

## Book Review

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**Pakistan's Enduring Challenges** by **C Christine Fair and Sarah J Watson** (eds).  
Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press,  
2015. 310pp., £45.50 (h/b), ISBN 9780812246902

Pakistan has remained the subject of constant speculation in the international community, perceptibly fluttering between positions of a pariah to that of a paladin before and after the events of 11 September 2001. Given its support for state-sponsored terror groups active in the territories of its neighbours, its tumultuous history of civil military relations, fractured economy, rise of religious fundamentalism and the constant threat of non-state actors to minorities at home as well as to the country's military and nuclear facilities, it is often characterised as a failing state.

This misnomer has done much disservice to Pakistan and the understanding of its geostrategic predicament, and this book edited by Christine Fair and Sarah Watson lays out the fundamental arguments upon which an in-depth understanding of Pakistan's security challenges can be built, not only to better understand why Pakistan is where it is today, but also to act as a guide to its foreseeable future.

The central arguments presented in the book oscillate between the context of an overnight reversal of American foreign policy towards Pakistan after the 9/11 attacks and the subtext of American withdrawal from Afghanistan, which casts a long shadow on the relative stability that Pakistan has seen domestically in the last decade. The 11 chapters, presented under three categories – security issues, domestic political and economic issues, and challenges related to foreign relations – are

successful in introducing the wide gamut of factors that impact on security conditions inside and around Pakistan.

The arguments presented in these chapters are theoretically sound and empirically strong and are sure to leave the reader sufficiently informed and intrigued for further research. It is worth mentioning that the editors have made an effort to understand the strategic cultural aspects of religious fundamentalism and of its militant offspring operating within Pakistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan-administered Kashmir and Indian-administered Kashmir.

The American withdrawal from Afghanistan threatens to create a vacuum which could engulf the relative stability seen in Pakistan and South Asia in general. Where Pakistan goes from here depends not only on its own understanding of its security predicament, but also on how successfully others around the world and especially in its neighbourhood are able to understand the quagmire of variables, both domestic and international, which constitute its insecurities. A geopolitically insecure, democratically weak, internally turbulent, religiously radicalised, institutionally corrupt and internationally ostracised Pakistan is in no one's favour.

This book enriches one's analysis by succinctly portraying Pakistan's security complex in an objective and non-partisan manner and it avoids intellectually misinformed conclusions about Pakistan.

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