

BOOK REVIEW

Rajiv Dogra, *Where Borders Bleed: An Insider's Account of Indo-Pak Relations* (Rupa Publications India Pvt. Ltd, 2015), 274.

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Where Borders Bleed: An Insider's Account of Indo-Pak Relations by Rajiv Dogra is a book on the complex nature of India-Pakistan relations. The writer is a former Indian Foreign Service officer and has served in as Council-General at the Indian Consulate in Pakistan from 1992-1994 .While tracing the history, the writer shares his experiences and opinions about Pakistani politicians. In contrast to the Indian leaders, such as Gandhi, Nehru and Indira Gandhi, whom he sees as epitomes of integrity and honesty, he portrays Pakistani leaders otherwise. Since independence, the writer argues that the Indian leaders, especially Nehru, due to their idealism tried their best to maintain peaceful relations with Pakistan. He emphasizes that India, on numerous occasions, made huge concessions to Pakistan and argues that Pakistan ,after taking concessions from India, always found new means to undermine Indian interests.

In the initial chapters of the book, the writer narrates the events that led to the partition of Indian Sub-continent. The writer interprets the partition as a collaboration of Mohammad Ali Jinnah and the British Empire because, according to him, it served their purpose. For Jinnah, Pakistan was an ultimate ambition. Whereas, by encouraging and facilitating the division, the British had hoped that Pakistan, being an Islamic country, would play an instrumental role in bringing the Muslim countries closer to the West, at the same time, keeping India in check. He blames the British for their haste in accepting the partition plan because, in all probability, they knew that Jinnah's health would not permit delay. This makes one wonder if history can be written without popular support. While making such arguments, the writer completely fails to realise the fact that a separate homeland for the Muslims of India was a popular demand and Muslims of this part of the United India had

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rendered supreme sacrifices to achieve this dream. The current discriminatory treatment of minorities and the growing intolerance is a testimony to the wisdom of creating a separate homeland for Muslims.

The writer holds the Muslim League and the Muslim National Guards responsible for the bloodshed that followed partition. He further writes that it was the terror unleashed by the Muslim National Guards that led to the spread of violence across India and the mass migration. There was more violence in West Punjab which continued over a longer period. Whereas violence in East Punjab was in reaction to what happened in West Punjab and other parts of Pakistan, particularly, Karachi. The writer claims that all the bloodshed could have been stopped, had the Muslim League given out a call for restraint like the Congress party did (p. 36). The writer then goes on to discuss whether Jinnah really wanted Islam to be a state religion or he was more inclined to make it a secular state.

The writer argues that during early years, it was that Britain's geostrategic interests would best be served through creation of Pakistan. The author also claims that the British policies favoured Pakistan on the Kashmir issue and that the Indus Water Treaty was one of the most "generous" agreements that any upper riparian country had signed with a lower riparian country in the world. The writer associates Indo-Pakistan war of 1965 to the results of 1962 Sino-India war which, according to him, encouraged Pakistan to raise the issue of Kashmir internationally. He writes further that President Ayub Khan's decline and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's coming to power besides Nehru's sudden death was also seen an opportunity by Pakistan. Contrary to Pakistan's expectations, India decided to cross the international border and took control of strategically important Haji Pir area in the Kargil Sector. The writer laments that whatever gains India made during the war were all lost on the table in Tashkent.

The writer also narrates the dismemberment of Pakistan in 1971 in his own words by absolving India of having any role in former East Pakistan and putting the entire blame on the government of Pakistan. It is contrary to facts as he admits in the book that the Mukti Bahini were "trained and equipped in a large measure by India" (p. 156). The negative role played by India in the dismemberment of Pakistan is not hidden

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from anyone. Modi's statement in Dhaka on June 7, 2015 clearly states, "establishment of Bangladesh was a desire of every Indian and that is why India's forces fought along with the Mukti Bahini, thus creating a new country". It is yet another testimony of how India conspired against Pakistan and exploited the rifts that existed between the two wings of Pakistan.

The writer gives an account of Bhutto's appointment of General Muhammad Xia ul Haq who later on assumed power by removing the former. The author blames Zia for religious extremism in Pakistani society along with increasing trend of narcotics and weapon culture, ignoring the fact that Pakistan has remained committed to maintain peace in the region during the era that he is mentioning.

While discussing Pakistan's relations with Afghanistan, the writer focuses on the issue of Durand Line, which is pointless as this is a settled issue and an internationally accepted border between Pakistan and Afghanistan. One of his arguments highlights his subjective approach in his study where he states that the threat to the West does not emanate from Afghanistan but from Pakistan and its nuclear arsenal. Here, once again, he fails to understand that no other country has been affected suffered the most by terrorism as Pakistan which has lost thousands of security personnel. It is interesting to note the author's criticism of the Indian leadership. He blames Prime Minister Manmohan Singh for the joint statement issued after his meeting with his Pakistani counterpart in the Egyptian city of Sharm el Sheikh for admitting India's role in creating unrest in Baluchistan, and said that the nuclear tests by India were unnecessary as it gave an excuse to Pakistan to formally join the nuclear club. The writer also discloses that the Indian government intends to erode Article 370 of the Constitution "little by little" to terminate the special status of the State of Jammu and Kashmir. Towards the end of the book, while examining different scenarios of the future of Indo-Pakistan relations, he concludes that in order to achieve peace in the region, both the countries have to forgive and forget the past.

The book lacks objectivity as it presents only one side of the story. Rather than a dispassionate analysis, the narrative reads more like official statements that most of the students of Indo-Pak history are

already aware of. The writer fails to bring any new facts that may add to our knowledge, and most of the arguments are far from reality and appear to be sheer propaganda against Pakistan.