

***Putting Pakistan Right: Standpoints on the War on Terror,  
Energy, Transit Corridors & Economic Development.***  
**Moazzam Husain, USA, 2016.**

Muhammad Faisal\*

Pakistan has been confronting multifarious challenges during the past decade. Scholars have examined the ‘roots’ of Pakistan’s critical issues through a security-centric discourse, yet, comprehensive work, which explore the options to ‘put Pakistan right’ have been lacking. Moazaam Hussain, by putting together his writings on a variety of subjects in one place, has attempted to provide a policy-relevant analysis of the present woes to a common reader with an eye on the future.

The book, *Putting Pakistan Right: Standpoints on the War on Terror, Energy, Transit Corridors & Economic Development*, a collection of op-eds published in *DAWN* from 2008 to 2015, analyses the issues related to the on-going War on Terror (WoT) in the country, energy crisis, transit corridor and economic development. By tackling the inter-connected issues, the author has attempted to holistically look at the intersection of economic, security and governance challenges and presented policy options for improving the situation. It appears that the aim of the book is to stir a national conversation on the issues confronting Pakistan and exploring ways to address them.

The book covers the issues of far-reaching implications ranging from Pakistan’s on-going fight against militancy to the upheaval in the Middle East, since the Arab Spring and from regional politics in South Asia to Pakistan’s crippling energy crisis. Finally, from Pakistan, a continuous balance of payment short-fall induced economic crises to the emergence of transit corridors in the region, particularly, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Hussain has covered security and terrorism issues in an informed manner. He, rightly, notes that religious extremism is an existential threat to the country and needs to be tackled on war-footing. However, the discussion on the energy crisis showcases it to be his real forte

---

\* The book reviewer is Research Fellow at the China Pakistan Study Centre, Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad.

## Book Review

not a surprise given his extensive work in the field.

The book exhibits evolution of author's thought process over the years. For example, in 2009, he debated, if we, as a nation, really know the enemy we are fighting in the name of terrorism and also how effective are our policies in this regard. However, in 2014, after the Army Public School (APS) attack, he declared, the real fighting against terrorism was just commencing. Similarly, while discussing regional trade and transit corridors, he emphasised opening up trade with India, yet, when the CPEC project was announced, he termed it the most important stimulator of economic activities in Pakistan.

His broad recommendations in various op-eds include: viewing war against militancy as the existential fight with the goal to stabilise the internal security situation, undertaking wide-ranging madrassah reforms and reviewing the outlook of security planners towards Afghanistan. He, empathically, calls for trade and economic cooperation with India, as leveraging Pakistan's geographical position will connect the country with South and East Asia on one hand, and Central and West Asia, on the other. He stresses that through economic inter-dependence, Pakistan can build necessary trust for resolution of the disputes with India.

On resolving the energy crisis, he recommends institutional arrangement for the governance of the energy sector. He calls for a more inclusive and holistic approach for energy security, as opposed to current focus on the generation of more electricity and setting up of new power plants. He estimated that the country needs an investment of nearly US\$10 billion, as the starting point, to resolve the energy crisis and end the load-shedding.

On the economic governance front, he makes a case for privatisation of state-owned enterprises. He believes that by lessening the burden on the government for running these large corporations, an economic turnaround can be brought. Meanwhile, the government will also earn enormous capital from privatisation of these assets. For Pakistan International Airlines (PIA), he made a case for its restructuring and rationalisation to turn it into a profit-making entity.

At its core, Hussain presents a liberal vision for the country, which is internal peace, stability, market economy and peace with all the neighbours.

It is an ideal, with variations, that every country aspires to survive in the world. Yet, in the real world circumstances, history and events constrain the choices available to policymakers. External events, often dictate the internal policies. However, it is equally correct that every nation faces similar challenges. It is only by prioritising and choosing which battles to fight and which to leave for another day; only then a nation makes progress.

Nonetheless, the book, *Putting Pakistan Right* is a must read for the readers looking for the policy dilemmas and their solutions. Being a collection of op-eds, it is devoid of an in-depth theoretical discussion or a historical context of the evolution of challenges. Yet, it analyses the contemporary developments and presents comprehensible solutions.