

## BOOK REVIEW

**Stanley Wolpert, *India and Pakistan: Continued Conflict or Cooperation*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press Ltd, 2010.**

*India and Pakistan -- Continued Conflict or Cooperation* by Stanley Wolpert is an excellent account of the complex relationship that the two South Asian countries share. The book extensively deals with the issues that have bedevilled the relationship between India and Pakistan since their inception, particularly focusing on Kashmir, which is indeed the root cause of continued tension. Besides tracing the ancient history and the advent of different religions like Islam and Sikhism in the region, the book begins with discussing partition and Lord Mounbatten's agitation with the constant squabbling between the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League that culminated into him urging the British Prime Minister to advance Britain's withdrawal from India by a year. In less than ten weeks, Cyril Radcliffe, equipped with only a cursory understanding of the region, hastily presided over the partition of India's two largest multicultural provinces, Punjab and Bengal. The author discusses the factors that ultimately led Mounbatten to pressurise Radcliffe to award the Gurdaspur district of Punjab to India thus granting the country direct access to Kashmir. Similarly, the Muslim majority district of Ferozepur was strategically included in India on the insistence of Lord Mounbatten. The Partition of India was followed by intense violence and bloodshed that left a permanent scar on both nations; a wound so deep that even today they have not been able to overcome their hatred and mistrust for each other.

In the following chapter, the author goes back to 1148 C.E. when Kashmir was first mentioned in texts and traces the different phases of political development that the Valley underwent. A symbol of peace, the Kashmiri industry of rug making, shawl weaving and woodcarving was hailed the world over. However, the decline of the Mughal Empire ultimately brought Kashmir under the rule of the Sikh Maharajas and Dogra Rajputs. During partition, the fate of Kashmir was left to Maharaja Hari Singh who initially wished to keep Jammu and Kashmir independent. As tensions between Kashmiri peasants and their Hindu landlords escalated, Muslims fled to Pakistan where the tribal Pathans, inflamed at the plight of their Kashmiri brothers, took it upon themselves to liberate Kashmir thus sparking the first war between India and Pakistan. The writer provides a detailed account of the subsequent role played by the United Nations and its various representatives who strived to resolve the issue with mutual consensus but miserably failed. In the meantime, Pakistan's first

Prime Minister, Liaquat Ali Khan, was assassinated at the Pakistan Army headquarters in 1951. Since then, Pakistan's army established itself as the most powerful institution in the country. Two years later, Constituent Assembly elections were held in Kashmir and in 1957, the Assembly adopted its own state constitution proclaiming Jammu and Kashmir as an integral part of India. This equipped Indian leaders with a pretext to resist any call for a free and fair plebiscite supervised by the United Nations Commission on India and Pakistan.

By this time, both India and Pakistan were involved in the 'Cold War' that further complicated the situation. India's announcement that Kashmir was an integral part of the state did not go down well with the Pakistan army led by General Muhammad Ayub Khan who later became President of Pakistan. Ayub's efforts to reach an understanding with Nehru on the issue of Kashmir did not bear any fruit. The President consequently assigned his young foreign minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto to deal with the problem. Bhutto, in his effort to consolidate the friendship with China, agreed to handover some 2,000 square miles of Kashmir to the country that in turn infuriated Nehru who not only lodged a protest in the United Nations Security Council but also called off Indo-Pakistan talks before they were launched.

Growing tensions between the two countries resulted in the second war in 1965. The situation forced world leaders to intervene and their efforts finally resulted in a peace conference in Tashkent. Both leaders agreed that instead of fighting with each other, greater focus was required on eradicating poverty and disease. However, the young foreign minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto did not agree with the outcome of the Tashkent peace conference and viewed it as "betrayal of Pakistan." This marked the start of Bhutto's campaign for Presidency. The deteriorating situation in the country forced President Ayub to hand over power to General Agha Muhammad Yahya. U.S. pressure, general strikes in East Pakistan and social disorder in West Pakistan forced Yahya to transfer power to elected representatives as soon as possible thereby setting the stage for the darkest and most unfortunate time in Pakistan's history. Pakistan's first national elections were held in the backdrop of a hurricane in East Pakistan, which left millions dead. West Pakistan in response illustrated nothing more than shameful indifference to this calamity.

Providing context with regard to Pakistan's two wings, the author highlights that the Pakistan Resolution, which the Muslim League adopted in 1940, was actually drafted by a committee chaired by a popular Bengali leader A.K. Fazl-ul-Haq. The resolution proposed the creation of two independent states -- "North-Western and Eastern zones of India." The author further states that in all

probability what Haq had in mind would have included all of India's West Bengal and Calcutta in addition to East Pakistan. Since the creation of Pakistan, the two wings were at odds with each other due to cultural differences. With the passage of time, the gap between East and West Pakistan grew. This gap further widened in the 1970 elections when West Pakistanis voted for Bhutto whereas East Pakistanis felt that Shaikh Mujibur Rahman was the only hope. Forming a majority, Shaikh Mujibur Rahman should have been invited to form the government but his six-point agenda that virtually called for the independence of East Pakistan was not acceptable to West Pakistan. Subsequent events led to a third war between India and Pakistan, which resulted in the fall of Dhaka.

Six months later, Bhutto and Indira Gandhi, the Prime Minister of India, signed the Simla agreement. The two sides vowed to settle their disputes through peaceful means and the UN cease fire line in Kashmir was renamed the "Line of Control." Wolpert believes that Gandhi would have accepted the Line of Control as an international border had Pakistan agreed to such an idea. In 1977, Bhutto was replaced by General Zia ul Haq who assumed the responsibility of ridding the country of all evils. According to Wolpert, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan paved the way for the dictator to prolong his rule for eleven years.

Wolpert also discusses Afghanistan's impact on Indo-Pakistan relations and the dynamics of the "Great Game." In order to explain the Indian approach towards Afghanistan, the author makes an interesting reference to *Arthashastra*, India's oldest text, and quotes Kautilya who says that one's neighbour was always "the enemy" while one's "neighbour's neighbour" was always "the friend." The following years saw Pakistan training thousands of Mujahideen to fight against the Soviets with the help of the U.S. These Mujahideen soon became a source of concern for India given their potential to create trouble in Indian Kashmir. The book describes the creation of the Taliban and the policies adopted by the subsequent governments of Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif towards Afghanistan and Kashmir.

The following chapters deal with the development of the nuclear programme pursued by both countries and discuss how it escalated tensions from the dangers of conventional warfare to the potential of nuclear confrontation. The Kargil conflict was a nightmare not only for the people of South Asia but also the entire world. The events of 9/11 further complicated the situation. India offered its services to the U.S. in the war against terror but this offer was turned down and Pakistan once again found itself as a front line state in a war. India grew anxious as once again arms and ammunition poured into Pakistan. In addition, growing militancy in the country was a source of great concern for the world, as it feared

the possibility of the militants gaining control of Pakistan's nuclear weapons to use them against the West.

When the peace process started, the author believes that the agreement of a ceasefire along the Line of Control was a very positive development that paved the way for a "peace bus" to travel between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad in 2005. However, the Mumbai attacks sabotaged any efforts to maintain peace. Inside Pakistan, the security situation in Baluchistan continued to deteriorate whereas in other parts of the country, a lawyers' movement to remove General Pervez Musharraf was gaining momentum. In the meantime, Benazir Bhutto also returned home after she was granted immunity along with her husband. She was assassinated in 2007 and the following year the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), founded by her late father, formed the government.

Referring to President Zardari's efforts to prevent the Sharif brothers from entering politics, the author advises the political elite that it is unwise to ban political leaders from contesting elections, since undemocratic moves had proven counterproductive in the past. The best way to defeat opponents was to perform better and win popular support. The author also believes that the resolve shown by Chief Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry and the lawyers had revitalised the judicious spirit of Jinnah. Across the border, India saw communal violence escalate. After the desecration of the Babri mosque, around 2,000 Muslims were massacred during the Gujarat riots in what was quite possibly the worst example of communal violence in India.

Towards the end of the book, Wolpert tries to suggest resolutions to the Kashmir dispute. He emphasises that no permanent and peaceful solution can be achieved without taking the Kashmiris on board. He further suggests that the Line of Control should be accepted as an international border and that India should ensure Kashmir's provincial autonomy. Bolstered by support from the UN and SAARC countries, economic, education and cultural cooperation between India and Pakistan would help to usher in lasting peace in this region. The writer concludes that groups with a vested interest will strive to derail the peace process between India and Pakistan and only visionary leaders of these two countries can successfully guide the region towards a sustainable and peaceful future. It is high time that India and Pakistan defeat the evils of poverty, illiteracy and unemployment.

Written lucidly, the book provides a unique insight into the history of this region that continues to shape the political landscape even today. The book is

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highly recommended for anyone who wishes to understand the complex relationship between India and Pakistan in its historical perspective.

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