

Book review: Andrew Small: The China-Pakistan Axis - Asia's New Geopolitics. London: Hurst 2015. ISBN 978-1-84904-341-0

Michael, Arndt

Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version

Rezension / review

Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Michael, A. (2017). Book review: Andrew Small: The China-Pakistan Axis - Asia's New Geopolitics. London: Hurst 2015. ISBN 978-1-84904-341-0. *International Quarterly for Asian Studies (IQAS)*, 48(1-2), 143-145. <https://doi.org/10.11588/iqas.2017.1-2.4080>

Nutzungsbedingungen:

Dieser Text wird unter einer CC BY-NC-ND Lizenz (Namensnennung-Nicht-kommerziell-Keine Bearbeitung) zur Verfügung gestellt. Nähere Auskünfte zu den CC-Lizenzen finden Sie hier:

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/deed.de>

Terms of use:

This document is made available under a CC BY-NC-ND Licence (Attribution-Non Commercial-NoDerivatives). For more information see:

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0>

much shorter stretch with Myanmar. The country blocks India's access to its own northeast, a region which could – in theory – be reached easily by rail and road across Bangladesh. Historically and culturally the country was part of Bengal, and the idea of Pakistan as a separate state for the Muslims of India was especially strong here. Bangladesh's history as East Pakistan (1947–1971) ended almost half a century ago, but the role of religion in the state is far from defined. As for the outlook going forward: “Besides domestic drivers, such as political instability, growing authoritarian tendencies of the ruling regime, proliferation of intolerance, polarization of society, and lack of space for religio-political parties within the mainstream, the future trajectory of terrorism in Bangladesh will depend on the global political situation, especially in the Middle East. If the role of the West, mainly the USA, in international politics reinforces the sense of Muslim victimhood, then the appeal of violent extremism to the common people in Bangladesh is likely to intensify” (p. 435).

This book will be a standard reference work on Bangladesh for years to come, and a necessary addition to any collection on the region in general and on Bangladesh in particular. Bangladesh as a “test case for development” offers useful insights for other “less developed” countries and their donors.

Wolfgang-Peter Zingel

ANDREW SMALL, *The China-Pakistan Axis. Asia's New Geopolitics*. London: Hurst, 2015. 319 pages, £30.00. ISBN 978-1-84904-341-0

In a book of over 300 pages dealing with an under-researched state-to-state relationship, the reader can expect a reasonable number of footnotes, as well as a bibliography and an index of perhaps 25 pages. In this regard, Andrew Small's book clearly surpasses expectations. It is telling that the main text of this meticulously researched and well-written book on the history and trajectory of the China-Pakistan axis consists of 188 pages, while the remaining 131 pages are solely devoted to an impressive quantity of documentation.

Small writes on page 5 that “in-depth studies on the China-Pakistan relationship are few and far between, with virtually no full-length treatments appearing since the early 1970s”. Clearly, the author has successfully taken up the challenge and chronicles what has happened, and, more importantly, what is currently happening between Pakistan, the Islamic state, and China, the Communist state. The book provides a detailed account of the origins and developments of this relationship, China's secret role in (and not so secret support of) Pakistan's nuclear weapons programme, trade issues, the current status of extremist movements in both countries, and possible future developments.

The China-Pakistan relationship, often described by both sides as an “all-weather” friendship, dates to the 1962 Sino-Indian war, a defining event in the history of India and a lasting trauma for Indian elites until today. The fact that Indian forces proved vastly inferior to their Chinese counterparts led the Pakistani leadership to focus on, even align with China. Especially when the USA rejected Pakistani military demands during the 1965 Indo-Pakistan war, the latter was in dire need of a strong international ally, and, to the surprise of many, found it in communist China. Pakistani leadership, beginning with Field Marshal Ayub Khan in 1962, followed by Yahya Khan, General Zia-ul-Haq and all their successors, all undertook to deepen and widen this relationship.

Andrew Small impressively demonstrates in the seven chapters (and dramatic introduction) of this book that geopolitical considerations, arms/weapons, trade and infrastructure are the four major pillars upon which this unique axis rests. The latter two, in particular, have received their fair share of criticism in recent years, with, for example, the Gwadar port development project on the Arabian Sea and the Karakoram Highway linking China to Pakistan both failing to bring about the desired economic improvements, despite the huge amounts of Chinese capital invested in the two projects. The author makes use of extensive interviews conducted in both China and Pakistan, as well as ample citations from the memoirs of relevant actors involved, especially from the military and politics. For Andrew Small, the nuclear question is also of utmost importance, and the author has been able to unearth many details regarding nuclear matters, probably unknown to most readers, in addition to highlighting how Pakistan has helped many “rogue” states to obtain nuclear material or plans for building centrifuges.

It goes without saying that the problems in this axis are many, particularly in the form of unbridgeable cultural differences and widespread terrorist activities. Small (p. 30) describes an incident during the brief war of 1965 when then Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai met a Pakistani delegation that, to his surprise, only requested ammunition for no more than 14 days. “How can a war be fought in that short time?” Zhou wondered. “I would be interested to know if you have prepared the people of Pakistan to operate in the rear of the enemy. [...] I am talking about a People’s Militia being based in every village and town.” Pakistani generals, many of whom had received training in the UK, were speechless: “What does Zhou Enlai know about soldiering and military affairs anyway?” Such differences in military tactics and approaches remain characteristic of this relationship today.

On page 67, Small cites a Pakistani sinologist who said: “China has a good understanding of almost everything in Pakistan, political, security or economic, that might affect the bilateral relationship, but there is one piece they just don’t get: Islam.” These words reveal the major dilemma underlying the axis. Critically, China is worried about violence in its Muslim Xinjiang province,

along with violence against the more than 10,000 Chinese nationals living and working in Pakistan. Pakistan is home to one of China's most feared terrorist movements, the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM), which fights for Uighur freedom in Xinjiang and is partly based in tribal areas in Pakistan. Much to the chagrin of political elites in China, Pakistan is poised to play a decisive role in China's battle against Islamic terrorism in the future, even though the Chinese fear that their fight is not fully supported, even sabotaged by Pakistan and that unresolved terrorist problems in Xinjiang province might incite protests in other Chinese provinces as well. According to a Chinese expert (p. 90): "When we provide them [Pakistan] with intelligence on ETIM locations they give warnings before launching their attacks."

After having read the book, one cannot but conclude that despite stark differences in ideology and cultural understanding, a common enemy (India) and economic interests (predominantly Chinese) are enough to provide the basis for a lasting friendship between the two nation-states. How can one understand the underlying motives, the nature, the trajectory of the alliance that binds these two important states together? The answer: by reading this book. Small's insightful account is highly recommended for students, researchers, analysts and policy makers dealing with international relations and security in the Asia-Pacific. The wealth of information and data included, along with the hundreds of hours of (frank) interviews will make this a book of lasting relevance.

Arndt Michael

AMARNATH AMARASINGAM / DANIEL BASS (eds), *Sri Lanka. The Struggle for Peace in the Aftermath of War*. London: Hurst, 2016. 293 pages, £25.00. ISBN 978-18490-4573-5

The termination of Sri Lanka's civil war through the military defeat of the LTTE and the establishment of a victor's peace in 2009 offers a compelling case for those studying war-to-peace transitions and the transformation of violent intra-state conflicts; nonetheless, academic interest in Sri Lanka's protracted civil war and the underlying ethnic conflict has been waning since the war's end. The volume under review is thus a welcome exception to this tendency. Against the backdrop of the 10-year rule of former President Mahinda Rajapaksa (2005–2015), who not only engineered and implemented the ruthless military campaign that ended the war, but moreover left an indelible mark on the country's post-war politics, the authors of this volume have set out to explore the manifold problems Sri Lanka's minorities have been facing since the war's end.