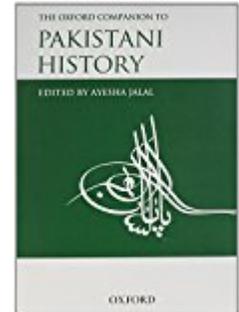


Ayesha Jalal, ed.. *The Oxford Companion to Pakistani History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012. xiv + 558 pp. \$75.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-19-547578-4.



Reviewed by Rohit Wanchoo

Published on H-Asia (June, 2015)

Commissioned by Sumit Guha (The University of Texas at Austin)

The Oxford Companion to Pakistani History, judiciously edited by Ayesha Jalal, is a valuable single-volume reference work for those embarking on a study of Pakistan. For scholars familiar with Pakistan, it provides insight into areas unrelated to their basic specialization, and for the undergraduate student, journalist, and intelligent layman, it offers useful background information. The subject index at the end of the volume and the asterisk marks within the text are useful for those seeking specific information or leads. The contributors to this volume have adopted an academic and liberal democratic standpoint and can claim to have as “unbiased” a stand as is possible in the social sciences.

The subject matter of Pakistani history is problematic as the editor notes in the preface. Several entries dealing with partition, Jinnah, the philosophy of Pakistan, and Islamization try to grapple with this issue. Jalal, for example, emphasizes that Jinnah’s insistence in the Lahore Resolution of 1940 that Muslims constituted a nation did not imply the demand for a separate state. She

recognizes that though the demand for Pakistan attracted many Muslims, “it embittered relations between the communities in Punjab and Bengal where the Hindu Mahasabha had an edge over the Congress” (pp. 253-254). Pakistan was “anathema for most non-Muslims in the Muslim majority provinces” (p. 254). Therefore, Jinnah’s plan for a confederal arrangement was undermined by communal polarization and the Congress preference for a strong center.

Alternative interpretations are also included under different headings. In the entry for Sardar Vallabhai Patel, Prachi Deshpande states that Patel convinced the Congress Party to accept the Cabinet Mission Plan of 1946 “to divide the subcontinent into a loose federation on religious lines” only to have the Muslim League reject the plan (p. 413). In other entries, M. R. Kazimi argues that Liaquat Ali Khan had written a “detailed objection” to the Cabinet Mission Plan of 1946 and that in *India Wins Freedom* (1988) Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was “glossing over” his own role during the final negotiations (pp. 285, 45). Whether

Jinnah used the Pakistan slogan as a bargaining counter or a demand for a separate country, “the result was the division of India on a religious basis” (Ishtiaq Ahmed, p. 358). Contradicting Jalal, Sharif Al-Mujahid asserts that Muslims had “progressively developed the will to live as a nation” and the Lahore Resolution expressed the will “to be united in a state” (p. 514). In the entry for the ideology of Pakistan, Abbas Rashid argues that the two-nation theory did not preclude “co-existence in one state” (p. 214). It was Liaquat Ali Khan who narrowed the broad-minded conception that Jinnah had enunciated in his August 1947 address to the Constituent Assembly.

Several entries regarding the military and judiciary reflect the pro-democracy perspective of the contributors. Mohammad Waseem observes that federalism in Pakistan was undermined by the integration of West Pakistan into One Unit in 1955. Democracy was weakened by *muhajirs* (migrants) from India and their unwillingness to accept the “principle of the rule of majority.” They were afraid that this principle would lead to the “rise of the Bengalis,” since they constituted 54 percent of the population of Pakistan (p. 125). The *muhajirs* turned to the military after their influence declined because the army shared similar ideas of a centralized state, Islamic values, and intolerance toward ethnic identities. Sarah Ansari writes that the Jeeye Sindh movement in 1973 demanded “Sindhi self-determination” under G. M. Syed, a former president of the Sindh Muslim League, who had supported the demand for Pakistan in 1943 (p. 505). In the 1980s, Mumtaz Ali Bhutto, cousin of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, proposed a “confederal constitutional framework” on the basis of the Lahore Resolution of 1940 (p. 247). In spite of separatist tendencies in Sindh, in a separate entry, Ansari notes that “all-Pakistan parties” like the Pakistan Peoples Party invariably fared well in elections (p. 479). According to Ahmed, non-Punjabi provinces sometimes demanded that the powers of the central government be restrict-

ed to “three subjects only, namely, defense, foreign affairs, and currency” (p. 167).

Language constitutes an important basis for centrifugal tendencies in Pakistan. The Sindhis resent the imposition of Urdu and the refusal of the *muhajirs* to learn their language. Tariq Rahman notes that *muhajirs* “supported the Punjabi-dominated centre which used Islam and Urdu to deny them their rights and exploit them economically” (p. 484). As the number of non-Sindhis in Karachi swelled, the *muhajirs* were able to successfully resist the imposition of Sindhi by the secondary school board in 2005 even though Sindhi had been made the language of the province in 1990. The Punjabis who constitute the majority of the ruling elite in Pakistan also support Urdu in order to “suppress ethnic language based centripetal forces that can lead to the fragmentation of the country” (p. 521). According to the census of Pakistan, fourteen million people have reported Saraiki as their language. This is an attempt by the intellectuals of southern Punjab, notes Rahman, to “emphasize similarities with the Sindhis while deemphasizing continuities with the Punjabis” (p. 457). Support for Saraiki constitutes protest against economic neglect and distribution of land to nonlocals. As in India, language issues are intimately connected with economic and political grievances.

While religion has been important in Pakistan from 1947 onward, Islamization only began with General Ziaul Haq. As Ahmed states, the Hudood Ordinance introduced punishments according to the Quran and Sunnah, the law of Evidence in 1984 reduced the value of a woman’s testimony in court to half that of a man, and the Shariat Courts in 1986 lowered the “legal position of women” further (p. 239). In an entry for culture adapted from a book by Jameel Jalibi, it is noted that unlike other nations Pakistan lacked conspicuous “common characteristics” at the national level (p. 108). An “inner contradiction” blocked the evolution of a unified culture in Pakistan. This

arose because Pakistan was “a homeland for Indian Muslims yet in denial of the Indo-Muslim past” (p. 109). In the philosophy of Pakistan entry, Javed Iqbal, the son of the poet Muhammad Iqbal, argues that the founding fathers of Pakistan were “convinced that the separation of these areas from India would resolve the socio-economic retardation of the Muslim populace.” They also tried to reconcile “traditional Islamic values with modern liberal ideas” (p. 417).

The diplomat, Tanveer Ahmad Khan, writes that the “international border became an epistemological barrier” between India and Pakistan (p. 219). He notes that a war broke out between the two countries in 1965 largely because India refused to hold a plebiscite in Kashmir—an observation that may appear too strong to many Indians. He also writes that Pakistan “sponsored a revolt in Indian-held Kashmir by infiltrating guerrillas in the region”—a statement that might not go down well in Pakistan (p. 221). Observing a “paradigm shift” in Indo-Pak relations, he expresses optimism about the future (p. 224). Ahmad Faruqi, a professor at Stanford University, explicitly states that Bhutto, as foreign minister, had proposed that irregular fighters be sent into Kashmir. President Ayub Khan only accepted this advice after a creditable performance by the Pakistani Army in April 1965. The Indian attack on Lahore during the war shocked Ayub because Bhutto had led him to believe that India could not “risk a war of unlimited duration.” Equally taken aback were the people of Pakistan who were “expecting an imminent victory over India” (p. 535).

The problem in East Pakistan, Abbas Rashid states, arose because the West Pakistan leadership disliked “the logic of the demographic arithmetic that gave a clear majority to East Pakistan” (p. 215). On the one hand, although the atrocities committed by the Pakistani Army and the role of the Mukti Bahini in Bangladesh are acknowledged in this volume, they are not dealt with at any length. On the other hand, the political and mili-

tary aspects of the 1971 crisis and war are dealt with head on. Bhutto created a crisis by demanding two prime ministers for the two wings of Pakistan after the Awami League of East Pakistan became the largest party with a clear majority after elections. Faruqi blames “elements” in the Pakistani Army for deliberately propping up Bhutto to counter the Awami League (p. 535). “The majority of East Pakistani population” came to support independence because of the atrocities and rapes committed by the Pakistani Army. When Yahya Khan “blundered” into attacking Indian air bases in the west, the Indian government got the “excuse” to launch “an invasion” of East Pakistan (p. 536).

As for the Kargil war of 1999, it was an attempt by the Pakistani Army to assert its role in foreign policy. It ended because the American president, Bill Clinton, persuaded Nawaz Sharif to withdraw from the Line of Control. This, writes Faruqi, “negated Pakistan’s assertions that it was not controlling the mujahidins and also exposed the direct involvement of the Pakistani Army.” It was “obvious” to the people of Pakistan that American pressure had led to the withdrawal by Pakistan. In the eyes of the world, Pakistanis were seen as “the aggressors.” It also deflected attention from the death of over fifty thousand people in Kashmir in the decade preceding Kargil (p. 271). Tanvir Ahmad Khan asserts that possibly Pakistan would have dropped its long-standing demand for a plebiscite in Kashmir “in return for a settlement based on autonomy and self-rule” for territories controlled by both India and Pakistan. This did not fructify because of “Indian reluctance to accept demilitarization of the disputed state,” which most Kashmiris and Pakistan regard as an essential precondition for a settlement (p. 174). Moonis Ahmar acknowledges that there is fear of “internal colonization” by Kashmiri Muslims among the people of Ladakh and the Northern Areas (p. 273). After initial measures to create goodwill, however, he proposes a “joint parliament of J&K” to help resolve the Kashmir dispute (p. 275).

All this is far removed from what the public or the politicians in India are willing to accept, so the problem remains unresolved.

No one can study Pakistan without a discussion of military rule, and there are several entries regarding this topic. The Doctrine of Necessity was first articulated by Justice Muhammad Munir in 1954 to justify the dissolution of the Pakistan Constituent Assembly by Governor-General Ghulam Mohammad. This doctrine states that “which is otherwise not lawful is made lawful by necessity” (p. 352). The very same Munir also criticized dogmatic Islam in his report on the 1953 anti-Ahmadi riots in Punjab. Extra-constitutional laws have been imposed in the country via Provisional Constitutional Order (PCO), the first time by General Ziaul Haq in 1981 and subsequently by General Pervez Musharraf in 2001 and 2007. When the 2007 PCO was declared illegal by the Supreme Court, it marked a “turning point in civil-military relations” (p. 427). Farooq Bajwa argues that the first time martial law was imposed—following anti-Ahmadi riots in 1953—it was seen as a “success” (p. 324). Ayub Khan’s dictatorship was milder than that of other military rulers and combined repression with reform. Ayub also consolidated support for his regime by selling millions of hectares of land to civil and military officers at low rates after imposing a ceiling on landownership.

On the whole, entries dealing with the economy and culture are not as detailed as those referring to political, legal, military, and foreign policy issues. There are several detailed surveys of the latter and many thumbnail sketches of personalities and parties. Assessing the impact of the Green Revolution, Akmal Hussain estimates that poor peasants lose one-third of their income “due to asymmetric markets and power structures at the local level” (p. 185). But such entries are too few. If a bibliography were included at the end, after the subject index, this volume could be made more user-friendly and useful. Alternatively, some texts

could be cited at the end of major entries dealing with key themes. Even in this age of Wikipedia, Google Search, and online journals, Jalal’s valuable introduction to Pakistan will be able to hold its own.

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Citation: Rohit Wanchoo. Review of Jalal, Ayesha, ed. *The Oxford Companion to Pakistani History*. H-Asia, H-Net Reviews. June, 2015.

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