

## BOOK REVIEW

***The Kashmir Dispute: 1947-2012.* A.G. Noorani. Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2014. Pp. 550.**

The book under review, *The Kashmir Dispute: 1947-2012*, authored by A. G. Noorani, is an anthology of archival and contemporary documents, speeches, interviews, and personal notes of the author. The book strives to represent an accurate account of the Kashmir dispute. The author of this book is an eminent lawyer, historian and political expert, and has contributed numerous in-depth studies on the Kashmir issue. The culmination of his experience and analytical writings in this book is used to trace the political, diplomatic, and legal dynamics of this issue. To support his arguments, he has utilised a wide variety of documented and research writings in order to give a detailed historical background of the political realities of the dispute. Noorani magnifies the view of Kashmir's history, which is fundamentally related to the real question of the accession of Jammu and Kashmir. The current book is thematically divided into three main sections: "The Indo-Pak Dispute," "The US and Kashmir", and "The End Game".

Looking back and understanding the complexities inherent in the Kashmir issue, it is evident that the entry of new political players in this dispute from time to time has further convoluted the situation. In the course of this study, the author provides an overview of the role of political leadership in complicating the Kashmir issue. His arguments are based on significant documents, the speeches of Jawaharlal Nehru, the Jinnah Papers, the Cunningham Collection, Mathai's notes, and even official letters written by Nehru to Liaquat Ali Khan. Noorani is successful in presenting a real perspective of how the Kashmir issue was made even more complex by the British government in the pre-independence era, and how the Kashmiris are still suffering due to the roles played by subsequent Pakistani and Indian leaderships.

While determining the roles played by all the players, Noorani establishes that India and Pakistan had both launched a cold war against one another even while the seeds of their nascent existence were being sown. This was primarily because both the sides were restless to seize power, with each leadership trying to outdo the other, practicing deception and using armed force as an instrument of policy. Noorani's elaboration of the role of Indian leadership makes some powerful assertions, such as the fact that only a few were aware that India was first to invoke religious reasons in the formal proposal for Partition. This factor,

he stresses, explains Pakistan's pain at the accession of Kashmir to India. He mentions that despite the difficult national stances, this was a moment in time when Kashmiris were willing to accede to Pakistan. Unfortunately, Nehru and Patel, both staunch nationalists, had plotted Kashmir's accession to India even before the Partition. It is sad to recall the antipathy that Nehru had for Pakistan, regarding specifically the accession of Kashmir to Pakistan. The book highlights an excerpt from Nehru's letter to his sister Vijayalakshmi Pandit, which says, "For my part, I do not mind if Kashmir becomes more or less independent, but it would have been a cruel blow if it had become just an exploited part of Pakistan." This sense of animosity is reinforced in another letter from Nehru to Patel, dated 18 November 1950, which states: "...the fact remains that our major possible enemy is Pakistan."

The author gives credit to the persistence and tactical skills of Mohammad Ali Jinnah, which drove the independence of Pakistan. However, he criticises and blames Jinnah for his arrogance for considering that "Kashmir will fall into our lap like a ripe fruit." Noorani believes that flawed assumptions on Jinnah's part were one of the reasons that made Pakistan lose Kashmir. The study further argues that Jinnah refused the best option for resolution offered by Mountbatten on November 1, 1947. This offer entailed a "Jinnah plebiscite in all the three states- Kashmir, Junagarh and Hyderabad." However, Jinnah turned it down. Noorani comments, "So much for his commitment to democracy...He was more interested in the Nizam of Hyderabad." Noorani underscores that Jinnah, due to his immense arrogance, not only mishandled Sheikh Abdullah- who was not willing to accede to India- but also supported the tribal raid, which rendered the Indian army's entry into Kashmir on the request of Maharaja Hari Singh legitimate.

Stressing the role of the British government, the author indicates that the Radcliffe Award has also been criticised by the imperial power. The book quotes Mountbatten for regretting this award: "I mean Radcliffe let us in for an awful lot of trouble by making it possible for them to accede to India. If he had not made that award, the Maharaja would really have had no option but to join Pakistan." In the same vein, the book quotes Nehru for his promise on resolving the Kashmir dispute through a plebiscite. The most gripping part of Noorani's narrative emanates from a revelation of telegrams, addressed to the Pakistani and British prime ministers by Nehru, in which he assured the premiers that Indian troops will be withdrawn from Kashmir, and expressed a stance consistent with the idea of a "plebiscite". In a telegram to Liaquat Ali Khan, Nehru wrote, "In regard to accession also it has been made clear that this is subject to reference to people of the state and decision. Government of India has no desire to impose

any decision and will abide by people's wishes". Later, on several occasions, he made remarks about "our assurance that we shall withdraw our troops from Kashmir."

The diversion of words from actions is a most painful experience in the Kashmir dispute throughout history, which let peculiar and fatal decisions to be made, while completely ignoring the grievances of Kashmiris. Incidentally, facts show that a display of arrogant power was not absent, and the world indeed was not blind, as the Indian army was rarely out of sight, even in the remote villages. Noorani lucidly accounts for the fact that although the gun is gone, the rift persists. The people of Kashmir are not bereaved of souls; they have aspirations, feelings and memories of the wrongs done to them. It should be kept in mind that 2012 is not 1986- just one small incident can revive memories of the atrocities that set Kashmir aflame. This happened in 2009 and 2010, and can happen any time again. On the resolution of Kashmir in the wake of Kargil, Noorani emphasises and highlights Musharraf's four point formula. With reference to this plan and Manmohan's expected subsequent visit to Islamabad, Noorani argues that if such an exchange had materialised, the finalised deal would have given an "equal autonomy" to the people of Azad Kashmir and those of Indian-occupied Kashmir. Given the role of the UN, Noorani elaborates that the success of any working group or resolution has not been established by any means. Today, with the Kashmir issue recognised as a live political dispute between India and Pakistan, no one can contest India's legal sovereignty over Kashmir. In this situation, the author questions the significance and relevance of UN's earlier resolutions, and stresses that in this context none of them are relevant.

Noorani concludes the study by explaining that ever since this issue was brought to the fore, despite efforts for a negotiated solution, progress could not be made primarily due to a lack of agreement on preliminary matters. He reasons that despite their desperation, the people of Kashmir yearn for the dawn of peace and stability. A brief study of bilateral negotiations on the Kashmir dispute is thus undertaken in this book; it seeks to arrange the exercises carried out for a negotiated solution, in a context that draws attention to classified documents which were revealed only in the past decade. These mirror the potentialities and limitations of relevant policies made to date. It also points out the essential political preconditions for success in such exercises. If the only accepted mechanism for a resolution of the Kashmir dispute is plebiscite, which is also an inherent right of the Kashmiris, Noorani poses an important question: now that the logic of plebiscite is dead, what is the future status of this territory? He also emphasises that the people of Kashmir should be empowered by making the Line

of Control irrelevant, so that they can be responsible for their own destiny, and India and Pakistan should share Kashmir.

The book acknowledges that from the events that unfolded after the independence, both countries espoused inconsistent stands on the instruments of accession and plebiscite. Neither India nor Pakistan gave up its claim to Kashmir valley, and many a time this proved to be an opportunity lost. It appears that the difference in describing Kashmir as a “problem” or a “dispute” was but a trivial objection. The book unfolds some truths and lessons that should be accepted by all the parties involved in this issue. For Pakistan, India’s accession of Kashmir is horrendous; similarly for India, Pakistan’s accession of Kashmir is intolerable, as is the idea of a United Kashmir. No solution can be worked out without accepting these realities. Noorani’s proposition for the resolution of Kashmir issue is embedded in the impracticable hope of sharing Kashmir instead of fighting over it. Still, Noorani categorically states that in case the Kashmir resolution has no winners and only contended losers, it is plausible that the people of Kashmir would readily agree to being called “contended losers.” His inscription regarding Jinnah’s rejection of Mountbatten’s proposal on November 1947, and the account of Sheikh Abdullah’s resistance in acceding to India is controversial. However, the question of whether or not Pakistan acted as an aggressor has nothing to do with the inability to hold a free and impartial plebiscite.

This book is highly recommended for researchers working on the Kashmir issue, as references to significant archives and documents makes it is a commendable attempt at the compilation of a history of the dispute. It can also be recommended to students of world politics, Pakistan studies, Kashmir studies and conflict studies, as it qualifies for solid, scholarly research. Policy-makers should also look through this book, as it has made extensive use of classified documents, providing evidence that facilitates an understating of the complexity of the Kashmir issue.

Tooba Khurshid, Research Associate,  
*Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad.*

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