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REVIEW AND VIEWS

THE IDEA OF PAKISTAN

Qadar Bakhsh Baloch[1]

Title: ***The Idea of Pakistan***

Author: ***Stephen Philip Cohen***

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Introduction

The book ***'The Idea of Pakistan'*** is an intelligently created and purposely articulated art of Stephen Cohen- an American leading expert of South Asia. 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). An American Jew who has been a member of the Policy Planning Staff of the U.S. Department of State during the administration of President Ronald Reagan and before joining Brookings for years taught political science at the University of Illinois. On finishing the reading of the book, with a feeling

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of depression and with out blaming to his Jewish background, I wondered that why the learned professor has underplayed the bright spots while adding a darker hue to the gray areas. Perhaps my depression emanates from my love to my motherland and optimistic vision about its future.

The book is a well planned follow-up of another prize-winning book: *India: Emerging Power* which dealt primarily with foreign policy. However, *The Idea of Pakistan* is a much more personally oriented look at the internal history, political dynamics, and external strategic affairs of Pakistan. *The Idea of Pakistan* presents a personal perspective of the author and unlike its title, says relatively too less about the history and roots of the idea of Pakistan. The major part of the study (seven out of total nine chapters) is of routine, but a well articulated and carefully manipulated view of Pakistan's past from its origin till the present military rule that has experienced uneven economic growth, political chaos, sectarian violence, and several crises with its much larger neighbor India including nuclear ones. Cohen's facts are questionable, his logic manipulative, and his omissions are deliberate and meaningful. However, last two chapters; seemingly present a view from the heart of the American empire, aiming to prescribe effective American policies, how Washington can best advance its interests in South Asia. His analytical dash towards Pakistan's futurology (chapter 8) outlines a range of scenarios for its future and that of its relationship with the United States. American options- the policy guidelines for America(chapter 9) is a master piece and well conceived climax of the book which attempts to contextualize America's current security interests and concerns in Pakistan and serves as policy-orientated study of Pakistan . This part not only discusses the present state of Pakistan and its likely future, but also amply examines American policy options. He tries to appraise that Pakistan is not only part of the solution but is also part of the problem and in "American

options in Pakistan" Cohen writes out a prescription of "American" medicine for Pakistan based on his wishful diagnosis.

The basic theme of the book is that the *Idea of Pakistan* has fallen short of its ideas and the biggest question today is how the idea of Pakistan will work. Instead of following the chronological order to describe the details of developments in Pakistan after the start with a brief history of Pakistan, Cohen then systematically examines aspects of the Pakistani state and society through different lenses (as indicated by chapter names)"The Army's Pakistan", "Political Pakistan", "Islamic Pakistan", "Regionalism and Separatism" demographic, educational and economic prospects, Pakistan's future and American options. Despite the title, most of the book is focused on the implementation of the idea rather than on the idea per se Cohen's book does not resolve the self created controversy about whether Pakistan was a good or bad idea. Regardless of a few oversights, the book is a very careful attempt to contextualize America's current security interests and concerns in Pakistan.

REVIEW

The book begins with historical overview of the ideas that led to the birth of an Islamic home for Indian Muslims in 1947, and then progresses in discussing how these ideas were implemented. Cohen seems confused and out of steps as he starts interpreting the idea of Pakistan (chapter-10 and purpose of the foundation of the Independent State of Pakistan, his one argument contradicts his second one. The author laid the foundation of his thesis by calling Jinnah a *"secular lawyer-politician"* (p.28) (*without citing any historic/ bibliographic reference to his claim),* for whom, "Pakistan would be a democratic, liberal, and just state (p.38). He succeeded in turning two 'nation theory' into political reality but failed to

build a consensus on the kind of state Pakistan was to become (p.29). He was the individual, most responsible for the merger of the idea of Pakistan with the State of Pakistan. Later, he calls Mohammad Ali Jinnah, an advocate of distinctive Muslim Indian identity, Pakistan's George Washington, the first world class political figure produced by Pakistan- by the idea, not the state (p.28). However, Cohen forgets to explain that a leader likes Jinnah, who is the product of *the Idea*, how can he be secular once the product is realized. Cohen contradicts his own thesis about the idea of Pakistan while acknowledging Iqbal's role. Iqbal believed, "Pakistan would not only solve India's Hindu-Muslim puzzle, it would awaken and recreate Islam". Iqbal's idea of Pakistan was based on *"an acute understanding that political power was essential to the higher ends of establishing God's law"*. "Iqbal supported Jinnah by turning the idea of separate Muslim homeland into a mass movement, drawing intellectuals, professional and community leaders into the fold"(p.30). On the next page, Cohen tries to conclude his views point without giving any rationales," Iqbal wrongly believed that the Islamic nature of a new Pakistan would give it inherent strength. In short, Cohen contends that there was confusion from the very beginning about the idea of Pakistan but refrains from passing his judgment on whether the idea was good or bad.

His statement "Jinnah's divisive rhetoric and acceptance of extralegal procedures suddenly gave to a vision of a democratic Pakistan" (p.42) is self conceived having no mention of even one extralegal procedure adopted by Jinnah. In order to support his claim about "secular Jinnah and his secular vision of Pakistan", Cohen writes, "while he (Jinnah) left no document outlining his plans for the new state, Jinnah had given several important addresses that constitute benchmarks in the history of both the state and the idea of Pakistan. The most remarkable aspect of these later

speeches was their secular character". I am really surprised that how a man like Cohen could fail to trace the true benchmark from Jinnah's addresses. One may help him, by mentioning just a few out of so many passages indicative of his secular or Islamic vision.

> *"It is extremely difficult to appreciate why our Hindu friends fail to understand the real nature of Islam and Hinduism. They are not religions in the strict sense of the word but are, in fact, different and distinct social orders… The Hindus and Muslims belong to two different religious philosophies, social customs, and literatures. They belong to two different civilizations which are based mainly on conflicting ideas and conceptions. Their aspects of life and our life are different." (Quaid*-e-Azam - Presidential Address in 1940)

In his speech at the Frontier Muslim League Conference on November 21, 1945, he said:

> *"We have to fight a double edged battle, one against the Hindu Congress and other against the British Imperialists, both of them being capitalists. The Muslims demand Pakistan where they could rule according to their own code of life and according to their own cultural growth, traditions and Islamic laws".*

In a message to NWFP Muslim Students Federation in April 1943, he said:

> *"You have asked me to give a message. What message can I give you? We have got the great message in the Quran for our guidance and enlightenment."*

In an Eid message to the nation in 1945, he said:

"… Everyone except those who are ignorant knows that the Quran is the general code of the Muslims. A religious, social, civil, commercial, military, judicial, criminal and penal code; it regulates everything from the ceremonies of religion to those of daily life; from the salvation of the soul to the health of the body; from the rights of all, to those of each individual; from morality to crime; from punishment here to that in the life to come, and our Prophet (S) has enjoined on us that every Muslim should possess a copy of the Holy Quran and be his own priest. Therefore, Islam is not confined to the spiritual tenets and doctrines and rituals and ceremonies. It is a complete code regulating the whole Muslim society in every department of life, collectively and individually."

In his presidential address delivered to the annual session of the All India Muslim League, in Delhi on April 24, 1943, he said:

"Here I should like to give a warning to the landlords and capitalists who have flourished at our expense by a system which is so vicious, which is so wicked and which makes them so selfish that it is difficult to reason with them. The exploitation of the masses has gone into their blood. They have forgotten the lessons of Islam. Greed and selfishness have made these people subordinate to the interests of others in order to fatten themselves. It is true we are not in power today. You go anywhere to the countryside. I have visited villages. There are millions and millions of our people who hardly get one meal a day. Is this civilization? Is this the aim of Pakistan? Do you visualize that millions have been exploited and cannot get one meal a day? If this is the idea of Pakistan, I would not have it. If they are wise, they will have to adjust themselves to the new modern conditions of life. If they don't, God help them, we shall not help them."

Cohen goes on to discuss how the state of Pakistan came to be ruled by an oligarchy composed of the army, the civil bureaucracy and the landowning class (called feudal lords in Pakistan). Kashmir and the mission of "liberating" it from Hindu oppression has been a recurrent theme in the narrative of the idea of Pakistan by first-generation Pakistanis. The army has incorporated this theme into Pakistan's military doctrine as a guerrilla movement sponsored to bleed India. As a cause, this movement serves to channel extremists and the victims of domestic oppression, but its strategic consequences have not been thought through.

According to the author, the military is only one (the most important) component of the" moderate oligarchy" or" establishment" of about 500 individuals which runs Pakistan and "whose membership depends on adherence to a broad set of values and norms, including a particular understanding of the idea of Pakistan" (Page 69). Cohen opines that "the establishment' is an informal political system that comprises of the senior ranks of the military, the civil service, the judiciary, and other elites possessing a common set of beliefs that:

- India has to be countered at every move and issue militarily, thereby giving the military a primary role in Pakistan.
- The national interest is understood only by the army, not by civilian politicians.
- Nuclear weapons have obliged Pakistan with security and status
- Kashmir is the unfinished part of the partition plan,

- Large-scale social reforms such as land redistribution are unacceptable
- Verbal Muslim nationalism is desirable but Islamism is not
- The armed forces are considered a "model" and democracy is seen as good only as long as it does not interfere with the governance of the elite.
- Washington should not be trusted but should be taken maximum advantage of.
- The media need to be on a tight leash
- Existence of radical Islamic extremists could be a useful tool for state policy
- "something or someone will always come to Pakistan's rescue because of its location" (Page 270)

Then he explores the role of the Pakistan Army and core belief of the officers' corps and their strategic vision for Pakistan, the prospects for their Islamization, and their relationship with the population. According to a popular but rather humorless Pakistani joke, *"all countries have their own armies, but (in case of Pakistan), an army has its own country."* Indeed, even when civilian governments have nominally been in charge in Pakistan, there has never been much doubt about who actually takes the shots. In addition to holding political power, the Pakistani army controls vast commercial and industrial interests and owns massive rural and urban properties. As Cohen remarks, "*regardless of what may be desirable, the army will continue to set the limits on what is possible in Pakistan* (p.97)." *For all these reasons, the army despite its self-perceived guardianship*

role is part of the problem of Pakistan's instability. 'Pakistan's army', Cohen holds, is strong enough to prevent state failure, but not imaginative enough to impose the changes that might transform the state' (p 274). Indeed in one possible future scenario, he maintains that the current socially liberal military backed regime may be replaced by a military-Islamist alliance (p 289). He describes Pakistan Army, evolved through four generations as follow:

- *The British Generation* comprised of group of officers who were trained in Sand Hurst (UK) or Indian Military Academy (IMA) at Dehra Dun. This generation of officers left an important legacy by shaping the orientation of the Army as they founded, commanded and trained the major institutions of the Pakistan Army. The experiences of partition, India's occupation of Kashmir, her refusal to deliver Pakistan's allotted share of military stores, its forceful absorption of the princely state of Hyderabad, and many other examples of duplicity- became part of the Pakistan's army's legacy. However, they continued seeing their British predecessor as their role models and possibility of turning the Pakistan Army into an "Islamic Army" was never seriously considered. (pp.99-102)

- *The American Generation:* This generation emerged with the Pakistan's joining with America in SEATO and CENTO (Baghdad Pact-1955) till its breakup with the connivance of America in 1971. American weapon system, their training programs, their military doctrine and resultant socio-interaction with them, influenced and shaped new orientation in thinking as well as working style of Pakistan army (pp.102-106).

- *The Pakistani Generation, 1972-82:* Those who joined Pakistan Army in the post-Bangladesh years were most purely" Pakistani" of all,

representing wider society in class origin, and less exposure to American influence. Their professional careers and world outlook were shaped by the 1971 debacle and believed that United States had let Pakistan down. Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto who was over thrown in 1977 initiated secret nuclear program, which was intended to bring balance of power of the army by giving Pakistan a new way of offsetting India's military superiority. Zia's long tenure as chief of the army staff and president of the Pakistan inevitably shaped the offices corps in three respects: his emphasis on Islam, stress on the revival and legitimization of irregular and covert warfare, and acceleration of the nuclear program, bringing it under army direction (pp.108-109). Cohen blames that Zia's over emphasis on Islam encouraged Islamic zealotry and cites September 1995 coup led by Major General Zahir ul Islam Abbasi in support of his argument (p.108). *I may remind Dr. Cohen here that General Abbasi is the product of so called "American Generation", which witnessed American double standards and their dual face in their training institutions.*

- *The Next Generation:* Cohen duplicates the same old "Pakistani generation" in this category, which entered in army in the 1970s, belonging mostly to the middle class and joined the army simply to improve their standard of living. Distinction between the public and the private domains is fast disappearing, as senior officers misuse official transport, manpower, and regimental resources and facilities. For junior officers, there is greater latitude to do the same, and the incidents of disregard for civilian laws are increasing.

Cohen argues that rather than seeing the army only in a short-term perspective and as a bulwark against 'radical Islam', the US should, "insist as a condition of aid that the Pakistan government allow the mainstream political parties (such as Pakistan People's Party and the Pakistan Muslim League) to function freely." "The goal", he continues,

“should be a spectrum of moderate parties, Islamic and secular that are willing to operate within a parliamentary and peaceful context, and are tolerant of sectarian and other minorities” (p 317). Educated Pakistanis would concur wholeheartedly with the vision of a tolerant and plural democratic order. Such bald exhortations for external manipulation of the affairs of a sovereign country are nevertheless likely to further increase the anti-American sentiment in Pakistan which so exercises the author. He remains realistic that a ‘staged’ military withdrawal will be a slow process (p 160). It will depend on much improved relations with India so that Pakistan is no longer a ‘garrison’ state (p 278). Even in the circumstances of the removal of the strategic threat posed by India, the army may already be too entrenched to contemplate a withdrawal (p 279).

Cohen provides an extensive critique of militarism in Pakistan and how it has adversely affected its national security. Pakistani generals steadfastly hold that *“What is good for the army is good for Pakistan.”* He further says, "The army lacks the capability to fix Pakistan's problems, but it is unwilling to give other state institutions and the political system the opportunity to learn and grow; its tolerance for the mistakes of others is very low, yet its own performance, when in power, has usually dug the hole deeper." Cohen points out how Western leaders and academics have often ended up supporting military dictators. For example, he mentions how the noted Harvard professor Samuel Huntington called Ayub Khan a Solon, after the great Athenian lawgiver. General Zia was widely praised in the West for being a bulwark of freedom against the Soviet Union. Much of the same is true of the standing that Musharraf enjoys in the West. Cohen argues that Musharraf's international backers "see him as a wise and modern leader, a secular man who is not afraid to support the West or to offer peace to India and a man who can hold back the onrush of Islamic extremists". Yet, he concedes, "no serious Pakistani analyst

sees Musharraf in these terms". They see him as claiming to act in an undefined and abstract "national interest" and "taking people into confidence" only after having made the key decisions. Cohen aptly comments that Musharraf believes that no civilian can understand the national interest. One wishes he had analyzed this point further. Does it imply that no civilian can be trusted with its protection? If so, that might suggest something more sinister, that in Musharraf's view, the term "national interest" is a synonymous to the military's interest.

Cohen credits US military action in Afghanistan for enabling the religious alliance of the Mutahidda Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) to make a breakthrough in the 2002 national and provincial elections (p 187). Cohen importantly links the state's failures to provide basic healthcare and education with the rise of Islamist organizations supported by proliferation of 'madaris' (religious schools), filled these gaps (pp 184, 315). He opines that mosque schools ill-equip their students for modern life and in some instances they are breeding grounds of sectarian hatred and jihadi sentiment. Cohen pins more hope in external support for rebuilding of Pakistan's education system (pp 314-15).

The author terms Pakistan one of the world's most ethnically and linguistically complex states (Probably not more than the U.S). Destabilized political environment, he contends, is caused by repeated military interventions and domination of the Punjab. What this really means in a statistical sense by Cohen, when any reader considers this excerpt: "The focal point of Punjabi domination was and remains the army. Seventy-five per cent of the army is drawn from three Punjab districts (Rawalpindi, Jhelum, and Campbellpur) and two adjacent districts in the NWFP (Kohat and Mardan). These districts contain only nine per cent of Pakistan's male population. The officer corps is drawn from a wider, more urban base, but is still predominately Punjabi, often

the sons of junior commissioned officers. Pakistan's air force and navy are drawn from a much wider base." I am afraid that he intended to air the flames between various ethnic groups, and overplayed separatist tendencies in the country to protect the Army's role as the only efficiently functioning institution.

Perhaps the only chapter of this book, which presents real mosaic, is 'on Pakistan's demographic future'. Pakistan's population is growing by 2.9 per cent annually, which is the highest in the world and, if this trend continues, by 2015, Pakistan's population will be 219 million, 225 million by 2025 and 295 million by 2050(p.232). This high population growth rate, coupled with massive urbanization and large youth ratio, can result in massive unemployment and politico-economic challenge for the successive governments of Pakistan. The author criticizes that the local government plan is a deliberate effort to weaken provincial power and to create a class of notables who owe their position to the army. Successive spells of martial laws have weakened political institutions and undermined civil society. High military expenditures (p 255) plus low state revenue and no tax on agricultural incomes (p 258) have been at the cost of investment in human capital. In his views, the reason for the increase in the Fauji Foundation's assets from 2.06 billion to 9.8 billion rupees in 2005 is not that it was profitable but owing to the fact that the foundation received government subsidies and preferential contracts.

In short, Cohen identifies demographic pressures along with political institutional weaknesses, educational imbalances and economic structural problems as hampering Pakistan's longer term stability. In his view, besides, the growing appeal of radical Islam, the most glaring threats Pakistan faces are the booming population and the deteriorating education system as over 1 million Pakistani children now attend madrassas where the syllabus needs drastic revision.

Cohen puts forth his guesses on where the country is headed in the future. He examines several broad scenarios over the next five to eight years, including the most extreme, a catastrophic war with India, and the most benign, an enlightened democracy at peace with its neighbors, as well as other scenarios and sub-scenarios in between. For each, he appreciates its environment, identifies key drivers and likelihoods. The book lays out six scenarios of the near-to-mid-term future:

(1) Continuation of the status quo, which involves rule by an establishment-dominated oligarchic system,

(2) Liberal, secular democracy,

(3) Soft authoritarianism,

(4) An Islamist state,

(5) Divided Pakistan and

(6) Postwar Pakistan.

In all scenarios Cohen appears to be pessimistic about Pakistan, although he feels it is unlikely that Pakistan will break up, become an Islamic state or a normal democracy. *While the scenarios are interesting in themselves but represent mostly the author's wishful thinking as methodology for developing them is never laid out clearly.*

The final chapter talks about recommendations on what America should do to prevent Pakistan from sliding into one of the worse scenarios. Before writing Pakistan off as a hopelessly failed state that its critics believe it to be, Washington may have one last opportunity to ensure that this troubled state will not become America's biggest foreign policy problem in the last half of this decade (p.328). Cohen's prescription for Pakistan regarding what America should do are: reviving the economy, ensuring army is kept away from radical Islam, encourage democracy

with army's pronounced role, reforming education through secularization of curriculum, secularized education to replace madrassas; and "shape" Pakistan's environment as per American and Indian suiting.

- He suggests that the US adopt a carrot and stick policy with Pakistan in which the Pakistan is awarded with military aid if it continues to be seen as being faithful in implementing American suggestions about education reform in Pakistan (Page 315).

- He recommends the continuation of the present joint military training program, which brings Pakistanis to the United States and allows Americans to visit Pakistan. Cohen believes that this relatively inexpensive program should be preserved and expanded to other non-military subjects, because it allows the United States access to the Pakistan army and its young upcoming officers. Cohen says any backsliding on progress should be taken as a "danger sign", on which American support should be withdrawn and more punitive measures taken against Pakistan.

- He believes that India should "make the kind of concessions that Musharraf can use to get the military and others to "bite the bitter pill" of a status quo settlement for Kashmir" (Page 323).

- He reminds US policy officials that Musharraf is not irreplaceable and was he to be forced out of office; his replacement would be a like-minded general.

- Cohen concludes his book by saying, "Americans must remember that although Pakistan will pursue its own vital interests as it sees them, an opportunity may exist to

incrementally shape Pakistan's future in a direction that is compatible with important American interests.

Seen in the historic canvas of last three years, Cohen's only first suggestion seems materializing. Where, Pakistan has demonstrated a faithful client to American interests in even bombing own people, secularizing curriculum on the name of reformation and ordering 'no stay for foreign students' in madaris. In turn America seems willing to supply F-16 as a show piece (not mentioning of the Nuclear Deal with India). However, there is ever widening gulf between Cohen's view of Musharraf and the Indian perspective despite Musharaf's well praised flexibility on Kashmir. Cohen's suggestions have been rejected out rightly by Indians.

Views/Comments

Baseless Quotes: A review would be incomplete without some brilliant "quotable quotes" that could reflect the author's perception about Pakistan and Pakistanis:

- "The bomb confirmed the sought-for image of Pakistan as combining Islam and technology, never mind that most of the technology was either stolen from a European nuclear facility or provided by China" (Page 80).

- "Pakistan's army is strong enough to prevent state failure, but not imaginative enough to impose the changes that might transform the state" (Page 274).

- "Pakistani officials like Pakistani beggars, become alert when they see Americans approaching" (Page 327).

- "Pakistan now negotiates with its allies and friends by pointing a gun to its own head" (Page 270).

Oversights: There are number of oversights in the book, which indicate the shallowness of the research process:

- Dur-ul-Uloom Haqqania is in NWFP and not in Balochistan (p.182).

- SSG stands for 'Special Service Group' of the Pakistan Army and not the Special Security Group and it was very much there in the 1965 and 1971 wars. Therefore, it is wrong to say that the SSG saw battle first in Baluchistan (p.220).

- The only Baloch prime minister of Pakistan was Mir Zafarullah Khan Jamali (p.227). Bulkah Sher Mazari, the caretaker prime minister, and Farooq Leghari ex–president of Pakistan, are also Baloch. They hail from Mazari and Leghari clans of Baloch tribe setteled in Koh-e- Sulaiman range of D.G.Khan.

- President Musharraf served two terms in the SSG, first as a Captain and was mostly based at Cherat (SSG HQ) and then as a major, this time at the Attock Fort.

- There is no university in Pakistan named after A. Q Khan (p.80), however few private schools and colleges are named in his recognition of hero ship.

- Without citing any source the author claims that at the National Institute of Pakistan Studies of the Quaid-e-Azam University, eighteen of thirty graduate students had counterfeit degrees. (p. 244).

- Cohen did not comment on the freedom of the press in Pakistan under military rule. According to a report put forward by Reporters without Borders, last year the press in Pakistan was ranked in the 90th the bottom. A year prior, it had ranked in the 85th. This group has labeled Musharraf a "predator of press freedom", alleging that he uses the military intelligence agencies to "watch, intimidate, manipulate or arrest both Pakistani and foreign journalists who annoy him". It also mentions that an investigative journalist was fired from his newspaper in June 2003 because Musharraf accused him of tarnishing the country's image.

Unanswered Questions: The book with nearly 400 pages left many important questions unanswered.

- While discussing the ups and downs in US-Pakistani relations, Cohen does not explore the reasons that the tide has always been at a flood when a Republican administration has been in power in the White House and a military dictatorship in Islamabad. It cannot just be a coincidence, since it has happened at least four times in the past half-century. Ayub's friendship with Eisenhower, Yahya Khan's good ties with Richard Nixon is referred as promising relations between the two countries. President Carter, who stopped arms shipments to Bhutto's government but relations improved dramatically under Reagan. Musharraf's who was even not considered for joint press conference by the Clinton during his few hours visit to Pakistan, was awarded with the title of "personal friend" by the George W Bush.

- Cohen does not acknowledge US interference in its political development as a main cause of democracy failure in Pakistan.

- Much of Cohen's analysis does not appear to be based on primary sources at micro level, such as interviews, surveys and polls. Furthermore the sourcing of material is not appropriate and rational one. In one instance, he uses a paper by Daniel Pipes to define an Islamist state. This is like citing Sulman Rushdi or Samuel Huntington as an authority on Islam and Ahmad Faraz or Shoukat Aziz or Manmohan Singh as an authority on Judaism.