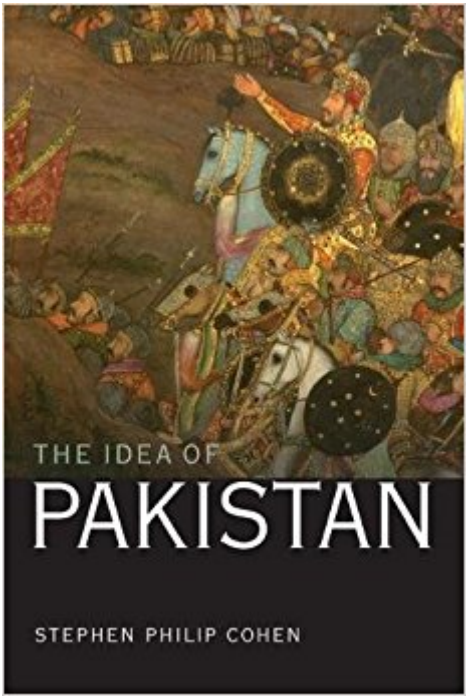
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The Idea Of Pakistan



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Synopsis

Stephen Cohen updates his critically acclaimed book with a discerning view of significant recent events in the region, particularly the devastating earthquake in Kashmir and its after affects. The quake killed over 70,000 people and left another 3 million homeless in one of the most remote, inhospitable parts of the world. Cohen observes how the catastrophic event has affected Pakistan’s political, military, and economic structures, as well as its relationships with other countries. Praise for the previous edition: "A lucid, penetrating and brilliantly constructed book on the state and nation of Pakistan. Cohen, an old South Asia hand, brings to the fore all his knowledge and expertise of one of America’s most important allies in the war against terror."—Choice "Cohen’s facts are indisputable, his logic cold and clear, and his omissions deliberate and meaningful."—Foreign Affairs "A singularly successful effort to explain Pakistan.... The intellectual power and rare insight with which the book breaks through the complexity of the subject rivals that of classics that have explained other societies posing a comparable challenge to understanding."—Middle East Journal "Cohen knows Pakistan well and his analysis is very perceptive."—Newsline (Karachi, Pakistan) "A personal, perceptive, and policy-oriented study of Pakistan. This is an important work, by a leading expert of South Asia."—Economic and Political Weekly (India) Book Review "[Cohen’s] survey of how the country has developed and why it is at the crossroads it is now is most insightful and useful. A first class primer and more as I commence my work."—David B. Collins, high commissioner of Canada, Islamabad

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Customer Reviews

Stephen Philip Cohen is a senior fellow in the Foreign Policy Studies program at the Brookings Institution. He is the author of classic books on India’s and Pakistan’s armies and the widely praised India: Emerging Power (Brookings, 2001). He was a member of the Policy Planning Staff of the U.S. Department of State and before joining Brookings was a faculty member at the University of Illinois.

When the British partitioned their India, the Muslims purported to believe in what was known as the "Two-nation theory:" the idea that the Muslims of the subcontinent, because of the sharp differences between them and the majority Hindu communities, constituted a separate nation, which would be founded in the Muslim-majority regions of India. Hence today, we have Pakistan: a country which barely functions on the civil or political level, somewhat riven by ethnic and regional divides, but supported by a very capable military, which is indeed the only really competent component of the Pakistani state. A veritable army with a country. Professor Cohen closely examines the historical background of this weak yet powerful nuclear-armed entity, with emphasis on the roles of the army, politics (highly corrupt and basically inept), Islam and how demographics (the country already has a population of 200 million), education (weak and almost non-functional, except for the religious schools) and the economy (flat-lining, except for the textile sector) impinge on Pakistan’s future. As America’s foremost expert on South Asian security affairs, Cohen’s assessment is not optimistic, and it is obvious as to why not. While slightly dated, this book will fill in any gaps you might have on the importance and weaknesses of this strategic country.

Very good book. It brings out the facts behind the creation of the "Islamic" state, Pakistan. It also emphasizes the diversity in demographics of Pakistan. It almost makes you wonder, how complex such sociology based problems are and how long it may take for peace to prevail in the Kashmir valley. Probably, not in my lifetime.

Recommended read along with other books about Pakistan.THREE CUPS OF TEAAMONG MUSLIMSWHERE THE INDUS IS YOUNGALIVE AND WELL IN PAKISTANTHE GREAT GAME

The literature review provided by the book is although quite exhaustive whilst at several places reader may find Mr. Stephen biased in his pessimistic illusions about the existence of Pakistan. I personally feel he did not want to hurt sales of his book India: Emerging Power. Hence the feelings of his potential Indian readers were considered more important than ground realities.Perspectives

on different sorts of ideas of Pakistan in different constituents of society is a marvelous approach. But then what's the point to have numerous references and incomplete information. It's worth mentioning that in Afghan war Pakistani human and other resources were used to make the Vietnam of Russia. Similarly Jinnah never wanted Pakistan until 1940. He was compelled to do so due to Nehru and Sardar Patel's political motives. And then what happened when Pakistan tried to resolve the Kashmir issue through the participation of international community?Pakistan is based on an Ideology and only 64 years old whereas the benchmark which this book has tried to set is of countries which have had more than 100 years of constitutional history. These same countries unlike Pakistan have never had a female Prime Minster or even stereotyped casting of votes based on colour or race until recent years.This book is not a recommendation for those who have less knowledge on the subject.

"The Idea of Pakistan" is a brilliant work of an accomplished analyst who is intimately knowledgeable of Pakistani culture, society and politics. The book is essentially a detailed thesis in strategic country analysis, written by a highly interested and talented scholar. It well covers the `driving factors' behind Pakistan's past, present and future.Mr. Cohen's analysis of Pakistan Army, politicians, Islamists and nationalists is extremely convincing. At times he does go overboard with his fear of Islam in Pakistan and chance of country's nuclear weapons ending up in the wrong hands. Readers should discount these thoughts without becoming skeptical of the entire work; after all, Mr. Cohen is an American!What impressed me the most, however, was his way of highlighting the `youth explosion' of the untrained and unemployed, that is to overtake Pakistan by 2015 the latest. I yet have to see a single Pakistani analyst put his/her finger on this decisive factor. Or perhaps I simply do not read enough.I am afraid this brilliant work will encounter more criticism than accolades, especially from within Pakistan. As Mr. Cohen points out, Pakistani education system coupled with the state sponsored propaganda makes recipients suspicious of all foreigners (especially those with Jewish last names). Nevertheless, a relatively unbiased reader should see the shining merits of this work.For this single effort, Pakistani `Establishment' should award Mr. Cohen with the highest civil honor available to foreigners. Unfortunately, the act will require the same `vision' that Mr. Cohen correctly finds missing among this group. Regardless, he has my best wishes and many thanks. May Allah reward him!

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