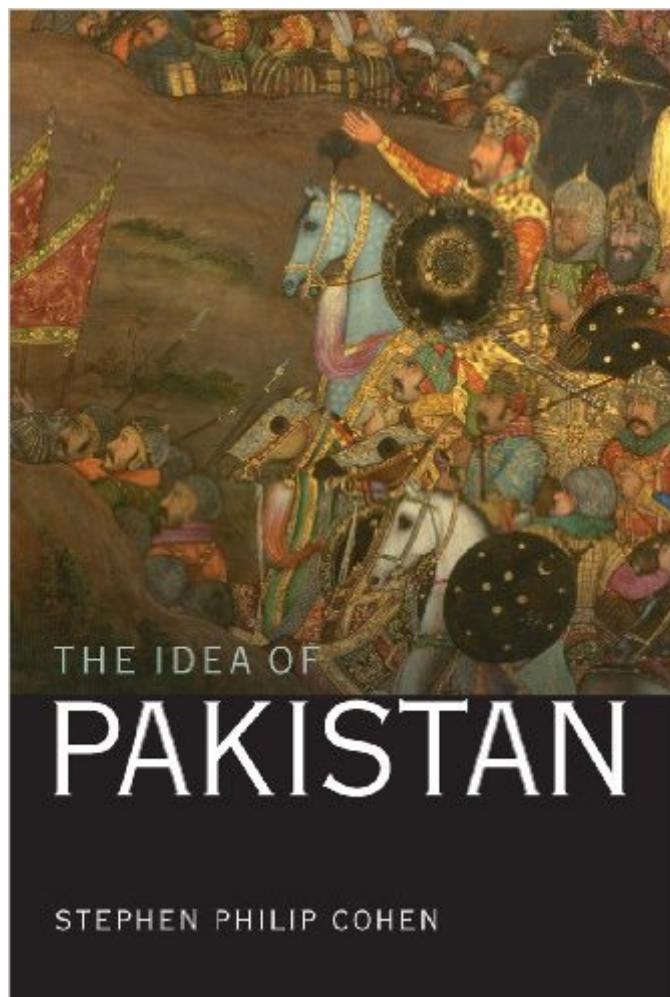


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The Idea Of Pakistan



Synopsis

Stephen Cohen updates his critically acclaimed book with a discerning view of significant recent events in the region, particularly the devastating earthquake in Kashmir and its after affects. The quake killed over 70,000 people and left another 3 million homeless in one of the most remote, inhospitable parts of the world. Cohen observes how the catastrophic event has affected Pakistan's political, military, and economic structures, as well as its relationships with other countries. Praise for the previous edition: "A lucid, penetrating and brilliantly constructed book on the state and nation of Pakistan. Cohen, an old South Asia hand, brings to the fore all his knowledge and expertise of one of America's most important allies in the war against terror."¹Choice "Cohen's facts are indisputable, his logic cold and clear, and his omissions deliberate and meaningful."²Foreign Affairs "A singularly successful effort to explain Pakistan.... The intellectual power and rare insight with which the book breaks through the complexity of the subject rivals that of classics that have explained other societies posing a comparable challenge to understanding."³Middle East Journal "Cohen knows Pakistan well and his analysis is very perceptive."⁴Newsline (Karachi, Pakistan) "A personal, perceptive, and policy-oriented study of Pakistan. This is an important work, by a leading expert of South Asia."⁵Economic and Political Weekly (India) Book Review "[Cohen's] survey of how the country has developed and why it is at the crossroads it is now is most insightful and useful. A first class primer and more as I commence my work."⁶David B. Collins, high commissioner of Canada, Islamabad

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Customer Reviews

Cohen has the necessary qualifications and the background for this important work. His subject is critically important for the region, as also for several parts of the world. He treats the subject with neutrality and scholarly erudition, which is sometimes missing from Western works in these turbulent days. His central theme is contained in the title of the book: The Idea of Pakistan. He describes how the idea originated, how it developed and crystallised, and the challenges that Pakistan faces today. He ends the book with a presentation on the various possible scenarios / paths that Pakistan could take. His approach is analytical and comprehensive. The book is well-referenced and is easy to read. His writing style is neither pedantic nor casual. By the time you end the book, you will probably know a lot about Pakistan, all delivered through a systematic framework. However, it is also difficult to retain for long what you have read in this book. This may be due to the fact that the book reads like a project report commissioned by a Corporation or a Government. Cohen does not offer you any insights, as this would perhaps be considered a professorial misdemeanor for a work such as this! Another significant issue is that he treats Pakistan as a totally modern state, and analyses it from that perspective. As a result, he ignores the cultural, economic and political legacy of Islam and Moghuls which Pakistan inherited. This gives his book a very contemporary, current-affairish feel. In my view, his analysis of Pakistan also suffers due to this omission. The past continues to affect the present and the future. Therefore, any culture or nation that has such an ancient past can not be understood effectively, unless that past is also considered. Overall, a good book.

"The Idea of Pakistan" is a brilliant work of an accomplished analyst who is intimately knowledgeable of Pakistani culture, society and politics. The book is essentially a detailed thesis in strategic country analysis, written by a highly interested and talented scholar. It well covers the 'driving factors' behind Pakistan's past, present and future. Mr. Cohen's analysis of Pakistan Army, politicians, Islamists and nationalists is extremely convincing. At times he does go overboard with his fear of Islam in Pakistan and chance of country's nuclear weapons ending up in the wrong hands. Readers should discount these thoughts without becoming skeptical of the entire work; after all, Mr. Cohen is an American! What impressed me the most, however, was his way of highlighting the 'youth explosion' of the untrained and unemployed, that is to overtake Pakistan by 2015 the latest. I yet have to see a single Pakistani analyst put his/her finger on this decisive factor. Or perhaps I simply do not read enough. I am afraid this brilliant work will encounter more criticism than accolades, especially from within Pakistan. As Mr. Cohen points out, Pakistani education system

coupled with the state sponsored propaganda makes recipients suspicious of all foreigners (especially those with Jewish last names). Nevertheless, a relatively unbiased reader should see the shining merits of this work. For this single effort, Pakistani 'Establishment' should award Mr. Cohen with the highest civil honor available to foreigners. Unfortunately, the act will require the same 'vision' that Mr. Cohen correctly finds missing among this group. Regardless, he has my best wishes and many thanks. May Allah reward him!

An excellent account of history, politics, and personalities todo with Pakistan, this book provides indepth analysis of the state of Pakistan as we have it now. Being a Pakistani professional working overseas and a byproduct of the same society which Mr Cohen concentrates in this book, I read this book thoroughly, keenly and critically. Relating every thing with my life experience in the environment where I grew up, I can sense the depth of knowledge of the author who tells us about the political history of Pakistan. Somewhat I disagree with the author about the exaggerated threat of Islamic fundamentalism in the initial few chapters however in his last few chapters he admits this and put forward some sensible policy guidelines and suggestions for the US foreign policy. Considering the recent developments I can already see the US policy makers taking a serious note of the findings, and taking a few steps towards the right direction e.g. offering F-16 to both India and Pakistan, facilitating Kashmir dialoue, providing aid to restructure Pakistani educational system, and expressing desire to see Pakistan a democratic country. The problems which are described in this book have been pointed out and discussed in Pakistani press before, however in the absence of real democracy and people power they can't make a difference. This is a must read book if you are a Pakistani or Indian and love to see your countries as progressive and modern countries. My congratulations to Mr Cohen on this excellent effort.

When the British partitioned their India, the Muslims purported to believe in what was known as the "Two-nation theory:" the idea that the Muslims of the subcontinent, because of the sharp differences between them and the majority Hindu communities, constituted a separate nation, which would be founded in the Muslim-majority regions of India. Hence today, we have Pakistan: a country which barely functions on the civil or political level, somewhat riven by ethnic and regional divides, but supported by a very capable military, which is indeed the only really competent component of the Pakistani state. A veritable army with a country. Professor Cohen closely examines the historical background of this weak yet powerful nuclear-armed entity, with emphasis on the roles of the army, politics (highly corrupt and basically inept), Islam and how demographics (the country already has a

population of 200 million), education (weak and almost non-functional, except for the religious schools) and the economy (flat-lining, except for the textile sector) impinge on Pakistan's future. As America's foremost expert on South Asian security affairs, Cohen's assessment is not optimistic, and it is obvious as to why not. While slightly dated, this book will fill in any gaps you might have on the importance and weaknesses of this strategic country.

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