another institutional constraint. Commercial civilian nuclear exports were hardly regulated at all, and there was a strong economic incentive for Chinese companies to engage in this type of trade. In other words, it was a chaotic situation, intellectually as well as practically. But improvements since the mid 1980s have been impressive.

Medeiros's chronicling of the evolution of Chinese engagement with the international non-proliferation regime from 1980 to 2004 is detailed and accurate. While the book's theoretical claims may be less useful, it is nevertheless a worthy addition to the enormous amount literature on China's 'new' international behaviour.

Asia, America, and the Transformation of Geopolitics

William H. Overholt. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008. £14.99/\$24.99. 322 pp.

In 1993, when Hong Kong-based American banker William Overholt published his book, *The Rise of China*, many thought his views a bit too optimistic. Now, most would acknowledge his foresight. Overholt has returned to think-tank and academic pursuits, and has produced another important work – this time, his scope is much wider. Ever the iconoclast, he stresses many facts that most Americans, especially politicians and policymakers, dare not mention.

The most important assumption of this book is that changes in Asia have rendered many great-power foreign policies, modes of thinking and institutions obsolete, but they persist due to what the author calls the 'inertia of foreign policies'. The Western approach to Asia, he believes, is still rooted in the Cold War: America's alliance with Japan, for instance, is a snapshot of the past. Washington must accept that changing circumstances require a tacit 'bi-condominium' between the United States and China in managing Asian affairs.

What has changed in Asia? Overholt identifies several important trends. Nationalism is on the rise and economies are booming, but Asia is not becoming more unstable. Instead, most Asian states de-emphasise territorial and geopolitical conflict, preferring regional stability through active cooperation. Overholt points out the similarities between European integration after the Second World War and Asian regionalism today, indicating this trend is not unique for Asia but is in the mainstream of post-Cold War international relations.

Another major change is of course the 'Rise of China'. Overholt is sharply critical of American and European disdain for China's gradualist approach toward economic and political reforms. He points out that this is hypocritical: no Western politician would prescribe a radical strategy of reform for his own country, and 'no successful Western country has developed democratic institu-

tions from scratch, privatized its state enterprises, or changed its legal tradition through shock therapy' (p. 112) Meanwhile, the pace of change in China is much faster than anyone could have predicted.

Overholt also makes a reasonable argument about the rise of India. The success of India depends not only on the government's ability to win over domestic special-interest groups, which tend to resist reform, but also its willingness to de-emphasise geopolitical and territorial conflict. Making compromises with Pakistan over Kashmir and resolving territorial disputes with China will be crucial for India's peaceful rise. The author is less sanguine about Japan, believing Tokyo's emphasis on obsolete institutions such the US–Japan alliance has led to its virtual isolation within the broader integrative movement in the region.

In the last chapter, Overholt offers many scenarios for the future. In contrast to the highly influential *Global Trends 2020* by the US National Intelligence Council, Overholt's scenarios are more conventional and policy oriented. But they are still useful for readers hoping to peek into the near future with a clear vision.

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