

**Book Review**  
**By**  
**Sajid Aziz**

**The Pakistan Paradox: *Instability and Resilience* Written by  
*Christophe Jaffrelot* (Haryana:  
Random House India, 2014) 688**

The book '*The Pakistan Paradox: Instability and Resilience*' is authored by Christophe Jaffrelot, a professor of Indian politics and sociology at King India's Institute (London). His other publications include *The Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics, 1925 to 1990s* and *India's Silent Revolution*.

This book is divided into three parts, each dealing with a specific theme or paradox as the author calls it. The element of paradox- instability and resilience- is a constant theme and courses throughout the book. The three paradoxes that guide this work are: 1) a narrow definition of Pakistan that is religiously informed and linguistically identified with only one language, Urdu and the countervailing ethnic forces that assert their distinct identities 2) the dialectics of centripetal and centrifugal forces and 3) the role of Islam and its multiple interpretations by different schools of thought.

In first part of the book titled, "Nationalism without a nation-*and* even without a people?" the author traces the historical roots of the centralizing ideology of Pakistani state in the twilight of Muslim power in mid-nineteenth century in the undivided Indian sub-continent. The seed of Muslim separatism, smithed in the collective psyche of Muslim elite in UP, would bloom into the flower of Aligarh Movement, to Muslim League and its 'communal ideology.' Jaffrelot argues state-formation in Pakistan had certain historical streaks and continuum which could possibly be traced back to Pakistan Movement and its ideology. This centralizing ideology, with its foundation on Islam and Urdu, has been a source of considerable resentment among certain ethnic groups and has promoted 'the poison of provincialism.' Though he does allude, though sparingly, to the imperative of a unifying force against the threat of a stronger neighbor, which was always reluctant to 'accept' the independence of Pakistan.

In part two, 'Neither Democracy and Nor Autocracy,' the author discusses the dialectics of centrifugal and centripetal forces at play in Pakistan and the failure of both democrats and autocrats to help forge a level of political and social cohesion and pursue policies that would mitigate economics of exclusion and weaken politics of cliques. The tension between the central government and federating units has been a recurrent

theme in the chequered history of Pakistan. Though, these negatives are contrasted with the positive developments in the form of a revitalized judiciary, burgeoning media industry and NGOs, that are discussed under the rubric of 'opposition forces.'

The last part of the book dilates on the distinction between Islam as a territorial ideology and a political religion. The former is historically reflected in the ideology of Syed Ahmed Khan and in the politics of Jinnah and Muslim League, whereas latter was visible in the religious movement of Muslims in Sub-continent which resisted the notion of a separate state for Muslims and considered Muslims to be part of a trans-national *umma*, not confined by territorial boundaries. The author considers that territorial ideology contains in its core the element of 'identity marker' rather than any religious exclusivity. A state governed by territorial ideology of Islam recognizes equal rights for minorities, but the same cannot be said of political religion. In Pakistan the notion of territorial ideology had the upper hand until the ascendance of Zia-ul-Haq in late 70s. Though, Bhutto's manipulation of religion for political purposes had also contributed to it.

This book is a fine contribution to the existing discourse on Pakistan, but there is plenty of ground to question and challenge some assumptions and qualify certain premises in this book. For example, the writer traces roots of 'Movement for Muslim Separatism' in Indian Sub-continent in the socio-ethnic origins of Muslim elite and their interests, in the process undermining the role of significant developments that increased the perception of a beleaguered minority among Muslims. It is worth bearing in mind that Muslim separatism was preceded by Hindu communalism and fanned by major political parties representing majority Hindus; Jinnah and Muslim League were products of a certain political era which saw important developments in this regard. Moreover, it is not unusual that movements in third-world countries are initiated by a small educated elite and intelligentsia, commonly referred to as an elite. Ben Bellas of Algeria, Ernesto Gueveras of Argentina, Nehrus of India, all emerged from a background of well to do socio-economic and higher education. Thus, attributing the genesis of a movement to a social elite (true in case of Muslim League) does not in itself discredit it, when not treated in Gramscian terms.

Christophe Jaffrelot finds a connection between authoritarianism in Pakistan and history of Muslim movement in India. It, no doubt, contains a grain of truth, but it should be seriously qualified to factor in other significant aspects: the imperative of unifying ideology and need for security against a stronger neighbor, the necessity of streamlined administrative structure to deal with a staggering refugee crisis.

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Given the title of the book '*Pakistan Paradox: Instability and Resilience*,' the reader would expect a greater appreciation, if not a relative equilibrium, of the contrasting forces of instability and resilience, but accounts of resilience are not discussed in any detail and aspects pertaining to societal and political dynamism are just dumped in the realm of 'fortuitous.'

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