

modernizing currents in the society." Over the years, Pakistani society, instead of confronting the growing encroachment of conservative Islamism, gradually ceded intellectual ground to activist religious orthodoxy.

The final part of the book presents the author's own suggestions and policy prescriptions to deal with the challenges in Afghanistan and Pakistan. And this is where the author disappoints. No doubt, the book is emphatic in its assessment of Pakistan's Afghanistan policy as a failure and underlines the dangers of breaking up with the US and becoming one of the most public supporters of the Taliban. Khan is also clear that the Kashmir dispute between India and Pakistan can only be resolved by peaceful means and that there is a need for Pakistan to focus on regional economic cooperation. But there is reluctance in this book to confront the roots of Pakistan's present predicament—the unholy nexus between its security establishment and violent religious extremism. It is not readily evident from Khan's conclusions what the best way is to deal with this fundamental challenge that has wreaked havoc not only on the region and the world but also on Pakistan itself. Khan is right that in order to overcome the challenge of extremism, stabilize the region, and align Pakistan's development with the contemporary currents of modernization, intellectual clarity is essential. This book takes a few steps in that direction but fails to go all the way.

—Harsh V. Pant

### ATROCIOUS OUTLIERS

Yang Su: *Collective Killings in Rural China during the Cultural Revolution*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011. Pp. xix, 300. \$27.99.)

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Although the brutality and violence of the Cultural Revolution period in China have been both well documented and extensively analyzed, the near-exclusive focus of existing scholarly analysis has been the urban conflagrations that quickly spun out of control between 1966 and 1969. To date, there has been little exploration of how the Cultural Revolution may have unfolded in rural communities, let alone the extent of the violence that ensued there, no doubt owing to the relative dearth of reliable information available to researchers of the period. Yang Su's important and troubling volume redresses this gap in our understanding of the period, providing a wealth of empirical detail on rural violence during this tumultuous period.

It is therefore not only a welcome addition to the new generation of scholarship on the Cultural Revolution, but also one that is likely to set a new standard for future studies of collective violence, both in terms of the scope and depth of the research, as well as the breadth of the analysis.

Centered largely on a systematic quantitative analysis of Cultural Revolution accounts found in new county gazetteers, supplemented by extensive interviews and “unpublished internal documents” (31), Su trains his attention on a particular type of incident that took place during the Cultural Revolution: one that involved “the intentional killing of a significant number of the members of any group (as a group and its membership is defined by the perpetrator) of noncombatants” (38)— in short, episodes in which “neighbors collectively and publicly murdered their neighbors” (5) with large numbers of both participant-onlookers and victims involved. While he is at pains to point out that such “collective killings,” even in the two provinces of Guangdong and Guangxi during the two-year period (1967–68) with which the study is primarily concerned, were extraordinary and by no means common events, Su nonetheless describes Cultural Revolution mayhem on a staggering scale: outbreaks of violence in more than 1,500 counties (31), leading to an estimated number of deaths in the Chinese countryside ranging between 492,000 and 1,970,000 (37). Using the relatively more quiescent province of Hubei for comparison, Su finds that these unusual events were the product of a particular confluence of circumstances, and he turns to the social mobilization literature to make sense of these “atrocities in plain sight.” The author rejects the straightforward “state-policy model” that depicts genocide and mass killings as forms of policy produced by the bureaucratic operations of the state. Instead, he offers an alternative “community model” that casts “eliminationist killings as emergent events in extraordinary situations” that were neither planned nor premeditated. He proposes that these “collective killings” arose in local environments shaped by powerful clan organizations and interclan competition (11–12). In the cases he uncovers in Guangdong and Guangxi, Su finds that geographic remoteness and poverty correlated powerfully with the horrendous and murderous outcomes that he catalogs. He develops these themes in subsequent chapters. Chapter 3 focuses on the role of clan competition in setting the context for collective killings by enforcing “‘us versus them,’ or in-group and out-group identities,” influences that Su argues were not in and of themselves sufficient to cause collective killings but did “provide a local impetus for embracing violence when other conditions were in place” (68). Chapter 4 explains how the Mao-era practice of class labeling exacerbated preexisting tensions. Su posits that Maoist policies perpetuated artificial class divides in order to bolster mass participation in radical government programs, and keep local-level cadres in line by using the threat of mass criticism to police cadre behavior. Yet Su concludes that the persistence of such practices is likewise insufficient to explain “why eliminationist killings were extremely rare in the long history” of the Maoist

regime (124). In his fifth and sixth chapters, Su finds that while the participants in rural collective killings were all “ordinary men” who “killed in the absence of any direct orders and without coercion, [who] acted on their own initiative” (154), they did so within the broader context of a system that stressed political performance while also dismantling legal constraints on local communities. Su subsequently details how central Party officials, operating with partial information and an incomplete understanding of local conditions, endorsed the view of certain provincial actors, thereby contributing to a heightened “wartime” atmosphere in Guangdong and Guangxi. However, he also demonstrates that the actual patterns of collective killings were shaped primarily by local, and not centrally generated, conditions, with remoteness and poverty serving as key precipitating factors.

The author’s tone shifts in the conclusion. Whereas Su’s “community model” stresses the lack of premeditation and planning leading up to collective killings, attributes only an indirect role to the central state, and takes the local communities in which these atrocities were committed as the primary unit of analysis, the conclusion instead casts blame squarely on the regime. The bulk of the author’s research stresses that the vast majority of the incidents he described occurred in a few communities in Guangdong and Guangxi and were in fact produced by an unfortunate confluence of circumstances: clan tensions divided poor and remote counties and tended to exacerbate the already high levels of factionalism rife during the Cultural Revolution period. When local actors sent reports to or sought the sanction of higher levels, they too often received either inappropriate or ambiguous responses or no response at all. In the confusion that resulted, authorities who should have intervened to prevent an escalation of violence instead allowed attacks and counterattacks to take place on the ground, with horrific results. In his concluding chapter, Su puts aside his locally grounded and community-based approach to assert that the rural collective killings he documents were in fact ultimately “rooted in the nature of the regime” (261), and roundly condemns the “criminal nature of Maoism” (262) for setting the stage by promoting a rhetoric of and justification for violence, on the one hand, and then failing to contain and deter its extreme manifestations, on the other.

While his concluding assertions regarding the culpability of the center seem to depart, at least in emphasis, from the excellent and fine-grained analysis of the local factors that made Guangdong and Guangxi the “atrocious outliers” (53) he claims that they were, in the final analysis they do not detract from this impressive, thorough, and harrowing study that should forever put to rest the misconception that the Chinese Cultural Revolution was an urban movement that left the countryside unscathed.

–Patricia M. Thornton