

## BOOK REVIEWS

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### **Shadi Hamid, *Islamic Exceptionalism: How the Struggle over Islam is Reshaping the World* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2016), 320.**

What is Islam? What is the relation, if any, between terms such as 'Islamist', 'Fundamentalist', and 'Muslim brotherhood' amongst others? Where do Muslims see the role of Islam in their respective societies? Is Islam, in fact, 'exceptional' in nature or is it like any other religion?

These are some of the questions that acclaimed author and Brookings Institute scholar, Shadi Hamid tries to answer in his book, *Islamic Exceptionalism: How the Struggle over Islam is Reshaping the World*. The book explores Islam and how it relates to political thought, especially with reference to the Middle East. It argues that democracy has failed to gain control in the Middle East as people elect 'Islamists' into power.

The author studies three representations of political association in Islamist movements - the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Ennahda Movement in Tunisia, and the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in Turkey. He evaluates how each movement achieves balance between religion and state, and discovers inadequacies in each case. Where the state fails to accommodate space for religion in public life, tensions can give way to tenacious forms of Islamist movements. Thus, he argues, Islam needs to have a more important role in shaping the political community across the Muslim world (p.30). He goes on to say that Islam is, in fact, 'exceptional' compared to other major world religions because Muslims view politics, theocracy and violence in a different way than Christianity, Judaism or other non-religious people globally. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), the founder of Islam was not just a religious leader, he was also a statesman. His governance revolved around politics, law, and religion, with the latter at the forefront of public life. On the other hand, in Christianity's early development, governance was not important to Jesus as he was a rebel against the political order. Therefore, there can be no comparison between Islamic *Shari'ah* law and Christian belief as the former is both spiritual and political in nature making the notion of separation of mosque and state a contradiction against the very essence of

Islam (p.63). Consequently, he maintains that Islamic reformation cannot be projected to resemble Christianity. Islam is distinct in how it relates to politics, it is different.

Giving a historical perspective, Hamid writes that for centuries, the Muslim world shunned Christian West as they enjoyed the accomplishments and successes of Islamic empires, until these were overcome by the Western world's progressively secular colonial influences (p.70). The end of the Ottoman Empire in the early Twentieth Century triggered political deterioration that had, in fact, started a lot earlier. According to Hamid, the differences concerning what the Muslims once were and where they are now is at the epicentre of the fury and embarrassment motivating political violence across the Middle East (p. 12). Before the decline of the Ottoman Empire, Islam was a basis for harmony and consent. In the pre-modern era in the Middle East, no one fought over secularism or Islamism. But once challenged by secularism, Islamism felt the need to deliberately emphasise its Islamic individuality in the framework of nation-state, and to find a way to introduce it into political discourse. This made Islamism a point of dispute in the politics of Middle East that continues even today (p.199).

Hamid vehemently discards the notion that all countries will eventually move from revolution towards rational enlightenment and non-theocratic government (p.10). Islam is spreading fast and in some Muslim majority countries like Malaysia and Indonesia, a huge percentage of the population are of the opinion that Islamic law should be endorsed by the state (p.25). He further states that in the West, there is a significant lack of cultural belonging and religious identity within society that drives young Muslims who grow there to feel drawn towards martyrdom. Nonetheless, this neither calls for an expulsion of democracy nor explains *jihadism*. Instead, it simply gives out a message of uncertainty regarding the commitment of secular democracy and the West's obsession with its imposition on other cultures and countries. He maintains that one can be an 'Islamist', that is, someone who believes that Islam is compatible with democracy without being an extremist - a believer of a totalitarian, hateful and savage version of Islam propagated by terrorist organisations like the Islamic State (IS). He contends that if the Middle East wants democracy, then its inhabitants and the Western world must understand Islamist

political parties and recognise that most people in the region want Islamists in control of the state.

Yet, the author negates the impression that Islam is in conflict with modernity. In doing so, he traces the roots of Islamism in the region. He argues that Islamism, as a political ideology developed in the late Nineteenth and Twentieth Century as a response to secularism. Islamists like Hassan al-Banna, the forefather of the Muslim Brotherhood, tried to bring together Islamic law with the modern nation-state (p.6) and tried to make sense of why the Muslim social order was deteriorating while the European social order was on the rise. The writer claims that because the movement was a reaction to modernity, it is in itself integrally modern. Rather than discarding modernism, the Salafist movement of the early Twentieth Century acknowledged it by rising 'to the challenges of secularization, European colonialism, and the creeping authoritarianism of the late Ottoman era' (p.21).

Hamid also appears to look down on the negotiations that Islamists have made. For instance, in Tunisia, he states that the Islamist party was concerned more about its existence than its principles when it evacuated power after elections and supported the secular Nidaa Tounes party in 2014. He calls this an admonitory account, how political concessions could challenge the Islamic distinctiveness of Islamists (p.210). His view reflects that the Islamists should not compromise and by doing so, would challenge the Islamic identity of Muslims. Islamists see society and not the state as the instrument of social change (p.268) and in order to bring about this change in their countries from the roots, they need to let Political Islam play its due role in bringing about change.

While many readers may not agree with the conclusions drawn and proposed by Shadi Hamid, nevertheless, this book is a valuable contribution to the discussion on Islam and its profound impact on the politics of today's world. One of the key successes of this book has been the author's ability to navigate through the existing discourse on both sides of the pole without picking a side. Amongst other assertions, one of the key takeaways from the book is that the current situation in the Middle East is complex and its impact is country-specific and varies from time-to-time. He goes on to warn the West that expecting Islamists to adopt core values of Western liberalism is a lost cause which may alienate Muslims

leading them to join the ranks of IS. While most of the book concentrates on the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Ennahda Movement in Tunisia and AKP in Turkey, it fails to examine the greatest case study in reconciling democracy and Islam – Pakistan. Most of the issues discussed in this book can be found in Pakistan’s political landscape such as Salafism, radical Islamism, history of dictatorship and a functioning democracy. Despite these omissions, this book is a necessary read for students of religion and Political Science.

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**Naeem A. Salik, *Learning to Live with the Bomb Pakistan: 1998 – 2016* (Karachi: Oxford University Press), 352.**

Whenever there's a scientific or technological invention, people learn – later – to incorporate it within their social lives. While cars, computers, televisions, airplanes etc. were developed first, the social and legal frameworks to regulate and govern their use were developed later. In the case of computers, the entire world is still working to define its acceptable and unacceptable uses. Nuclear weapons are no different. While the P-5 developed nuclear weapons in the mid-40s, Pakistan demonstrated the same capability about half a century later.

Pakistan's nuclear programme was shrouded in secrecy until it was compelled to test its nuclear weapons in 1998. That was for, now obvious, security and geopolitical considerations. But about a decade or so later, there are several accounts that describe Pakistan's nuclear journey. One such account – and the first one coming from an ex-Army officer – was penned by Brigadier (R) Naeem A. Salik titled *The Genesis of South Asian Nuclear Deterrence: Pakistan's Perspective* (2009). Now, he has published his second book *Learning to Live with the Bomb Pakistan: 1998 – 2016*.

While one can find a plethora of literature available on contemporary nuclear arms control, non-proliferation, strategy, force development, command and control, and safety and security issues relating to Pakistan in the form of research papers and opinion pieces, this book discusses all these issues in a holistic manner and fills the critical gaps and assumes the title of probably the first such book to do so in one place. Dr Salik gives candid and objective perspective on these issues that is different and fresh as compared to Pakistan's official positions. His criticism appears to be driven from his knowledge and vast experience and reflects his concerns about the contemporary security situation.

One idea touched upon by the author, however in a cursory manner, is that India and Pakistan should work towards a joint mechanism to ensure that there is no cross-border terrorism on either side. In return,

India could verifiably abandon the Cold Start Doctrine (CSD) that threatens to lead to a war that could result in nuclear exchange. There have been scores of articles and books (by Pakistani authors) highlighting how the CSD and the use of battlefield weapons (by non-Pakistani authors) threaten regional peace. However, what is often lacking (and ignored) are the actual causes behind the development and formulation of such doctrines and responses by either side. It is India's CSD that caused Pakistan to develop these weapons, and arguably, it is terrorist activities inside India which provide justification for its CSD. Thus, if there is no terrorism, India would not need CSD and Pakistan would not require these short-range and low-yield nuclear weapons.

Not all terrorism inside India originates from Pakistan as is apparent from the incident in Pathankot Airbase, where Pakistan-based militants were blamed but no credible evidence was provided. On the contrary, responsibility was claimed by the indigenous Kashmir-based United Jihad Council. Similarly, Pakistan was blamed for the Uri attacks, but the two guides accused of facilitating the attacks were found innocent and released recently. There have also been instances where Pakistan has offered joint investigation or provision of evidence from India.

The author has not discussed his proposal in detail, but assessment of such a proposal will ultimately highlight that with changed nuclear realities, Pakistan and India must resolve their outstanding issues with use or threat to use force as that would entail the risk of using nuclear weapons. Resolution of Kashmir issue in this regard could reduce such prospects.

The author identifies the area of nuclear strategy where Pakistan might have undergone unlearning. However, studying the reasons given by Dr Salik and others, it is not difficult to identify that the 'unlearning' was caused by developments beyond Pakistan's control. It is heartening that Pakistan has learnt lessons from several conflicts and crises.

While Pakistan's nuclear programme is often cited as a subject where there is lack of information owing to secrecy, this book fills a critical gap. It shows that there is already enough information available in the open source that needs to be put into context. Nonetheless, the book would have not been as impressive had the author not had the experience of working at Pakistan's nuclear establishment. The book is a must read

for academics, journalists, and students working in the field of security and nuclear studies. The simple language makes it comprehensible for anyone with limited knowledge of technology and international politics.

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**Javid Husain, *Pakistan and a World in Disorder: A Grand Strategy for the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Palgrave, 2016), 222.**

Pakistan's foreign policy is 'out of sync with the ground realities at regional and global level' as 'it failed the tests of a sound foreign policy, and, therefore, it called for a fundamental review' (p. 1) writes Javid Husain in his book *Pakistan and a World in Disorder: A Grand Strategy for the Twenty-First Century*. Husain is a former Pakistani diplomat who has served various important positions around the world, including as the ambassador of Pakistan to the Netherlands, the Republic of Korea and Iran.

In the book, the author highlights historical foreign policy failures of Pakistan, and starts the discussion with two of the most debated theories of international relations pertaining to the post-Cold War world order: *Clash of Civilisations* and *End of History* by Samuel P. Huntington and Francis Fukuyama, respectively. According to him, the stipulated mottoes of the post-Cold War period, such as equality and peace remained unfulfilled by the international community wherein United States (US) remained the chief culprit for her blatant disregard of the principles of international law and the United Nations. International politics, in this regard, remained engulfed with the conundrums of realpolitik as major powers could not establish peace and the menace of war overshadowed world affairs, the invasion of Iraq being an example.

The author claims that instead of invasions or war, realisation of balance of power is the need of the hour for mutual progress and for the establishment of peace. Unfortunately, the US continues to remain unchecked; while emerging power China grows stronger with consistent economic growth. Such a trend is likely to lead to conflict between the two because the US is likely to do everything at its disposal to tackle China's rise and to resist its role in world affairs.

Husain, moreover, critically evaluates the faultlines of Pakistan's regional foreign policy by analysing her relations with neighbours, including China, India, Afghanistan and Iran. Discussing the case of



China with the authority of his diplomatic experience, the author argues that maintaining long-term Sino-Pak relations is of utmost importance for Pakistan. The author considers the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) critical for Pakistan's future as it will enable the country to stand in the comity of nations by augmenting its economic growth and regional connectivity. The author also advises Pakistan's policy-makers to benefit from the growth of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) by focusing on its relations with China for its economic and military influence.

The future of Indo-Pak relation is very confusing, the author reflects in the subsequent chapter. Outlining the traditional narrative, however, he fails to provide any substantial policy directions for ameliorating relations between the two historical adversaries. According to him, any kind of cooperation between India and Pakistan is not possible because of lingering disputes and enmity. What Pakistan should do, the author proffers, is to formulate such policies, which are essential for maximising the prospects of peace, stability and interests of Pakistan in the region. However, the author is far too pessimistic when he claims that cooperation between the two is impossible and Pakistan should not worry about the future of the South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC) because the convergence of geopolitical and geoeconomic dynamics can bring both states on the negotiating table for mutual development and that is the rational way forward.

Most developed states have had to let go of their mutual rivalries and focus on their socio-economic development. Pakistan should bear in mind that India is consistently gaining the status of a regional major power with its increase in military spending as a result of economic growth; therefore, it is in Pakistan's best interest to expand the scope of its India-centric foreign policy. For this purpose, political harmony and economic prosperity is essential to tackle India-led isolation of Pakistan in the region and beyond. To this end, Pakistan needs balanced relations with China, Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Russia to counter India and focus on regional cooperation under other avenues such as Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), if cooperation under SAARC does not work out.

The author argues that Pakistan's foreign policy towards Iran and Afghanistan remains moribund. Instead of maintaining a balanced relationship, Pakistan's leadership developed a hostile situation vis-à-vis the Taliban regime which resulted in the creation of space for India in Afghanistan as well as in Iran to promote its ulterior motives. The author agrees that Pakistan's cooperation with the US in its War on Terror was essential; nevertheless, Pakistan could have also considered taking Iran into confidence and even let her cooperate to promote peace in Afghanistan. As a result of US invasion in Afghanistan, Pakistan not only suffered huge economic loss, but also had to pay a heavy human price, as well being seen as a dangerous place, isolating the country diplomatically.

Ambassador (R) Javid Husain, in his well-articulated and referenced arguments suggests that Pakistan should strengthen herself internally. While he recommends that the government should keep on supporting initiatives and efforts for the Afghan peace process, economic, security and national interests should be the utmost priority while formulating foreign policy. Technological advancements and strengthening democracy are essential pre-requisites for a state to stand in the comity of nations in this century. In international relations, in this regard, there are no permanent friends or enemies, only permanent interests. This is why Pakistan should only focus on her national interests, while dealing with other countries in the neighbourhood and beyond.

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**Hong Liu, *The Chinese Strategic Mind* (New York: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2016), 224.**

China's rise as a big power makes one wonder how the Chinese mind works and how it views the world. It is commonly assumed that Chinese cultural norms significantly influence their strategic thinking. However, the Chinese strategic mindset is different from the West. A few works in English have already appeared describing the role of culture on China's strategic thinking about military and governance affairs.

On the basis of literature, Hong Liu, a Chinese expert at the Business School of Manchester University, UK, recently published his book *The Chinese Strategic Mind* by examining a number of cases across many disciplines. The author explores the interplay between Chinese language, their idiosyncrasies and Chinese cultural traits to see how they influence decision-making processes in different situations. He writes that the reservoir of Chinese strategic thinking is enriched by the contribution made by its thinkers such as Confucius, Lu Shang, Sun Tzu, Zhuge Liang, Liu Bowen, and modern leaders like Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping, and other political and business leaders (p.6).

China was the world's largest economy until 1840 but by 1978, it was regarded as one of the poorest countries in the world. Economic reforms initiated by Deng Xiaoping in 1978 helped China become the fastest growing economies (p.7). His approaches to economic development were efficacious, integrating Chinese ideologies with Western theories and practices. The author reflects that had there been no Deng Xiaoping or Mao Zedong, the People's Republic of China would not have existed the way it does now.

According to Liu, in conducting foreign policy, Mao Zedong followed Sun Tsu and principles of Daoism rather than Russian Communist leader Vladimir Lenin as noted by former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger (p.7). Mao Zedong's strategic thoughts are relevant to present day China's business arena (p.3). He was an ingenious strategist. The work under review primarily focuses on his strategic thought and approaches as a symbol of the Chinese strategic mind. He writes that foreign thinking did

not seem to be working on Chinese soil – Chinese affairs had to be dealt with by Chinese thinking as was followed by Mao Zedong (p. 10).

The author points out that the country's development was seen through the Chinese perspective, rather than through a Western prism (p. 5) because the two are far too dissimilar. Many Chinese business tycoons rose from humble backgrounds who worked as junior engineers in the Army and in small companies as foremen. For example, Ren Zhengfei, the founder of Huawei Technologies Co. Ltd, Xu Jingren, founder of the Yangtze River Pharmaceutical Group (YRPG), Liu Chuanzhi, founder of Lenovo, and Zhang Ruimin who established the Haier Group, are just few examples of hundreds of such entrepreneurs. All of them were influenced by classical Chinese strategic, political, and economic thinking and the modern philosophy of Mao Zedong.

There is lack of understanding about a number of issues between China and the United States. Liu explains that the Korean War (1950-53) was a classic case based on misunderstandings and miscalculations between the two nations. According to him, China's strategic thinking was not properly read by Americans during this war (p.16). General Douglas MacArthur miscalculated that China would not interfere in Korea (Ibid.). For Mao Zedong, the US was re-entering civil war in China, and was ready to confront a more powerful enemy (p.17). In an interview to an American journalist in 1946, Mao said:

The atom bomb is a paper tiger which the US reactionaries use to scare people. It looks terrible, but in fact it isn't. Of course, the atom bomb is a weapon of mass slaughter, but the outcome of a war is decided by the people, not by one or two new types of weapon (pp.16 & 18).

Liu is of the view that behind every successful company, there is a strategy that works developed through formal analysis, trial and error, intuition, or even pure luck (pp.52-77). He discusses Chinese military strategist Sun Tsu and writes that it is essential to understand the meaning and objective of the other party. He also throws light on the 'language-thought relationship' as writings influence human thought patterns and readers perceive different worlds in a given situation (pp.78-126). Liu

argues in chapter 5 that people mistrust each other because they do not know each other well enough or because they know each other too well. In the China-West case, the former assumption seems true.

Chapter 6 is devoted to Mao Zedong as a strategist who fought a civil war, won the class struggle for Chinese people, and introduced a cultural revolution to equalise China's social system. The last chapter discusses Huawei as a study of China's business culture. Founded in 1987, Huawei is a 'true Chinese successful company', Liu maintains. He argues that the factors that have driven Huawei's success over the past two decades have manifested strong Chinese traditions and characteristics as enshrined in Confuciusian values. Huawei is an exceptional case where Ren Zhengfei combined Western management approaches with Chinese ones to create a formidable Chinese high-tech opponent. Ren is an admirer of Mao (pp. 176-197).

This book truly represents Chinese thinking and is a comprehensive reflection of the Chinese strategic mindset. It is well-researched given its reliance on classical and modern Chinese literature. It will be useful for strategic decision-makers in multiple disciplines of Social Sciences.

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