

BOOK REVIEW

The Struggle for Pakistan: A Muslim Homeland and Global Politics

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In March 1940, Mohammad Ali Jinnah in his presidential address to All India Muslim League's Lahore session not only underlined the distinctiveness of Hinduism and Islam but forcefully

argued in favour of a homeland for the Muslims of the Indian subcontinent. It was from this very point that the "struggle" for a separate homeland started and in a very short span of seven years reached to its "logical" conclusion. During these crucial seven years Muslim League sold the idea of a separate homeland to the targeted populace with a promise that the creation of Pakistan would end all their miseries. However, the Pakistani state, even after more than six decades of its existence, miserably failed to meet the modest expectations of its citizenry, let alone providing them the much needed space to realise their dreams. Due to the inherent contradictions in the national ideology, based on Islam, and inaccurate policies of the ruling politico-security establishment, Pakistan even lost over half of its population and territory in 1971 when East Pakistan became independent. Pakistan of today has deservedly earned an unceremonious distinction of being "the most dangerous spot on the world map" because of the large scale violence, sectarian strife,

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religious extremism, politico-economic instability and terrorism.

At such a crucial time, Ayesha Jalal, an eminent Pakistani historian and Professor of history at Tufts University, has come up with a study that focuses on the historical journey of Pakistan and analyses various ups and downs. Contrary to the widely held and established narrative, the author argues that Jinnah's idea of "Two Nation Theory" was based on political, not religious, opposition to the Indian National Congress which logically culminated into a separate Muslim homeland—Pakistan. Although she concedes that Islam as a political identity played an important role in the creation of Pakistan, yet rejects religion being the main impetus behind it. Irrespective of whether religion was the main impetus or not, once Pakistan came into being, the establishment, instead of engaging in serious discussion over the South Asian history, emphasised on Islam and "Two Nation Theory" to construct the national narrative which resulted in the adoption of an ambiguous and ill-defined national ideology. Successive ruling regimes, both civilian and military, did not try to remove the ambiguity surrounding the national ideology. This gave religious right enough room to demand imposition of Sharia based

Islamic system in the country.

The author explains institutional imbalance and army's exceptional rise in the context of regional rivalry with India and Cold War international politics. According to her, in the wake of conflict with India over Kashmir, Pakistan needed to increase its defence funding. Since the country did not have enough resources to meet the defence requirement, it pleaded to Washington for economic and military aid which later resulted in Pakistan joining the Cold War security alliance system. There is no doubt that the US played an important role in facilitating army's rise in Pakistan, yet it is equally true that Pakistani leaders, both civilian and military, were very keen to align with the US. There is enough evidence to suggest that Jinnah tried to develop an understanding with the US to get economic and military aid in return of Pakistan's, yet to be born, support against the communist expansionism. This was followed by a number of requests by Pakistani leaders. Initially US administration was eyeing on greater economic and other stakes in India, but agreed to Pakistan's request in a changed atmosphere and especially after Jawaharlal Nehru refused to be a part of Cold War rivalry.

For Jalal, the breakup of Pakistan

in 1971 was not because of the inherent contradiction of Pakistan's ideology, but the autocratic and centralised policies of the state managers. In reality, ever since 1947, Islam was the only glue holding the two wings together. For Bengalis, their language, culture and the way of life were more important than the religion. Soon after partition, it was reflected in their unanimous rejection of Urdu as a national language of Pakistan. However, the West Pakistani elites did not pay much attention to it and continued emphasising on Islamic ideology and *India threat* to keep the country united. The strategy worked for some time but failed in the end.

In post-1971 Pakistan, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto with his populist approach raised hopes in millions of Pakistanis for a better future. He even gave Pakistan a new constitution in 1973 which established parliamentary form of democracy in the country. However, his dictatorial style and army's resolve of not submitting to a civilian authority failed the democratic experiment and paved the way for an exceptionally long period of military rule. Gen. Zia-ul-Haq, once in power, launched an intense Islamisation programme on the one hand, and took steps to firmly entrench army in the power structure of Pakistan on the other. Pakistan's

active participation in the "holy war" in Afghanistan brought intense sums of economic and military aid to Pakistan but with the same token radicalised the populace and gave birth to a highly destructive Kalashnikov culture. The author rightly claims that it seriously compromised state's monopoly over the instrument of coercion.

Zia's death in a mysterious plane crash ended a long spell of military rule and paved the way for general elections that brought Benazir Bhutto into power in 1989. The next decade saw the dismissal of four democratically elected governments led by Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif—each thrown out of office twice. In October 1999, serious differences between Prime Minister and Army Chief over Kargil culminated into fourth bloodless coup in Pakistan. It was during Pervez Musharraf's military regime that al-Qaeda operatives attacked United States in September 2001. In a very challenging and changed atmosphere, Musharraf opted for Hobson's choice and made Pakistan a frontline state in US-led war against terrorism. With his newfound confidence, argues Jalal, Musharraf took a number of steps on domestic front that further marginalised the mainstream political parties and institutionalised army's role in the

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power structure of Pakistan.

While discussing the fallout of US-lead war on terror, especially the increased terror related violence in Pakistan, the author chronologically proceeds and analyses almost all important internal developments such as military operations in tribal areas, Musharraf's confrontation with Judiciary, drone attacks, discovery of Osama bin Laden, memogate issue and so on. In the end she acknowledges the fact that despite a civilian government completing its full term and transferring power to the other

democratic dispensation, Pakistan Army "continues to shape foreign and defense policies and has the ultimate say in internal security matters."

In nut-shell, the study is rich in content and analysis, yet has certain shortcomings. It is surprising that an eminent scholar of her stature, instead of suggesting to evolve a new national consensus to deal with the multifaceted challenge, goes on to defend the discredited "Two Nation Theory" and refuses to accept the inherent contradiction in the ideology of Pakistan. ■