



PKSOI Book Review

Review of Pakistan's Drift into Extremism

by Hassan Abbas

East Gate Group, 2005 2005

ISBN-10: 9780765614971

ISBN-13: 978-0765614971

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Book Author Biography: Dr. Hassan Abbas is a Research Fellow at Harvard University's Belfer Center, a Fellow at the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding (ISPU) and an Associate of the Pakistan Security Research Unit (PSRU), University of Bradford, in the United Kingdom. He received his Ph.D. from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University. Prior to his present academic endeavors, he served in staff positions in the administrations of President General Pervez Musharaf and Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto in Pakistan. He also served as a senior police officer in the North West Frontier Province, bordering Afghanistan during 1997-8. In terms of his academic accomplishments, besides receiving a master's in political science from a leading Pakistani University, he spent a year in U.K. as a Britannia Chevening Scholar (1998-99), completed his LLM in international law, and remained on the editorial board of Human Rights Law Journal in the University of Nottingham. He completed his MALD degree from the Fletcher School, Tufts University in 2002. He has appeared as an analyst on CNN, MSNBC, and PBS as well as a political commentator on VOA and BBC.

Review of Book:

During the last decade, the U.S. and its allies continue to fight in Afghanistan. In recent years, they have focused their attention on finding viable solutions so they can reduce their military and civilian footprint. Civilian and military leaders understand Pakistan's crucial role in the success

of Afghanistan and comprehend the challenges of the border regions; however, various leaders have also expressed disappointment and are pressing Pakistan to do more. To understand Pakistan, one only needs to look at their history to appreciate the challenges, influences, and pressures they have experienced during their democracy. *Pakistan's Drift into Extremism* provides the historical foundation of Pakistan. Anyone who wants to understand the formation of the current Pakistan and the three key influencers, which have directly affected how it is governed, should read it. The thesis explains how Pakistan evolved to its current status. By gaining an understanding of the evolution of Pakistan, the author hopes the reader can gain a true appreciation and understanding of the people of Pakistan, its challenges and help to build a future for them. While the author has the book divided into eleven parts, the author makes three key themes throughout the book: Pakistan's drift began with its inception due to the amalgamation of those increased power by religious groups; the Army's operations and its own ascent into power; and outside influences by international partners, specifically the United States.

The first influence, which led Pakistan towards its drift, was **religious groups**. Woven throughout the book are examples of both political and military leaders who made allowances for these groups. Numerous reasons exist as to why the groups were sought out. Many historians point to the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan as the specific point in time when these groups rose to mainstream acceptance, while others explain that religious groups began exerting more power after the successful coup by General Zia ul-Haq and his subsequent eight-year rule which was the turning point. However, it was only over time that hard line religious groups - who barely had a foot in the door at the beginning of 1947- now have seats in parliament and subsequently, had Islam declared the country's religion, Islamic courts installed, and religious legislative demands (such as the blasphemy law punishable by death) incorporated into the constitution. Before Pakistan became an independent democratic nation, the founding father, Mohammed Ali Jinnah's vision was that of a secular nation that would serve as a safe haven for all. Soon after his death, religious groups' influence has been on the rise and continues today.

While religious groups and their leaders pushed their agenda, another equally influential group contributing directly to Pakistan's drift is its **military**.

The military has waged four wars on India including the Kargil operation as well as the civil war between East and West Pakistan resulting in the creation of Bangladesh as a separate nation. For over three-three years, as inept civilian leaders attempted to lead the nation, military leaders came in and out of power, replacing civilian control of the government. . . Each time the military achieved a successful coup, it remained in power longer, granting more privileges to its forces. These leaders over time have modified the constitution, divested the powers of the president, replaced government ministers with military leaders, overseen various higher education institutions and controlled foreign policy. These interventions have had a negative impact. The most obvious, that of being more powerful than civilian leaders; thus, effectively stripping away generations of effective civil control and domestic and foreign policies.

Religious groups and the military have had a direct linkage to the cause of Pakistan's drift; the third remaining major influence is the **United States**. Influential elite politicians, especially the religious leaders, have always disagreed with our lack of assistance in finding a solution to Kashmir, not coming to its aid during the East and West Pakistan war, and the perception of our preferential treatment toward India's nuclear program. However, the issue most recent in their minds is their sense of abandonment after the Soviet Union left Afghanistan. While the author provides examples of other international influencers, to include Saudi Arabia and China, the majority of biased blame lies at the doorstep of the U.S. Because these feelings have been around for over 50 years, even if the reader does understand the message the author is trying to convey, the mindset of the Pakistani towards the U.S. will never change. The reasons have a lot to do with the obsession of conspiracy theories, as well as laying the blame at outsiders instead of focusing on internal difficulties and shortcomings.

Pakistan's Drift into Extremism provides a condensed history of Pakistan and how the events throughout its history continue to hamper its growth. The country's drift towards extremism has existed from its inception. It seems destined to continue on this path. Though this book focused on three main influences, it does briefly touch on minor pressures that have contributed to the country's drift. While the author's main premise is that Allah, the Army, and America have been the cause of extremism, the author makes subtle points of other struggles within the country, thus, preventing it

from growth.

Authors Biography

Jenifer Breaux was assigned to the HQDA International Affairs Division as the Afghanistan and Pakistan Desk Officer in October 2010. In this capacity, she has had the opportunity to engage with delegations from Pakistan while assisting in the integration of Army International Programs and Security Cooperation activities for Afghanistan and Pakistan. She was assigned as the Plans Officer as part of the United Nations Mission in Liberia where she worked with contingents from over 40 nations. In her capacity, she assisted in the U.S. Team's advisors to the Liberian Minister of Defense, helping to create their National Military Strategy. She has a Masters Degree in Management from Texas A&M and a Bachelors of Science Degree in Biology from Bowling Green State University. She earned a Masters Degree in Strategic Studies from Command and General Staff College. She has attended numerous military courses including the Basic Strategic Arts Program (BSAP) at Carlisle Barracks, PA and Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, KS. She was commissioned as a Chemical Officer and now serves as a Strategist. She volunteered to be an AFPAK Hand and will soon start her language training in Urdu followed by a deployment to Pakistan.