
BOOK REVIEWS

Rasul Bakhsh Rais, *Imagining Pakistan: Modernism, State, and The Politics of Islamic Revival* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2017), 221.

Reviewed by Dr Eamon Murphy, Adjunct Professor, School of Media, Creative Arts and Social Inquiry, Curtin University, Australia.

The central theme of this highly topical insightful book by political scientist Dr Rasul Bakhsh Rais of the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS), Lahore is the parlous state of Pakistan's fragile democracy, particularly the unresolved issue of national identity. The analysis throughout is characterised by Rais' high-quality scholarship, his deep understanding of the country's society and politics, and his passionate commitment to the ideal of a strong modern democratic nation. The six main chapters provide a highly incisive in-depth analysis of the ideological, historical and political roots of the current crises in Pakistan's democracy.

Rais is under no illusion about the many problems facing Pakistan, one that is often characterised as a dysfunctional nuclear state, which is facing a crossroad in its history. Among the major threats he identifies are the failure of state institutions, widespread poverty, abuses of human rights, a shamefully inadequate mass education, the breakdown of law and order, a highly corrupt political system, ethnic and religious violence and regular mob violence fuelled by Islamic extremists which undercuts the authority of elected governments.

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The author excoriates the arrogant traditional landholding feudal elites who have dominated the country's political parties, subverted democracy and plundered the state for personal and family gain. He clearly identifies the rampant corruption, lack of justice and misrule which have led to disillusionment and cynicism and have resulted in despair and frustration, especially among the young which has contributed to the rise of extremism and terrorism. The second culprit in the decline of democracy is the authoritarian military which has dominated politics and ruled Pakistan, either directly through four military coups, or indirectly interfering in the democratic process, for much of its history. The most disastrous period of military rule was that of General Zia-ul-Haq which greatly damaged the democratic process, resulted in gross abuses of human rights and accelerated the growth of terrorism and sectarian violence. The third obstacle has been the emergence of a fundamentalist political Islam with a radical violent fringe which considers democracy, constitutionalism and the supremacy of civil law as alien Western concepts. The combination of an authoritarian military and corrupt political elites, and their alliances with extremist religious demagogues, have suffocated and threatened to destroy Pakistan's democracy altogether.

Rais is adamant that all too often politicians and the media have blamed outside forces, particularly Pakistan's archenemy, India. He is open and frank about sensitive controversial issues. He argues, for instance, that there must be a negotiated settlement with India over the highly emotional issue of Kashmir. He also recognises the meddling of Wahhabi Saudi Arabia and Shia Iran which have long waged a proxy ideological and strategic war in Afghanistan and Pakistan. He condemns the cynical and inconsistent policies of the United States culminating in the disastrous invasions of Afghanistan, and later Iraq, and the dragging of Pakistan into the ongoing counterproductive failed War on Terror (WoT). But while geopolitical problems have significantly contributed to the decline of the state, Rais is adamant that the solution must be found within Pakistan and must be resolved by its citizens.

According to the writer, the solution to Pakistan's crisis is clear. The country needs to return to the principles of its liberal founders and to start rebuilding state institutions in order to create a modern democratic, constitutional and pluralistic state governed by the rule of law, equality for all citizens and open and fair elections. He contrasts the current state of democracy, that is far removed from that imagined by the founders of Pakistan, led by Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Its founders' dream was that of a pluralistic, liberal, modern, democratic state which would protect the rights of the Muslim majority in the subcontinent but one in which all citizens, irrespective of birth, sect, ethnic background or religion, would have full rights as citizens.

While the exact position of Islam in the constitution and legal system of the new state was never clearly set out, Pakistan's founders were strongly influenced by Islamic modernism, a rational approach to Muslim thought and practice leading to the reform of religion through interpretation (*Ijtihad*) and consensus (*Ijma*). They believed that modernism would restore the strength, dynamism and adaptability of Muslim societies through modern science, reasoning and technology. He argues that Islamic modernism is fully compatible with democracy. Religion, according to this perspective, is to be largely a private matter and politics best left to the political realm.

Rais is cautiously optimistic that while Pakistan has many of the symptoms of a failing state, its citizens and society have been remarkably resilient. Although gravely weakened by patronage politics, praetorian military rule and extremist Islam, parliamentary democracy has somehow managed to survive. Elections are regularly held at local, provincial and central legislatures consequently maintaining the tradition and practice of democracy. The second positive factor has been the emergence of a strong and ever-growing articulate middle class, now over 40 per cent of the population, which has created a new political dynamic challenging the traditional landed political elite. In addition, Pakistan has a free highly vibrant critical nationwide English and Urdu print and electronic media. Yet another positive indicator has been the findings of opinion polls which support the view that while many Pakistanis are devout Muslims, the majority reject terrorism and religious extremism. Religious political parties

have generally polled very poorly in elections as Pakistanis have demonstrated that they are most concerned about bread and butter issues such as the cost of living, shortages in basic commodities and power failures. Finally, despite the growth of fundamentalist Islam, most Pakistanis still follow the tolerant syncretism Sufi Islam that has characterised the Islam that took root in the Indian subcontinent.

Imagining Pakistan was published before the victory of Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (Pakistan Movement for Justice) in the 2018 General Elections. Analysis of the election results suggests a changing Pakistan which has started to reject the long-established political dominance of the landed feudal elites. His many supporters, especially among the young, were motivated by his promise to root out corruption, create a new stable prosperous *Naya Pakistan* (New Pakistan), tackle poverty, remove the barriers to social mobility and revitalise its decaying infrastructure. Whether Khan, and the idealists among his party, will have the courage and authority to be able to resist the entrenched vested interests of the traditional elite, the power of the military and the strength of extremist Islam is very much an open question.

A fundamental question arising from this volume is whether Pakistan will return to the quasi-secular democratic state as imagined by its founders or whether there will emerge some sort of a sensible compromise between strong advocates of modernism, the moderate clergy who reject violence, and the stability provided by a strong but largely apolitical military. Whatever the outcome, Rais' thought-provoking book is invaluable as it provides a deep understanding of the complex problems, challenges and prospects facing Pakistan's struggling democracy. Such an understanding is a fundamental prerequisite to initiating effective reform.

Philip Murphy, *The Empire's New Clothes: The Myth of the Common Wealth* (London: Hurst Publishers, 2018), 256.

Reviewed by Ambassador (R) Shahid M. G. Kiani.

Philip Murphy's book on the Commonwealth, *The Empire's New Clothes*, may be reminiscent of what Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Malaysia's Prime Minister, once said in a 2014 interview about this association, which may not appear very enviable to many. He challenged its very name by calling it 'a misnomer'. He went on to elaborate that 'wealth' is not 'common' at all. It belongs to only four members and the rest are poor. So, calling it 'the Commonwealth', that is common, when obviously wealth is not common' is problematic. While Murphy may not be in total agreement with Mahathir's estimation of the Commonwealth, his own deep skepticism about it would not leave many readers cheering.

Post-1945 saw Britain, roaring that it had won the war, but faced difficulty in admitting a much loosened grip over its colonies, which were gradually attaining independent status. They were 'rewarded' with membership of the Commonwealth. For the members, the intergovernmental organisation stood for closer ties to the once 'rulers', with the media splashing news of biennial summits and photos showing a beaming Nehru of India, Nkrumah of Ghana, Kaunda of Zambia and Nyerere of Tanzania - freedom struggle stalwarts standing shoulder-to-shoulder with the Queen. The stalwarts, who had struggled through peaceful, and at times, democratic means to achieve freedom, may not have found it dichotomous standing together with their once colonisers in an intergovernmental institution. Nehru was on record admitting that he found 'nothing wrong in being a member of the Commonwealth' (p. 25) - added advantage - the Commonwealth also stands for 'shared values of democracy' (Commonwealth Charter). During the early post-World War II years, Britain was more focused on its domestic issues and struggling to find its 'rightful' place in Europe. The Commonwealth, unsurprisingly, took a back seat, at least for the British Government. For the Queen and the other royalty, nostalgia for the 'empire' had never diminished.

The author headed the Commonwealth Institute for many years, and is well placed to give his opinion on the subject. Not only does the author consider the association having limited significance in British foreign policy (p.8), but comes down hard on those who led the 'leave EU Campaign', and whose naivety surprises him when they considered that the Commonwealth could replace the European Union (p. 292). How did these Brexit supporters come to the conclusion that Commonwealth member states will welcome its exit from the EU when all estimates pointed to the contrary. The United Kingdom (UK) for Commonwealth states is a source of strength as they negotiate agreements, especially trade. Ironically, Brexit is in one big fix already. As the deadline to leave the EU approaches, not only does UK's financial sector shudder, but it also puts a big question mark on Prime Minister May's political career, the leader entrusted to steer it. This could possibly be the end of the road for her political career.

Murphy should have given more credit to Commonwealth's contribution in reducing space for racist regimes in Africa. The 1979 Commonwealth Summit in Lusaka, Zambia was a jolt to Prime Minister Thatcher's adamant stand on the Zimbabwe-Rhodesia racist Smith regime. The Lusaka Declaration, issued against a backdrop of political turmoil in Zimbabwe, helped contribute to the end of white minority rule in that country (Fifth Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting [CHOGM]). The British elite, of which Mrs. Thatcher was a part, had first hoped that the Commonwealth would preserve and project British influence. However, it seemed this eagerness decreased as Britain's policies came under criticism in the Commonwealth meetings. Ironically, while the Commonwealth members were adamant that the UK push sanctions against South Africa's apartheid regime, it made no difference to Mrs. Thatcher, as she continued to refuse this demand, even to the annoyance of the Queen. One cannot also dispute Murphy's estimation that public opinion in the UK became negative as immigration from non-white member states increased. The immigrants' way of life and culture added to the negative public opinion.

On the plus side, Murphy explains at length the discussions in Commonwealth meetings in the context of 'shared values of democracy'.

The association had suspended several members 'from the Councils of the Commonwealth' for 'serious or persistent violations' of the Harare Declaration of 1989, particularly in abrogating their responsibility to have a democratic government (p.36). Nigeria and Pakistan took a fair amount of criticism, for having non-democratic institutions. Moral pressure remained on Pakistan, as an aide-mémoire of an 'aberration', which needed correction.

Murphy recounts the various phases of the Commonwealth in the 1960s which he describes as efforts to contain the 'centrifugal forces of push and pull' of its members, which robbed it of much of its practical value (p. 20). The UK's jugglery to maintain a semblance of 'grandeur' and efforts to join the European Economic Community (EEC), only to face failure in 1963, also added to the Commonwealth woes. The 60s were a difficult period due to left leaning pro-independence movements in colonial Africa and self-confident French leader de Gaulle, who left no opportunity to assail Britain.

Murphy is uncomfortable with the 'hereditary' monarch being head of the Commonwealth. Facts on the ground may be contrary as the Queen and her family has immense respect in member countries. If not the British royal family, then who shall head the Commonwealth? This can trigger another headache of consensus-building, making to the election of the organisation's Secretary General, a highly contested one. Prince Charles, an unconventional royal, succeeding the Queen is also problematic for Murphy (p.98). However, he ignores the fact that there is a sea of difference between being a head of state and the symbolic head of an intergovernmental organisation.

By the end of the book, Murphy sounds the 'death knell' for the Commonwealth and wants its total disbandment (p.232) since he finds little use of this organisation. Any poll will suggest that this extreme step shall have no backers. Disbanding the Commonwealth, an institution which took decades to build, needs very serious soul searching. Reforms may be the right way. Let the Commonwealth reinvent itself as a major development partner. Blunting its critics, it can continue welfare programmes, as it is doing so already. Developed members and member states who are emerging economies can contribute in funding the immensely important health and education sectors of the most needy

members. A reformed Commonwealth shall find major supporters, among all members, as these sectors are *numero uno* priority for them.

Murphy's critique on many aspects of the present state of the Commonwealth is indeed valid and may also resonate with its other critics. However, it is difficult, if not impossible to support his total dissolution notion. He finds many weaknesses in the organisation, but none solidly convincing of its dissolution. Other such global institutions function, with all their flaws and even flourish. The United Nations (UN) has its critics, but a world without it will be a very different place. The Muslim world is even tolerating the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), even though the 'all important' global body has hardly any successes to its credit - part of the Muslim world continues to be aflame, as OIC stands as a bystander. The rise of right wing parties in Europe threatens the EU, but there are bigger supporters for its strengthening and bringing reforms.

53 states straddling the globe 'own' the Commonwealth, in one way or the other. Even if it is only credited in bringing together its 53 leaders at different intervals, who may otherwise find it challenging to meet and exchange ideas, it has performed an important function. Given a chance, the Commonwealth has enough talent for its reform. It can restructure and thrive!

Sulmaan Wasif Khan, *Haunted by Chaos: China's Grand Strategy from Mao Zedong to Xi Jinping* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018), 336.

Reviewed by Muhammad Shoaib, COMSATS University, Vehari Campus, Pakistan.

A state with virtually no boundaries, permanent population, and strong government did not make sense; yet, Mao Zedong remained resilient in his conviction to create and rule his state in this fashion. He had a government, eager to launch an array of reforms and bring change in society. His was a China conceived within the greater China that had existed after the Warring States' period. A moveable China, however, was eager to forge relations with other parties and states. What remained important for Mao was the task of ensuring the survival and existence of the China he had conceived. Fear and ambition shaped his thoughts, for fear generated ambition. At times, therefore, his targets changed. Nothing was impossible, ranging from negotiations with Nationalists to war with them. Mao's China remained a movable agent with him as the head of the government and the party that ruled it.

The way to understand Mao's struggle for Communist China goes through the Chinese context after 1911. Warlords had their strongholds, and the government was, in today's sense, nowhere. (What existed everywhere was chaos and the power of the barrel - that Mao himself had embraced). Mao's China, nevertheless, survived and expanded. Challenges, after creation of the *People's Republic of China* (PRC) in 1949, were daunting. Changed context - poverty, war, a longing to reclaim, and presence of an enemy in the neighbourhood - was a constant reminder of the importance of an appropriate Grand Strategy.

With circumstance, changed the pillars of Mao's Grand Strategy. However, the objective remained the same: survival of the state - possible only under the rule of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). But now, Mao's China had to circumnavigate the rivalry between the United States (US) and the Soviet Republic. Conflict in the Korean Peninsula troubled Mao's calculations (at a time when he was planning to reclaim Taiwan), but prudence and clarity of purpose prevailed - he sent his Chinese

People's Volunteers (CPV) into the Korean theatre. A war, started at the expense of Taiwan, was eventually a win. The Americans were stopped and sent a message. The war also exposed the strengths and weaknesses of alliance with Stalin's Soviet Union -Mao, after the Korean War, would often test the limits of the Soviets and Americans, but keep his options open. Almost at the same time, the PRC expanded its circle of friends and allies and reached virtually all the developing countries. It is this context that Sulmaan Wasif Khan, Assistant Professor of International History and Chinese Foreign Relations at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University, emphasises in his *Haunted by Chaos: China's Grand Strategy from Mao Zedong to Xi Jinping*. According to Khan, Mao's Grand Strategy focused on the survival and security of his state that was only possible under the rule of the CCP. Given Khan's account of the war with India, friendship with Pakistan, clash with the Soviet Republic, and the relationship with the US, the PRC's Grand Strategy appears apt to achieve its strategic goals.

Mao's successors, particularly Deng Xiaoping, too did not forget the bitter lessons learned in the pre-1949 period. A strong government was essential to rule a state as large and populous as the PRC. But the populace was not to be ignored. People had not supported the CCP to endure hunger, Deng knew. It was, thus, necessary to make the PRC prosperous; it was necessary for the PRC's survival - Mao would have done the same, he advocated. Khan shows in the chapter on Deng that the latter was daring as well as cautious; he advocated economic liberalism, trade, and modernisation, but maintained tight control on the state. Cautious opening and a careful but prudent external policy were his hallmarks. But for dissent, he had no tolerance. Anyone who threatened (or could threaten) the survival of the state or party, had to face the PRC and him. He could be warm towards the British, but unyielding about anything short of Hong Kong. There was nothing wrong with getting rich in his China, but everything was wrong with challenging authority, be it a student group or CCP member.

While Mao and Deng were revolutionaries, their successors were young who needed to be appropriately indoctrinated, but not charismatic - because Deng had seen the horrors charisma could cause. What defined

his successors, both Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao, was the virtue of dullness. Khan's book provides sufficient evidence on the context in which Deng's successors worked to amplify their predecessors' gains. An interesting aspect he highlights is the need for 'doing more' which Deng's successors felt. Jiang brought in indoctrination, nationalism, and rigorous education along party lines. Dissent was a threat to the state, so was any organised group.

The virtue of dullness also extended to Hu's reign. He, too, emphasised CCP's control on policymaking, but struggled with the People's Liberation Army (PLA) - the latter exceeded its apparent, constitutional limits and left the leader abashed in front of his guest.¹ His was, however, an era of transition when China started asserting itself. But the climax was perhaps left for Xi Jinping, son of a veteran CCP member who endured the calamity of the Cultural Revolution. Xi went a step ahead of Jiang and Hu. He embarked on a campaign against corruption, implicated CCP members, PLA veterans, and prosperous businessmen - partly in an endeavour to consolidate his rule. He played assertively on the external front, used China's growing power abroad, launched an ambitious infrastructure plan, and established new financial institutions that could provide an alternative to the developing world.

The strength of *Haunted by Chaos* lies in its use of primary sources and focus on the generally less emphasised topic of 'Grand Strategy'. The clarity of the author's argument amplifies the gains. From Mao to Xi, all CCP leaders' objective has been the same: survival (existence) of the state - that is synonymous with CCP's survival. Both are inseparable. However, Khan also makes it clear that the wise grand strategists of China were humans too. Cultural Revolution and war with Vietnam were not the wisest of courses, even if the state survived. Khan does not forget to highlight the problems in China that shape the context in which Xi rules. His are not the words of hope, however, and he dismisses the bright side of China - a country that traversed difficult times and prospered against the odds.

¹ Editor's Note: China conducted the first test flight of its stealth fighter, in January 2011, hours before former US Defense Secretary Robert Gates sat down with President Hu Jintao (who appeared to not have heard about the flight) in Beijing.

Elizabeth C. Economy, *The Third Revolution: Xi Jinping and the New Chinese State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 360.

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Elizabeth C. Economy is Director of Asia Studies and C.V. Starr Senior Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), New York, USA. In her recent publication, *The Third Revolution: Xi Jinping and the New Chinese State*, Economy explains ‘how the Chinese leadership has moved forward to advance its objectives and what have been the intended and unintended consequences of the new approach in recent years’ (p. 12). She asserts that while China’s influence in world affairs is growing rapidly, contradictions are inherent in the system as it desires to shape the predominant liberal world order. Apart from introspecting about Xi’s personality and his Chinese Dream, the book offers a retrospect on a range of reforms including political and cyber arenas, the most visible - environmental pollution, economic concerns such as issues of corruption, innovation and state-owned enterprises and China’s foreign and security policies.

The author believes that President Xi has made significant progress towards achieving his Chinese Dream, and the priorities he has set out for his next five-year term are the same that he has pursued to date, which speaks of his consistency. However, with China witnessing its transformation as a global power, Economy asserts that history is not on Xi Jinping’s side. ‘Despite a rollback of democracy in some parts of the world, all the major economies of the world – save China – are all democracies... world must deal with China as it is today. The strategic direction of Xi’s leadership is evident and is exerting a profound impact on Chinese political and economic life and country’s international presence. Much of the world remains ill-prepared to understand and navigate these changes’ (p. 19).

Analysing the political persona of President Xi Jinping, Economy notes that 'Xi has emerged as the descendent of both Mao and Deng' (p. 23). She adds that in recent years, Xi has accumulated significant authority over virtually all policies. By pushing aside decades of collective and institutionalised decision-making, he has centralised power in his own hands. Analysts believe that this consolidation is necessary and beneficial in order to run the clean-up protocol inside the Party, and push for economic and other reforms in general.

As Xi has committed to eliminating corruption from the core, Economy asserts that the current system is reversing the trend of reform and opening up, preventing influx of foreign ideas and narrowing the space for debate and dissent (p. 53). She believes that the accomplishment of Xi's vision requires a detailed recalibration of the state's relationship with its citizenry as well as the outside world. Whereby President Xi makes no distinction between the real and virtual political worlds (i.e., both should reflect the same political values, standards and ideals), he believes that Chinese society and its practices must be a reflection of Chinese dreams and relevant endeavours (p. 58).

While China has evolved as an economic powerhouse in recent years, 'it has [also] developed technological upgrades to increase the state's potent capacity to monitor and prevent content from entering and circulating throughout the country' (p. 59). The West's version of the Internet, which is widely called as 'Chinnet' in the country, has been regarded as an anathema to the values of the Chinese Government, by Xi. Given the pattern that Chinese Government follows, it can be inferred that the state wants to control the Internet as a potential source of political change. The author believes that:

...for the international community, Beijing's cyber policy is representative of the challenge that a more powerful China presents to the liberal world order, which prioritizes political values such as freedom of speech, as opposed to China's effort to constrain the range of ideas on the Internet. It also reflects the paradox inherent in China's efforts to promote itself as a champion of globalization, while simultaneously advocating a

model of Internet sovereignty and closing its cyber world to information and investment from abroad (p. 90).

Writing broadly about China being an 'Innovation Nation', Economy stresses that Xi has made his unhappiness clear with the current state of China's innovation strategy, but as the system incentivises this strategy, little attention is being given to 'invention' as per Western models. Kevin Wale, Head of General Motors in China describes the 'Chinese as innovating through commercializing... unlike the Western methods of research, testing and validation, the Chinese will bring something to market and innovate based on consumer wants' (p. 124); and this works for them.

Economy dedicates a chapter to China's foreign policy and its overall global outlook, an area which impacts the world, the most. She writes that 'many people around the world might question China's peaceful and amiable rise but none would doubt Xi's assertion that the lion has awakened' (p. 186). China has done really well in the numbers game as it has developed itself in an unimaginable manner over the last few decades. While global economies witnessed recession and slowing down, China was able to stand tall independently. According to the author, in the current world order, China has the desire to use its power to influence others and establish global rules of the game (p. 187). Xi's repeated call for a 'new type of relationship among major countries', creation of parallel forums like the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), China Development Bank (CDB) and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB); and growing responsiveness in the United Nations (UN) and World Trade Organization (WTO) are few examples to quote.

China, in today's order will definitely like being heard, consulted and followed as it is an economic and military power with 20 per cent of the world's population. In recent years, China has not only come up with counters, its policy has seen a shift from staking to securing. Its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), stance in South and East China Sea and growing interest in the Arctic region are cases in point. As it turns East now and witnesses 'fluid' dynamic of politics in the region, China sees world as its Oyster. Under its strategy of Cultural Conditioning and use of Soft Power,

the Republic has been able to promote its language and culture respectively, worldwide (p. 219).

While there exists a lot of literature regarding the United States' perception of China and how it wants to maintain its relations with an emerging power, history tells us that the US has always assured China of mutual cooperation, but simultaneously worked on parallel plans with regional states to encircle it. Beijing not only sees such advancements as a counter to its plan, but also detrimental to its interests and influence in the region. For the moment, President Xi is filling the vacuum of global leadership left by President Trump's 'America First' policy (p. 229). Economy's road forward suggests that 'diplomacy' must be given a chance here. She asserts that as President Trump withdraws from international accords and preaches his 'America First' policy, Xi's proposal of collective benefit makes him a more acceptable leader globally. This makes people skirt the issue of China's true capabilities to manage global affairs, whether it is North Korea's nuclear proliferation or the refugee crisis in Myanmar. In both cases, Beijing was not able to put forward a workable solution.

Though China has been successful in managing its economy and military affairs, it is yet to deal with issues of corruption, state-owned enterprises, slowing growth, pollution and indigenous innovation. This book provides a strong overview about Xi Jinping, with detailed historical background. Suffice to say, just because he has been around the world and successful in creating a powerful image of China, does not mean that there are no troubled waters back home.