

measured attention. Besides, any consideration of economic aspect of the ASEAN is completely missing in the book which neglects its main identity. The various chapters in the book do not necessarily present a coherent analysis of the concepts that the title reflects. Rather, all the chapters stand on their own with enough background information for the reader to understand the context. The editor has rightly claimed that “Southeast Asia is attractively difficult, creatively diverse...” (p.50), which is reflected in the elaborative analysis of Termsak Chalermphanupap’s “One charter, three communities, many challenges” (Chapter 3). As such the sceptical title “hard choices” really puts the ASEAN-member states in a difficult position to choose between security, democracy and regionalism.

Muhammad Asad: His contribution to Islamic learning. By Abroo Aman Andrabi. New Delhi: Goodword Books, 2007, pp.173. ISBN 978-81-78-98589-3.

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A number of studies on Muhammad Asad have been published over the past years in the form of journal articles and online texts. But there has not been any extensive study of his ideas and works to date. Therefore, Andrabi’s book, which is based on his Ph.D. thesis, is a welcome addition to the life and works of Muhammad Asad (Leopold Weiss).

Andrabi’s book under review consists of six chapters. In the first chapter, the author shares his thoughts on Asad’s life before his conversion from Judaism to Islam. It successfully chronicles Asad’s experiences in Saudi Arabia and Pakistan while serving the governments of these countries. One of the major shortcomings of this chapter, indeed the book is that it lacks a theoretical framework, which could have been used to assess Asad’s general contributions as a Muslim intellectual.

In the second chapter, Andrabi undertakes an ambitious task because it is not easy to discuss and analyse all of this pragmatic

intellectual's ideas in such a brief chapter. Nonetheless, Andrabi assesses Asad's ideas somewhat descriptively rather than analytically as they appear in his *Islam at the Crossroads* and *The Road to Mecca* among others. He gives an outline of each of the chapters in the selected books and highlights some of the issues that Asad examined. For example, Asad's monograph *Islam at the Crossroads* critically assessed 'education' as experienced in the West and argued that there was no distinction between secular and religious education.

One of Asad's most enduring works that is perhaps difficult to be replicated by any contemporary scholar is *The message of the Qur'an*. This translation work and commentary were the focus of Andrabi's third chapter. Here, Andrabi devotes a considerable part of his book to Asad's translation and commentary. Andrabi's approach in analysing Asad's work is a comparative one. He compares selected verses and sections of his commentaries with those of other translators of the Qur'an. Among the translators that he refers to in his comparative study are Abdullah Yusuf 'Ali and Marmaduke Pickthall. Andrabi's comparative method is commendable. Asad's works were criticised by traditional institutions based in the Muslim heartlands and elsewhere. But this reviewer did not find any significant critical points against Asad's translation and commentary in the chapter.

In the fourth chapter of the book, Andrabi analyses Muhammad Asad's concepts of the 'state' and 'government.' Although Andrabi does not clearly say so, this chapter is based on Asad's work entitled *The Principles of State and Government*. This was, however, previously published in Urdu in 1948 by the government of Punjab, Pakistan. He argues that Asad supported the rational-legal basis of the legitimacy of authority based on the democratic processes and points out that Asad laid emphasis on the Muslim state being based upon the two primary sources in order to maintain ideological purity (p.135).

After this useful overview of Asad's ideas on the state and government, Andrabi draws upon the views of some scholars about Muhammad Asad in his penultimate chapter. While this is an informative chapter, it would have been best to leave it out of the book because this has already been complemented by a two-volume

edited work, entitled *Europe's Gift to Islam: Muhammad Asad* that was produced by M. Ikram Chaghath (New Delhi: Adam Publishers & Distributors, 2007). This work gathered together the ideas of a number of prominent scholars who examined Asad's thoughts in some detail.

Andrabi's book is a welcome addition to the existing works on Asad. It shared thoughts about a significant twentieth century Muslim intellectual whose influence has not as yet been thoroughly examined. This book, which was simply and straightforwardly written, should hopefully stimulate other potential researchers and scholars to undertake further studies to evaluate the impact and influence of Muhammad Asad's intellectual input in and beyond the Muslim heartlands.

China modernises: Threat to the West or model for the rest? By Randall Peerenboom. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.406, 2007. ISBN 0-19-920834-4.

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Randall Peerenboom in *China Modernises: Threat to the West or Model for the Rest?* analyses the unique economic development model of China – widely known as the “East Asian Model” – and examines its implications for the rest of the world. The most provocative proposition in the book is that economic growth and development have taken firm root in China under an authoritarian system of government, and it is this economic development that would push China ultimately towards political openness in future.

In chapter one of the book Peerenboom points out that the East Asian model of development has served China well, and should be emulated by developing countries. He mentions that although China is one of those countries listed by the United States as undemocratic, China remains pragmatic in its effort towards modernisation and development. Peerenboom outlines the key principles China uses