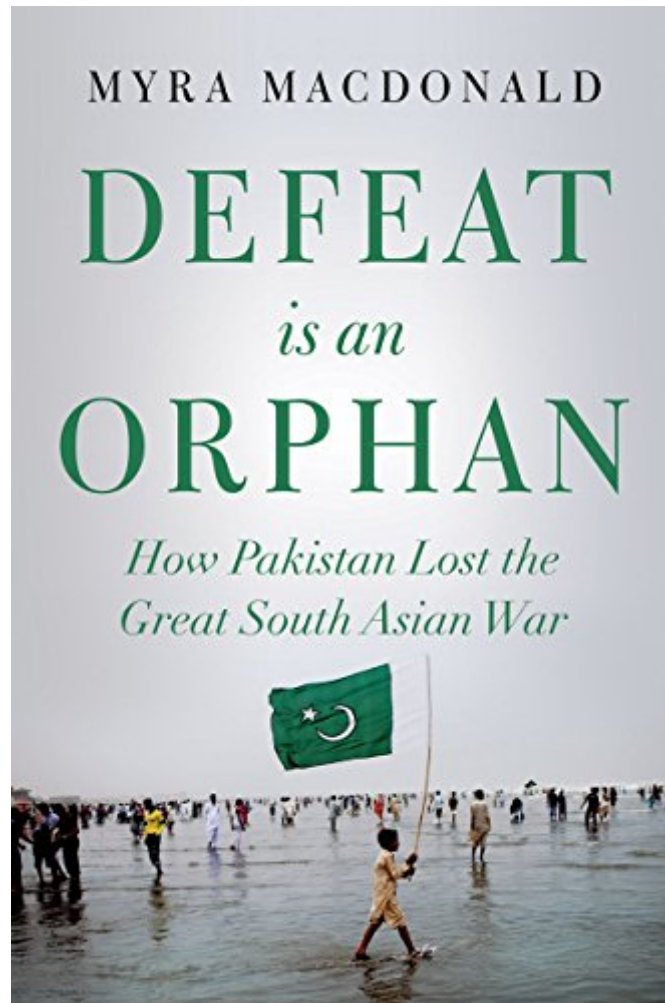




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Defeat Is An Orphan: How Pakistan Lost The Great South Asian War



Synopsis

When India and Pakistan held nuclear tests in 1998, they restarted the clock on a competition that had begun half a century earlier. Nuclear weapons restored strategic parity, erasing the advantage of India's much larger size and conventional military superiority. Yet in the years that followed Pakistan went on to lose decisively to India. It lost any ability to stake a serious claim to Kashmir, a region it called its jugular vein. Its ability to influence events in Afghanistan diminished. While India's growing economy won it recognition as a rising world power, Pakistan became known as a failing state. Pakistan had lost to India before but the setbacks since 1998 made this defeat irreversible. Defeat is an Orphan follows the rollercoaster ride through post-nuclear India-Pakistan, from bitter conflict in the mountains to military confrontation in the plains, from the hijacking of an Indian plane to the assault on Mumbai. Nuclear weapons proved to be Pakistan's undoing. They encouraged a reckless reliance on militant proxies even as the jihadis spun out of control outside and inside Pakistan. By shielding it from retaliation, the nuclear weapons also sealed it into its own dysfunction -- so much so that the Great South Asian War, fought on-and-off since 1947, was not so much won by India as lost by Pakistan.

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Customer Reviews

The book does a decent job of explaining the complex issues of the confrontations between India and Pakistan. It is NOT a history of the two countries since Partition even though it has some background on some of the events. It is a fair journalistic account since the author was in the region on assignment and its conclusions are reasonable. The included events are to the period of the surgical strike in 2016. It dissects events such as the Kasab's testimony and India's Supreme Court Afzal Guru in some detail. Good news for Pakistan, the book offers a way to correct its prevailing narrative and change course (that is if it is possible for it). It is time for Pakistan to think as to how they will come out of the mess they have created for themselves as conspiracies theories are not solutions. If it helps, to me this book will be much better read than Christine Fair's. Good news for India, the hard work of developing independent thinking for Indians has paid off. It will last for another generation to improve on it. It is time to wake up and smell the coffee, this contest is over.

The book starts off with the Kathmandu flight hijacking episode and goes on to connecting all the dots right up to the "surgical strikes". The key takeaway from this is that Kashmir solution is not in sight until Pakistan turns towards a progressive and secular democracy. The book goes in depth of how Pakistan lost its way dramatically since nuclear tests.

Starting with Emma Duncan in the 1980s, if people have been consistent on one point, it has been the clear elucidation of the dangers emanating from Pakistan's harmful state backed proxy policy. This is today symbolized by the ISI-PA Menagerie consisting of assorted terror groups. If the murder of killer Mumtaz Qadri and the bombing of Lal Shahbaz Qalandar and the revealing interview by the puritanical madrassa head near the Sehwan dargah is any clue, the message is clear, "we are a long way off from the day this nation called Pakistan will start resembling anything like what was envisaged in 1940". Loss or Win aside, Pakistan has cursed its populace to a brutal existence where any sort of happiness could eventually be taboo. Case in point being the rapid move to death of culture, music etc... the poignant example being the girl killed by the Talibs in Swat and allusions made to the reign of terror and neighbors suffer too, with the ensuing fundamentalist blowback into the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir and surrounding nations... Pakistan proudly calls this 'victory' and claims it is not 'isolated'... I see no hope (for the foreseeable future at least) that the mental illness gripping the military-intelligence complex in Pak will go away anytime soon.

The learning curve of India's external intelligence agency, the Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW), is faulty. This is the central idea of the book which is written in a novel style. In a concerted effort to define the term "Great South Asian War" the meaning of which is still obscure despite reiterating the term nine times in the book MacDonald ends up with disclosing at least five instances when the R&AW, besides the Intelligence Bureau, failed to forestall the next ominous event for India since its formation in 1968. Regarding the first instance, MacDonald writes on page 158: "When Pakistan tried to trigger a revolt in the [Kashmir] Valley in 1965 by infiltrating its own men, it was unable to drum up enough local support and failed. To assert its authority on its side, India made a succession of deal with Sheikh Abdullah, and later with his son Farooq Abdullah, giving power to their National Conference party in exchange for cooperation with Delhi. Kashmir became a constituent unit of the Union of India and the autonomy promised by Article 370 [of the Indian Constitution in 1952] was gradually watered down. The National Conference came to be seen as Delhi's representative in Kashmir rather than Kashmir's representative in Delhi. Then when an alliance of secular and Islamist parties banded together in the Muslim United Front (MUF) to challenge the party in 1987 state elections, the polls were widely seen as rigged in favour of the National Conference. After that, rumbling discontent slowly gathered steam until it became a full-blown separatist revolt [by 1989]. With no hope of having their grievances addressed through the democratic process, young men crossed the LoC to seek military training from Pakistan. This self-explanatory para accentuates the failure of the R&AW in advising the Indian government against the rigging of Kashmir elections that prompted an uprising against India owing to reasons local to Indian-held Kashmir but with the potential for influencing Pakistan. The Kashmir uprising is still extant and has drawn in India's half army and Pakistan's attention. Regarding the second instance, MacDonald writes on page 36: "In 1983, Pakistan carried out a 'cold test' exploding a nuclear-capable weapon without the fissionable core. It followed up with about two dozen cold tests over a number of years. By 1986 or 1987, Pakistan is believed to have weaponized its nuclear programme. Here, MacDonald says that, despite all clear indicators, the R&AW not only failed to assess Pakistan's having a credible nuclear weapon but it also failed to predict Pakistan's next move in case India tested its nuclear device. The incapacity of the R&AW cost India profoundly, as by testing nuclear weapons on May 11, 1998, India offered a valid opportunity to Pakistan to test its nuclear weapons and claim strategic parity, which Pakistan had lacked against India since 1947. Pakistan did avail itself the opportunity successfully. On page 29, MacDonald writes: "[T]he Pakistani [nuclear tests on May 28, 1998] effectively countered

Indian doubts about Pakistan's nuclear capability and by restoring the strategic balance between the two countries... These mistakes on the part of the R&AW not only made India lose its nuclear edge (obtained through a nuclear test on May 18, 1974) over Pakistan, but these mistakes also allowed Pakistan to equivoque strategically the oversized military of India. Consequently, India had to forsake the Sunderjee doctrine (1981-2004). Regarding the third instance, MacDonald writes on page 60: "Pakistan had started this [Kargil] war [in 1999] and in crossing the LoC [Line of Control] breached its international agreements. Whatever mitigation Pakistan might claim " India had, after all, started the Siachen war in 1984 " was lost in the noise." Further, on page 55, MacDonald writes: "India was simply too complacent. Poor intelligence and its expectation of peace after the nuclear tests had lulled it into a false sense of security." Taken both these statements together, MacDonald is saying that after the Indian army captured Siachen, the R&AW failed to help the army foresee Kargil coming. Similarly, MacDonald writes on page 60: "[I]n Kargil, Pakistan had longer supply lines across more difficult terrain than India, which had access through the Srinagar-Leh road. Without fresh ammunition and supplies of food, the Pakistani troops would not be able to hold indefinitely." Here, MacDonald is saying that the difference between Siachen and Kargil was that, in Siachen, India captured the height first and then defended it with the help of its full army and equipment; in Kargil, Pakistan captured the height first but did not defend it with the help of its full army and equipment. If Pakistan had also done that, a new Siachen would have embodied in Kargil. In fact, the lop-sided nature of conflict in Kargil made the Pakistan army withdraw " live to fight another day. Regarding the fourth instance, MacDonald writes on page 18: "After two attempts to free [Masood] Azhar [who was arrested in Kashmir in February 1994] " the kidnapping of westerners in Delhi and in Kashmir [in October 1994 and July 1995 respectively] " failed " In June 1999, another [third] attempt was made to free him by digging a tunnel into the high-security jail where he was held." By this time, it became known that the companions of Azhar were making attempts to get him released. However, after these three futile attempts, Azhar's companions made a successful fourth attempt by hijacking Indian Airlines Flight IC-814 en route from Kathmandu (Nepal) to Delhi (India) in December 1999 and got him released. By inference, if the fourth attempt had also met failure, there might have been the fifth one and so on. MacDonald shows that the R&AW not only failed to study the rescue-attempt pattern but it also failed to predict the next move of Azhar's companions. Regarding the fifth instance, MacDonald writes on page 121: "[Atal Bihari] Vajpayee had already warned the United States that India's patience was running out after the October 1 [2001] attack on the state

parliament in Srinagar. On December 13 [2001], it snapped. "This was not just an attack on the building [of Indian parliament], it was a warning to the entire nation." Here, MacDonald says that the R&AW failed to help India foresee a militant attack on Indian parliament coming from disgruntled Kashmiri elements after they attacked Kashmir's parliament.

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