

in committing grave acts of violence against India. She also unequivocally condemns the presence of terror outfits inside Pakistan and censures frequent holding of brazen militant rallies under the watch of the Pakistani state (p. 212).

What could be considered unconventional but rather pleasing turn in the India section is that apart from quintessentially mentioning the Kashmir issue, the section on India extensively alludes to Tarar's innate fondness of Indian Bollywood megastar, Amitabh Bachchan. The author passionately describes herself as a diehard Bachchan fan and her obsession and praise for his work in movies during his decades-spanning career. Besides an unabashed admiration for Bachchan, Tarar also warmly reminisces about her travel to New Delhi.

There is little doubt that contemporary literature on Pakistan is overwhelmed by excessive focus on geopolitics. With the country's key geographical location as the bedrock and resultant crucial ties with powerful countries like the United States and China, contemporary narratives, intentionally or unintentionally, have ensconced important aspects and challenges that beset Pakistan as a nation. At times when Pakistan is being incrementally perceived as a country that provides sanctuary to terrorist groups, be it to serve its strategic objectives vis-à-vis India or its wider geopolitical ambitions, it is quite essential that narratives such as this are written and disseminated more often. Such non-security centric works have the ability to refresh popular perceptions on Pakistan—a country doomed as failed and unstable.

On a critical note, structurally the book could appear disjointed and, at times, abrupt to the reader. This is probably because the narration follows a journalistic pattern/tradition of storytelling. Despite this, it is not as difficult to gather the significant strands running under the entire account. The language is lucid and certain sections are engaging. The work deserves some credit as a collection of experiences and travails that ordinary people in Pakistan contend with and their tryst with tough sometimes harsh realities of the times. It must also be applauded as an attempt to reflect upon the social ills that ail Pakistan's society, for instance highlighting a deeply patriarchal social order that has reached unimaginable proportions witnessed in a spate of honour killings and a pervasive practice of continued suppression of women.

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Pakistan's Tortuous Political History

S Samuel C Rajiv

BORN TO BE HANGED: POLITICAL BIOGRAPHY OF ZULFIKAR ALI BHUTTO

By Syeda Hameed
Rupa Publications, New Delhi, 2017, pp. 337, ₹500.00

SPECIAL STAR: BENAZIR BHUTTO'S STORY

By Syeda Abida Hussain
Oxford University Press, Karachi, 2017, pp. 140, ₹999.00

The blood-strewn saga of the Bhutto clan exemplifies the tortuous political history of Pakistan. The books under review are political biographies of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and his equally illustrious daughter, Benazir Bhutto, by an Indian and a Pakistani author respectively. Benazir became Pakistan's as well as the Muslim world's first female Prime Minister at the dramatically young age of 35 in 1988, within a decade after the brutal hanging of her father in 1979. In both cases, buoyant political journeys were cut short by tragic deaths during the time when military dictatorships held sway over Pakistan.

The authors bring attention to the varied hues of the complex subjects and the complicated times they lived in. Syeda Hameed though could be guilty of being uncritical in her reading especially of the foreign policy of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (ZAB), the first democratically elected President of Pakistan. Hameed bases most of her work, which took close to two decades to finish, on the insights and research material provided to her by ZAB's long-time political associate and co-founder of the Pakistan's Peoples Party (PPP), Mubashir Hasan. This is especially so when Hameed accuses Stanley Wolpert of bias in his famous work, *Zulfi Bhutto of Pakistan* (OUP, 1993), as he dedicated that book to Ardeshir Cowasjee, the Parsi columnist for the *Dawn* newspaper, who is described by Hasan as an 'inveterate Bhutto hater'. Hasan himself is the author of a well-received book, *The Mirage of Power* (OUP, 2000), which deals primarily with the developments during 1971-1977, when he served as Bhutto's Finance Minister, among other responsibilities. Hasan in fact acknowledges Syeda Hameed as one of his Indian friends who went through that manuscript prior to publication.

The title of the book, *Born to be Hanged*, is taken from a dispatch written by Sir Morris James, United Kingdom's High Commissioner to Pakistan during 1961-65, in which he describes ZAB's many strengths as well as his 'ruthlessness and a capacity for ill-doing which went far beyond what is natural'.

The only son (apart from three sisters) of an aristocratic zamindar from Sindh and his second wife Lakhi Bai (a Hindu who was a courtesan prior to marriage), Hameed notes that Bhutto had a 'virulent hatred of Hindus', calling them 'the deadliest enemies of our Koran and our Prophet', in a letter to Mohammad Ali Jinnah in 1943 from Mussourie, as a 15 year old.

Hameed notes that Bhutto's political journey began when he came to the attention of then President Iskander Mirza (who was of Bengali origin) while on a hunting trip near his hometown of Larkana in the mid-1950s. While Hameed brings to attention the friendly relations between President Mirza and ZAB's father Sir Shahnawaz Bhutto as the common glue that brought them together, the Pakistani author Syeda Abida Hussain in her book *Special Star* on the other hand reveals that ZAB's political career was greatly helped by his second wife Nusrat Sabunchi/Ispahani who became close to Naheed Begum, Mirza's wife, given that both of them were Shias of Iranian extraction.

Bhutto shot to domestic attention with his '1000 year war' speech at the UN Security Council in September 1965. This speech and the December 1971 speech at the UN are described in glowing terms by Hameed as one whose each and every argument took Pakistan 'a notch higher in world acclaim ...' and as 'iconic'. Bhutto as the Foreign Minister during the 1965 war was deeply resentful of the Tashkent Agreement, given that Ayub Khan did not agree to a discussion on the Kashmir issue with Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri, as insisted by Bhutto. The 'Tashkent betrayal' proved to be a useful theme in Bhutto's political struggle against the military dictatorship of Ayub Khan.

Hameed describes the founding of the PPP in November 1967, with its socialist



orientation and Islamic foundations. She brings to attention Bhutto's strong condemnation of the statement of the Pakistani Foreign Ministry on December 15, 1967 to the effect that Pakistan had no claim on Indian territory, when its attention was drawn to a declaration by Bhutto at a party forum that Assam must have a special status with Pakistan. Bhutto later in a letter to the Foreign Ministry clarifies that he was not talking of any territorial claims but 'a relationship with Assam of the kind that France has with Quebec in Canada'. Hameed oddly cites the same letter as reflective of Bhutto's 'statesmanship' when he calls attention to the 'struggle of the Nagas and the Mizos against Indian aggression' and says that Bhutto was the first South Asian leader who 'spoke for the Mizos and Nagas ...'

Hameed describes the Shimla Agreement as a 'victory for Pakistan' and a 'miracle', given that Pakistan got back its more than 90,000 prisoners of war and India withdrew its troops 'without any vital concessions' from Pakistan. She further cites Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw as stating that the Pakistan Army 'held back' though it was 'fully capable of fighting the Indians ...' and adds that the Pakistani general Niazi had not 'received orders to confront the Indian Army completely', without bringing to the attention of the readers the sources of her astonishing statements. Further, what's not touched upon is India's stupendous success in ensuring that Bangladesh emerged as a sovereign nation state recognized as such by the international community, even by Pakistan itself. Bangladesh was an important participant along with 35 other countries at the second Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) Summit in Lahore in 1974.

Hameed goes on to describe some of the key figures who were part of Bhutto's political journey, categorizing them as 'companions, contenders and saboteurs'. One of the contenders profiled is Wali Khan, who was described as an 'agent of India and Afghanistan' by Bhutto, while one of the saboteurs profiled is Maulana Kauser Niazi (aka 'Maulana Whiskey' who enjoyed his drink) and whom Bhutto appointed as Minister for Religious Affairs! The chapter that details aspects of the degrading detention and the painful trial and hanging of 'Hilal-e-Pakistan' on April 4, 1979 is titled 'judicial murder' and is mostly based on the 1988 book of Sri Lankan author TW Rajarathnam, *A Judiciary in Crisis: The Trial of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto*.

Syeda Abida Hussain's account meanwhile is of a first-hand witness to the tumultuous political career of the charismatic

“ The poignant political history of the most dominant political family of Sindh is a cautionary tale of the long road to genuine democracy that Pakistan has to essentially still traverse for the benefit and uplift of its teeming millions. ”

Benazir, initially as someone who opposed her politically to someone who became a close confidante in later years. As such, the book does contain nuggets of information relating to private conversations among others that is not published elsewhere. Hussain states that the 1965 war was part of the effort by Ayub Khan to 're-establish his standing' with the Pakistani people, having won the 1964 presidential elections contesting against Fatima Jinnah, sister of Mohammad Ali Jinnah, very narrowly. The role of other actors who helped Ayub make his decision, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto among others, is not flagged.

The author's narrative highlights the interplay of the foreign with the domestic in Pakistan's political history, as highlighted by long periods of exile of leaders like Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif in places as varied as Saudi Arabia, Dubai and London. The role and influence of key American interlocutors is equally reflective of this confluence, ranging from US Senators like Claiborne Pell, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, who on the request of Peter Galbraith (son of John K Galbraith, a friend of her father) prevailed upon Gen. Zia-ul-Haq to allow Benazir to travel overseas when she was in detention following her father's hanging. The author notes that the US even brokered the terms of government formation in 1988 when Benazir's party did not get a clear cut majority.

Hussain notes the mismanagement of the economy and widespread corruption charges that heavily dented Benazir's government, which lost power twice. As against her father's virulent anti-Hindu/India hatred though, the book does not record similar statements or outlook held by Benazir even in private, who hosted Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi twice in December 1988 and July 1989. Large-scale improvement in bilateral ties though was not forthcoming, with the Pakistan Army controlling Bhutto's terms of engagement. The author notes that the Army was not particularly impressed with Bhutto's

OXFORD

SYEDA ABIDA HUSSAIN

Special Star
Benazir Bhutto's Story



Interior Minister allegedly sharing a list of Khalistani insurgents with his Indian counterpart in the aftermath of Rajiv Gandhi's visit. She also flags Bhutto's 'reluctant' trip to Pyongyang at the behest of the Army to deliver American equipment in exchange for missile technology to its North Korean benefactors.

Pakistan's tumultuous political system continues to be buffered by weak leadership and corrupt governments. There is the ever-present threat of itchy generals with substantial stakes in Pakistan's political economy extending their baton to muddy the political waters while consolidating their interests. The poignant political history of the most dominant political family of Sindh is a cautionary tale of the long road to genuine democracy that Pakistan has to essentially still traverse for the benefit and uplift of its teeming millions.

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Book News

Book News

The Islamic Connection: South Asia and the Gulf edited by Christophe Jaffrelot and Laurence Louër explores the ideological, educational and spiritual networks, which have gained momentum due to political strategies, migration flows and increased communications. At stake are both the resilience of the civilization that imbued South Asia with a specific identity and the relations between Sunnis and Shias in a region where Saudi Arabia and Iran are fighting a cultural proxy war.

Penguin/Viking, 2017, pp. 303, ₹699.00