



The Struggle for Pakistan: A Muslim Homeland and Global Politics

Ayesha Jalal

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Established as a homeland for India's Muslims in 1947, Pakistan has had a tumultuous history that has unfolded in the vortex of dire regional and international conflicts. Beset by assassinations, coups, ethnic strife, and the breakaway of Bangladesh in 1971, the country has found itself too often contending with religious extremism and military authoritarianism. Now, in a probing biography of her native land amid the throes of global change, Ayesha Jalal provides an insider's assessment of how this nuclear-armed Muslim nation evolved as it did and explains why its dilemmas weigh so heavily on prospects for peace in the region.

Attentive to Pakistan's external relations as well as its internal dynamics, Jalal shows how the vexed relationship with the United States, border disputes with Afghanistan in the west, and the conflict with India over Kashmir in the east have played into the hands of the generals who purchased security at the cost of strong democratic institutions. Combined with domestic ethnic and regional rivalries, such pressures have created a siege mentality that encourages military domination and militant extremism.

Since 9/11, the country has been widely portrayed as a breeding ground for Islamic terrorism. Assessing the threats posed by Al-Qaeda and the Taliban as American troops withdraw from Afghanistan, Jalal contends that the battle for Pakistan's soul is far from over. Her definitive biography reveals how pluralism and democracy continue to struggle for a place in this Muslim homeland, where they are so essential to its future.

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