

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.

Reviewer: Kakuba Sultan Juma, Department of Political Science, International Islamic University Malaysia. Email: sultan_juma@yahoo.co.uk

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

in its pragmatic approach – ignoring International Monetary Fund and World Bank policies, such as lending practices, total privatisation and rejection of adopting totally the Western style of liberal democracy.

In light of this, Peerenboom points out that countries benefiting from these institutions should only accept those policies they feel are suitable for their countries. For example, maintaining the state to play a significant role in setting economic policies to regulate both local and international investments as well as paying more attention to the effects of globalisation. To him, this has greatly benefited countries such as Singapore and Malaysia. This can preempt one perhaps to argue that extending developmental assistance to countries with misdirected policies may lead to the recipient's invisible economic growth. He argues that unlike the Western countries, China has attached a special package to ensure sovereignty, self-determination and mutual respect, which gives other countries liberty to develop in their own ways to shapes their foreign policies.

In chapter two, Peerenboom raises fundamental issues, which need serious attention by those countries yearning for modernisation and development. He argues in this part of the book that based on empirical evidence, it can be stated that countries, which have put democratisation as their top priority to serve as their engine for modernisation and development, have suffered great losses. He argues that countries such as Indonesia, Philippines and many others at best have acquired themselves the position of failed states in their course of democratisation. He argues that though China is considered an authoritarian state on the international scene, its citizens are generally better off – many are able to read and write, and they enjoy high standard of living and high life expectation.

In chapters three to six, Peerenboom analyses and describes China's performance on ensuring fundamental civil, social, economic and political rights to its citizens in relation to other Asian countries and the world in general. Here, he makes the point that Asian countries such as Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia have registered success in their process of modernisation and development based on "East Asian Model" (EAM). He illustrates

what constitutes this model. He argues that this model focuses on the following factors: paying more attention to economic growth rather than to ensuring civil and political rights at the initial stages of development; rejecting or modifying the Western approach to development; and government investment in human capital and institutions. These factors are built on the idea that democratisation becomes prioritised much later when higher levels of wealth is obtained. He also cites the examples of countries from outside Asia such as Greece, Spain, Portugal, Poland, Hungary and Czech Republic that these countries paid more attention to economic development before they successfully democratised their countries.

He further points out that evidence from a study conducted during the period 1993-1995, revealed that out of 102 countries, which sustained economic growth and development well above 5% for the period 1965-1995, the top countries were from Asia. These were Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore and China. The argument here is that, except for Japan, these countries are known to be undemocratic on the international scene. But he stresses that, with the exception of China, the others have economic freedom and rule of law. It is interesting to note that the nature of experiences of Asian countries makes it difficult to tell whether democracy can be the ingredient to modernisation. This is so because, those countries regarded as authoritarian, score high on the scale of the rule of law. Peerenboom singles out Singapore as an autocratic country but ranks very high in development. It is perhaps correct to argue that democracy in the Western definition plays a secondary role in the process of development. Peerenboom expresses the opinion that values of democracy begin to take shape as economic growth is achieved. He stresses further that economic growth is linked to the shift to cultural and political change.

Peerenboom emphasises the role played by the State in the modernisation and development process. He points out that economic growth and development success requires serious effort on the part of the State to invest heavily in human capital, and infrastructures as well as formulating and adhering to sound economic policies. However, he opines that there are two paradigms in which modernisation and development can be achieved. One emphasises economic growth and development to take the lead (China follows

this path), while the other stresses on ensuring freedom and democracy. He appreciates the fact that the rule of law is an essential ingredient for economic growth. But he cautions that these countries should pay attention to their available local resources and values to develop institutions that directly caters to their local needs. He believes that over time, there may be convergence in institutions and practices as the countries gain more wealth to afford infrastructures like those in advanced economies.

Peerenboom suggests that developing countries should emulate China's pragmatic approach. He argues that the most significant explanation for China's current level of development is its willingness to experiment with different approaches to solve its problems and to evaluate the results free of economic or political biases. China invested heavily in human resource with the purpose of producing credible productive and innovative labour force.

Credit should be given to Peerenboom for writing an account of China's giant steps in modernisation and development. He points out that China has registered veritable achievements despite enormous criticism from the international community about its political system. The ideas in the book are quite provoking to those interested in understanding the nature and implication of China's model of development. This book is useful to leaders, policy-makers and development planners with the skills and knowledge to make appropriate choices for development and modernisation. More significantly, the book is an important source of information for development theories and their relevance. In addition, the book is a major contribution to the relevance of authoritarian regime in fostering development and modernisation. Therefore, the book is essential for students and researchers on development and modernisation.
