

This is followed by Stephen Blank's examination of contemporary debates over international security, in which he concludes that despite different perspectives, a fundamental consensus remains that 'defence is the most critical aspect of security' and that security demands 'a capability for conflict prevention and crisis management that includes the possibility of coercion' (p. 81). Subsequent essays examine how concepts of security in the West have diverged and how new understandings of security hold promise for generating consensus. Chapters on Nordic ideas of security, the relationship between democracy and security, defence transformation, and human security examine how those ideas have shaped the current discourse. In the final chapter, Fabrizio Coticchia and Federica Ferrari observe that 'human security has become a crucial component of security policy as pursued by nation-states and international organizations' (p. 268), a point which is taken up by the editors, who assert that 'human security as an organizing premise may represent the most beneficial and enduring contribution that the Western discourse of security has made to the emergence of a world that is both sager and more just' (p. 27). Anyone who seeks such a world is sure to find much food for thought here.

PROOF

South Asia

Teresita C. Schaffer

Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History

Thomas Barfield. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010. £20.95/\$29.95. 389 pp.

'Afghanistan', Thomas Barfield writes, 'is one of those places in the world in which people who know the least make the most statements about it'. A professor of anthropology at Boston University who is widely recognised as a leading authority on the country, Barfield effectively explores and explains the complexities of the Afghan scene that many others ignore, then relates them to the present crisis. Written with a rare combination of scholarship and wit, his splendid book offers unusual insights into the history and political culture of Afghanistan that make it essential reading for anyone interested in understanding the challenges that the United States, Britain and their NATO allies face there now.

Barfield argues that the most fruitful way to better understand the problems Afghanistan faces is to examine its changing concepts of power and political legitimacy. He begins with a useful chapter on 'people and places' that docu-

ments the country's ethnic and geographic diversity. His lucid discussion of the British and Soviet invasions and key domestic Afghan developments of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries sets the stage for a lengthy chapter on Afghanistan since the overthrow of the Taliban in 2001. Here he is especially critical of the key decision the Western powers made to set up a highly centralised government in Kabul. Too many people had become politicised and were demanding a share of power in the new regime and greater control over local affairs for this to work. Nor was there any leader available of the calibre of earlier Afghan strong men who might have had a reasonable chance of operating such a system. Certainly the weak and vacillating Hamid Karzai could not fill that difficult bill.

Barfield's approach to the Karzai regime and foreign efforts to deal with it usefully focuses, as he puts it, 'less on events per se than on how they illuminate the process of Afghan state rebuilding (in theory and practice), its leadership, and the role that the international community has played'. He argues that Americans and others have failed to take into account how profoundly altered Afghanistan now is from what it was when the communists seized power in 1978. But he finds that neither the problems the Americans now confront nor the policies they adopted to deal with them are new: both the British and the Russians had confronted similar difficulties and had designed similar plans, with varying degrees of success. And 'all left Afghanistan more sober, far less idealistic, and content to let the Afghans handle their problems in their own way'.

Barfield concludes that the long view of Afghanistan and its history that he has presented offers possibilities for resolving the country's current problems, but also a warning about how even the best-planned policies can fail. It will be up to the Afghans themselves, he argues, to deal with these positives and negatives, as they have at other times over the fascinating history of their country so well spelled out in this book. It is hard to disagree with this conclusion.

The Other War: Winning and Losing in Afghanistan

Ronald E. Neumann. Washington DC: Potomac Books, 2009.

£20.00/\$27.50. 243 pp.

Ronald Neumann left Afghanistan at the end of his term as US Ambassador in April 2007, and wrote this book soon afterwards. It has the vividness and detail one would expect from an account of earth-shaping times written by a trained observer. It also has the weaknesses that inevitably come with a memoir crafted before the events it describes have reached a conclusion.

This book is at its strongest when describing the way Neumann and more broadly the US government carried on the Afghanistan war in mid-decade. Neumann provides a close-up view of how an ambassador functions in an envi-

ronment where most of the resources and many of the decisions are in the hands of the military. He describes skilfully the back-and-forth among the Afghan government, the military, and both civilian and military parts of the US government in Washington, a complex set of dialogues which he himself was brokering on all sides.

Most powerful of all is Neumann's discussion of the difference between making and implementing policy decisions. This was clearly a constant source of frustration to him. The slow pace of implementation stems both from a budget process in which those who make foreign-policy decisions cannot really make fiscal ones, and from a ponderous contracting process. Critics have blamed the resulting stalemate on insufficient operational experience and savvy in the State Department. While this is a problem, Neumann's experience makes clear that the problems run far deeper. He blames more than anything the fact that while Kabul and to some extent the Pentagon knew themselves to be at war, the rest of the US government did not.

This book is less effective, however, in describing Afghanistan itself. More than most American officials, Neumann knew something of the 'old Afghanistan', where his father had served as ambassador four decades earlier. Flashes of this come through from time to time, as when Neumann describes his encounter with tribal leaders in Nuristan who had not seen an American ambassador since his father's day. And while there are many accounts of how Neumann worked with Karzai and the other leading personalities, the book does not provide a particularly strong impression of what drove these people and how they looked at the world.

Neumann's final chapter includes sensible prescriptions for US policy. But his 'Ambassador's eye view', and more importantly his decision to write the book right away, may have made it difficult to acquire the perspective on his subject which would provide a clearer vision. Students of the policy process and those interested in civil-military relations will find useful insights here; those whose focus is on Afghanistan as a country and how foreigners have so often crashed and burned there may come away feeling they still need more.

Decoding the New Taliban: Insights from the Afghan Field

Antonio Giustozzi, ed. London: C. Hurst & Co., 2009.

£25.00/\$40.00. 318 pp.

Antonio Giustozzi has put together a remarkable collection of essays on the Taliban. But do not open this book with the expectation that it will make the Afghan tangle simple or clear. On the contrary, its real contribution is that it complicates the mental models we have of Afghanistan's tribes, the Taliban

movement, and their relationships with the Afghan government, its Western friends and Pakistan.

Giustozzi organises the book geographically, with chapters devoted to Afghan provinces or groups of provinces. This approach tracks with the decentralised history of Afghanistan. The organisation and local dynamics of the Taliban movement are intertwined with the sociology of each region. In some cases, the different leaders or tendencies within the movement coincide with tribal differences. In other cases, the Taliban movement is strongest among the least tribalised parts of the local society. The competing loyalties of the Haqqanis and the Mansurs in Paktia province are a case in point. Much of today's writing about Afghanistan depicts Jalaluddin Haqqani as a powerful Taliban leader; in this account, he appears as an independent operator, tactically allied with the Taliban. And both the strength and the identity of the tribes varies greatly from one part of Afghanistan to another.

The similarities in the paths leading to re-entry of the Taliban are striking – and depressing. In almost every case, the absence of effective governance is the group's key opportunity, especially the absence of dispute settlement. The techniques that brought the Taliban back to prominence also fell into a pattern: intimidation and targeted killings; then introduction of Taliban-sponsored judicial mechanisms; finally, some attempt at establishing a 'shadow government'. Thomas Ruttig, in his article on Paktia, argues that the Karzai government and its Western backers failed to use the traditional mechanisms for enlisting local tribes and local militias, thereby aggravating the governance vacuum.

Most of the authors in this volume regard the Taliban – including its Pakistani branch, the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan – as a loose coalition. Paradoxically, as David Kilcullen notes in his chapter on 'Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Kunar', this makes its members harder to co-opt or eliminate: there is no one leader who can speak for the whole movement. The analysis in this book validates the basic approach behind the strategy the United States and NATO countries are following, one that relies heavily on filling the governance vacuum. But it also makes clear how overwhelming a task that is, in a country that has never known centralised government, and where insurgency even in the relatively safe parts of the country has an easy time picking off those who are struggling to introduce even minimally effective government. The other approach to fighting a coalition of this sort would be to split the movement and create a real alliance with a large enough chunk of it to permit viable government. But, as nearly all the essays in this book point out, that, ultimately, is a job that must be done by Afghans.

The contributors to this volume have all spent years in Afghanistan, Pakistan or both. Their descriptions have unusual granularity and detail. There are doubt-

less others who would argue with their conclusions. But the ground-level view they provide is invaluable for anyone who seeks to understand what Afghanistan and the world are up against.

Asymmetric Warfare in South Asia: The Causes and Consequences of the Kargil Conflict

Peter R. Lavoy, ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009. \$99.00/£55.00. 407 pp.

This volume is required reading for anyone who wishes to understand Pakistan's military decision-making or the half-war in Kargil in 1999, just a year after India and Pakistan tested nuclear weapons. Peter Lavoy, long a scholar of South Asian military affairs, assembled a first-rate team from Pakistan, India and the United States to examine the causes, conduct and impact of the Kargil conflict, based in part on an astonishing number of interviews with high-level participants from both sides.

The resulting book does not change the basic 'storyline' of Kargil that has been generally accepted for a decade: that Pakistan's tactical victory in crossing the Line of Control with India ended in tactical defeat, and that the nuclear shadow under which the fighting took place had effectively frozen the territorial status quo. But it does offer numerous surprising and important insights below that macro level. Lavoy's introduction directs a spotlight on, among other things, the implications of Kargil for nuclear deterrence theory, noting that one of its key postulates – that a nuclear environment fosters arms control – is contradicted by Kargil; and two others – that nuclear powers do not fight and that they do not initiate or escalate crises – are at least partly refuted.

In my view, two other conclusions in this book have special importance. The first has to do with the dynamics of Pakistan's decision-making. Several authors note that, in Pakistan's view, the Kargil operation was intended to create a 'fait accompli' that would change the status quo in Kashmir, and also to avenge decades of what Pakistanis consider India's taking advantage of them (most importantly the Indian intervention in the Bangladesh War, but also India's occupation of the Siachen Glacier in 1984). Together with a long history of military pre-eminence in Pakistan's decision-making and the Pakistan Army's institutional distaste for self-criticism after its military reverses, this genesis of Kargil led the Pakistani military leadership to assume, in ways that seem quite remarkable to outside observers, that India would not mount much of a defence. This streak of self-delusion in a military organisation that is in other respects highly professional has important consequences for the region, not to speak of Pakistan's relations with the United States.

PROOF

A second arresting analysis is the discussion of the role of surprise in military operations. James Wirtz and Surinder Rana review the literature and conclude that surprise is most valued by military leaders who face a stronger adversary and who believe that surprise can neutralise the power imbalance. They also conclude, after looking at the results of a number of surprise operations, that the result is often tactical victory but strategic failure. This is of course how Kargil turned out. It also raises questions about how both analysts and especially military leaders do and do not absorb lessons from history.

As happens in nearly every edited volume, there is a certain amount of repetition, and one chapter, by Bruce Riedel, basically condenses and reviews material he has already published elsewhere. But these are minor flaws in a book that combines many important insights and a welcome readability.

Making Sense of Pakistan

Farzana Shaikh. London: C. Hurst & Company, 2009.
£15.99/\$24.95. 288 pp.

Farzana Shaikh's slim volume is the best published discussion I have read on the vexing issue of Pakistan's national identity, an issue that has troubled Pakistanis and their friends since the state was born. Because Pakistan was founded to be the homeland for Muslims of the Indian subcontinent, the definition of the country's Islamic identity lies at the heart of the puzzle.

Shaikh distinguishes among four dimensions of Pakistan's Muslim identity: Muslims as a community; nationalism; the historical memory of Muslim Mughals as the group entitled to rule; and religious identity.

The first three are often blended together, though Shaikh usefully teases them apart. Certainly all three contributed to the legacy of the country's founder, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, whose address to the Constituent Assembly three days before independence was a stirring statement that the new Muslim state would protect all religions and treat their practice, by Muslims or anyone else, as a private matter. But Shaikh points out that this idea had a long history. The Mughals ruled over a multi-ethnic empire, the subjects of which were mostly non-Muslims. The rulers history has treated most kindly allowed religious tolerance, and used it to maintain social harmony.

Shaikh devotes more attention to the tensions between and within the religious side of Pakistan's Muslim identity. She highlights the tension between Islamic universalism and intra-Islamic quarrels, as well as the 'culture wars' over modernity and tradition. She also brings out aspects of this issue that are insufficiently known, such as the relationship between Islamic thought and economics. There is a strain in Pakistan's Jamaat-e-Islami party that sees economics as 'one

of the moral sciences' and a vehicle for creating a more moral society. At the religious level, Islam is an egalitarian faith. The strong religious injunctions to provide for the poor reinforce this tendency. This explains why, when natural disasters strike, Islamic militant groups are often among the first to send teams of relief workers to the countryside.

Shaikh's discussion of the army focuses chiefly on the nexus between the religious and military establishments, especially since Muhammad Zia ul-Haq's tenure as army chief. Here, she has probably gone too far in painting the army as a creature of ideology: it is also the strongest institution in Pakistan as well as the strongest spokesman for Pakistani nationalism. While the Islamic dimension is important, it is misleading to paint it as the dominant driver of the army leadership's thinking.

Shaikh also discusses the relationship between Pakistan's Islamic identity and its foreign policy. She depicts a fairly manipulative foreign policy, one that students of US–Pakistan relations will have no difficulty recognising. In one arresting passage, she argues that Pakistan's relations with China and the United States suggest that Pakistan is seeking 'international sanction to assume a role out of all proportion to its real power'.

Pakistan's difficulty in dealing with its internal insurgency, its continuing drive to challenge India's control of Kashmir, and its propensity to see an Indian hand in all its security problems, including especially those in Afghanistan – that is to say, the big issues that put Pakistan on the world's front pages – all come back to the complexities of its Islamic identity. Shaikh's book is an excellent introduction to this vital topic, recounted with skill and sympathy.

PROOF

Politics and International Relations

Pierre Hassner

Civil Resistance and Power Politics: The Experience of Non-violent Action from Gandhi to the Present

Adam Roberts and Timothy Garton Ash, eds. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009. £25.00/\$50.00. 407 pp.

Adam Roberts is one of the world's foremost students of non-violent action, intervention and the use of force. More than 40 years ago he co-authored with the late Philip Windsor an excellent book about Czechoslovakia 1968, in which they examined both Czech non-violent resistance and the more general meaning of the Prague Spring. Timothy Garton Ash, who also spent time in Czechoslovakia