

Book review: T. A. Heathcote: Balochistan, the British and the Great Game - The Struggle for the Bolan Pass, Gateway to India. London: Hurst 2016. ISBN 978-18490-4479-0

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responses, depends on our ability to correct old patterns of thinking. A growing self-assurance among the emerging countries is evident. China criticises Western weaknesses, such as our failure in development policy towards Africa, and the problems in our political systems, which have come to the surface during the financial crisis. The bipolar world is gone, and the idea of a multilateralism of cooperation among equal partners is unrealistic, according to Sandschneider. Non-polarity is his term for the present. To deal with this situation peacefully presupposes new forms of long-term cooperation. This period of major international changes requires historical consciousness among the main actors; accordingly, it is not helpful that German parties tend to have ever younger people in leadership positions.

In its negative experiences with colonial powers, China realised that there was nobody to rely on. The “Western community of values” must sound rather hollow to many countries with similarly negative experiences as well. And this self-declared community of values has not integrated any new members as equal partners. Therefore it is all the more important to recognise the significance of the new G-20 state grouping. This is a more promising step towards international partnership than if emerging political powers have to fight for their rights at every step of the way (p. 108). As models for the future role of Europe, Sandschneider contrasts Great Britain, which has been struggling for about 100 years now to accept its declining international standing, with Switzerland, which has achieved an international political role without ever having been a major political power.

In times of widespread self-deception in Western political debates, and after years of political instrumentalisation of the “human rights debate”, Sandschneider’s appeal for realistic appraisal may well be called courageous. The book addresses important questions to broaden the thinking of those dealing closely with politics in process. The first advice can only be: more humility.

Sabine Grund

T. A. HEATHCOTE, *Balochistan, the British and the Great Game. The Struggle for the Bolan Pass, Gateway to India*. London: Hurst, 2016. 288 pages, £30.00. ISBN 978-18490-4479-0

Ever since Rudyard Kipling popularised the term the “Great Game” in his novel *Kim* (1901), the history of the British political, military and colonial engagement and competition with Russia in the borderlands to India and later the Raj has been of particular interest to historians and to a predominantly British audience. The fateful military campaigns in Afghanistan from 1839–42 and 1878–1880 still influence the perception of Afghanistan and the Afghan

tribes as unruly, resilient, traditionalist and cunning. Thus, the relevance of the region derives, as the author notes in his introduction, from its continuous challenge to regional security until today.

The Iranian province of Sistan and Bolchestan, Pakistan's province of Balochistan (by far the largest administrative unit of Pakistan) and the three southern Afghan provinces of Nimruz, Helmand and Kandahar are considered as an economically underdeveloped, politically marginalised and volatile region. T. A. Heathcote, a graduate of the School for African and Oriental Studies (SOAS) and former curator at the Military Academy Sandhurst, leads the reader back to these restive edges of the British Empire, to Balochistan in the late 18th and 19th century. The book, an expansion of the author's PhD thesis at SOAS, is exclusively based on British archival sources and Heathcote offers a meticulous description of British military and diplomatic operations in the region from the late 18th century until the enforcement of British rule in 1893.

The manuscript opens with a historical account on the establishment of the Khanate of Kalat in the 17th century, when Mir Ahmad Khan achieved autonomy from the Mughal Empire. Heathcote bases this introduction on the standard English secondary literature on the region. The local political dynamics, the conflicts between various groups are represented in terms of the traditionalist checks and balances of a tribal society which had experienced little transformation or change. The following chapter introduces the competition among Iran (then under Qajar rule), Russia and Britain in the region in the first decades of the 19th century. The subsequent chapters, the main part of the manuscript, depict the expansion of British rule in the region from 1839 on, initially led by the East India Company and then later under the rule of the Viceroy. The author organises his material in strict chronological order and pays detailed attention on the careers of individual British officers and adventurers who took Benjamin Disraeli's line in *Tancred* literally: "The East is a Career". The myriad of geographical and personal names, the at times circuitous descriptions of various battles and smaller skirmishes between the British (including their auxiliaries) and their Balochi adversaries will fascinate historians of the colonial and military expansion of Britain in South Asia; a more general audience might well consider the volume an exhausting read, however.

Besides the detailed microhistory of events, there is only a limited interest in the larger political (for instance, the "Great Game" as such) or social transformation in the 19th century. While Heathcote is predominately interested in the trials and tribulations of his British heroes, their Afghan-Balochi antagonists remain the stereotypical "Other" – the volume would have benefited from a stronger consideration of the entangled history as well as the indigenous perspective.

Tim Epkenhans