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Andrew M. Roe *Waging War in Waziristan – The British Struggle in the Land of Bin Laden, 1849 – 1947*, University Press of Kansas, 2010, hbk, pp 313

At a period when the British Prime Minister has been unusually and openly critical of Pakistan's record in countering insurgency and terrorism, this book is a timely reminder of Britain's own experience of the North West Frontier for just under one hundred years up until Pakistan independence in 1947. Andrew Roe, a serving officer with The Yorkshire Regiment (Green Howards) has himself served in Afghanistan and he thus writes from direct experience of the region. It is to his credit that all profits from the sale of his book will be donated to Help for Heroes.

The book provides an excellent introduction into the geography and tribal culture of Waziristan, together with valuable insights into the British 'Forward' strategy of the day, together with the British response to the uprising led by the Fakir of Ipi in 1936 – 1937 (40,000 troops failed to catch him) and the ongoing insurgency up until 1947. He highlights the tendency for procrastination rather than decisiveness, the difficulty of achieving surprise, the role of airpower in counterinsurgency and the value of road building as a means to an end, not an end in themselves. He points to the need never to underestimate the enemy, the importance, as ever, of leadership and that contemporary problems of the region are best understood by an examination of its history, not in yet another 'paradigm' of political or social science on counterinsurgency. Rather, any 'solution' needs to be strongly shrouded in a Clausewitzian understanding that politics determines military action and not vice versa.

This is a first class account, extensively researched from both primary and secondary sources and as such, is essential reading for all those destined to become involved in this intractable of wars. Ambassador Akbar S Ahmed, who has served in Waziristan between 1978 and 1980, has given Roe's work his own seal of approval.

David Benest