

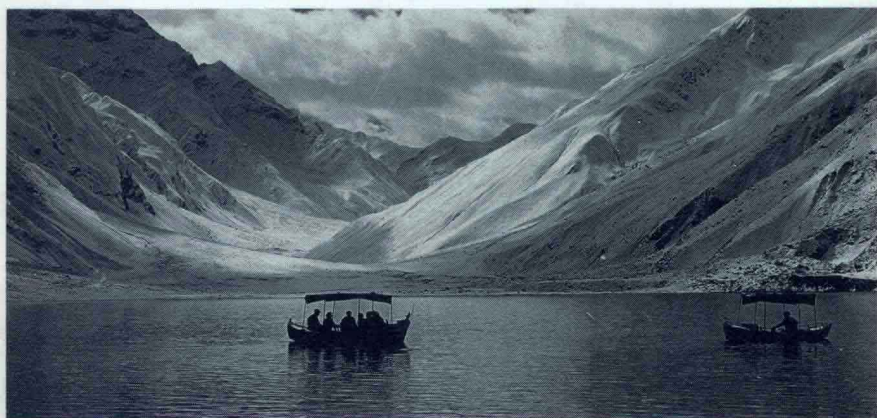
SECOND EDITION, REVISED AND UPDATED

# PAKISTAN

The Continuing Search  
for Nationhood

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Shahid Javed Burki



Profiles / Nations of Contemporary Asia

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## The Continuing Search for Nationhood

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Shahid Javed Burki

Westview Press

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*Profiles/Nations of Contemporary Asia*

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## Acknowledgments

This edition of the book has benefited from the comments made by a number of scholars who reviewed the first edition and pointed to a number of flaws. Some of those were easy to correct; some were more difficult to handle because they simply represented different ways of looking at Pakistan's economic, social, and political history. Among the book's shortcomings were its lack of attention to the social status of women and the absence of a discussion of the evolution of the legal system. It was pointed out by some that the book had failed to note women's precarious situation created by President Zia ul-Haq's efforts to introduce Islam into politics and economics. Some reviewers commented about the need to analyze the impact of an Islamic legal system on political, social, and economic development as it was incorporated with the system inherited from the British. Some others questioned whether Pakistan had indeed succeeded in alleviating absolute poverty to the extent claimed in the first edition.

The new edition of the book, which appears under a different subtitle, is an effort to accommodate these and many other comments. It also updates the story of Pakistan and brings it to the winter of 1990–1991 when a new political and economic order was being put into place. There is a great deal of new writing incorporated in this edition, and there are a number of people to whom I owe thanks for making it possible for me to reach some new interpretations about the development of Pakistan. Their help was in the form of many conversations I had with them since the appearance of the first edition. I owe a special debt to Kamal Azfar, Craig Baxter, Mahbubul Haq, Zia ul-Haq, Ghulam Ishaq Khan, Vaseem Jaffrey, Robert Laporte, Jr., Saeed Ahmad Qureshi, and Hasan Zaheer. I alone, of course, am responsible for any errors of fact and omission that remain.

*Shahid Javed Burki*



Map of Pakistan.

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## *Introduction*

The circumstances—some political, some social, but many economic—that led to the creation of Pakistan as an independent state are discussed in the first chapter of this book. On August 14, 1947, Lord Louis Mountbatten, the last viceroy of British India, administered the oath of office to Mohammed Ali Jinnah as the first governor-general of Pakistan. The ceremony was held in Karachi, the capital of the new country. The same evening Lord Mountbatten flew back to New Delhi, and the following day—August 15, 1947—he was sworn in as the first governor-general of India. Thus, within a period of just over twenty-four hours, the British liquidated their Indian Empire. Their departure was hurried and took a form not many had anticipated. The British had believed that when they left India they would hand over the administration to one successor government. Instead, they left two governments in charge of a partitioned India, one in Karachi and the other in New Delhi.

Pakistan, the smaller of the two successor states, was a political novelty—a country created to accommodate people who wanted to live separately because they followed a faith totally different from that of the majority of the country of their origin. A state created in the name of religion was a new political phenomenon, to be repeated only once again when the colonial powers withdrew from Asia and Africa. About eighty countries have obtained independence in the years following World War II, but only one other—the state of Israel, created for the Jews of the diaspora—was established for religious reasons. But religion proved to be a weak basis for defining a nation's frontier. Pakistan, as it turned out, was established with problematic frontiers. The country was divided into two halves—or “wings,” as they were called—but Islam failed to keep East and West Pakistan together for very long. In 1971, two dozen years after the country's birth, the eastern wing separated to form the independent country of Bangladesh. But the formation of

Bangladesh left Pakistan with unstable frontiers. Even today, two of Pakistan's borders—the Durand line that runs between Afghanistan and Pakistan, and the “line of control” that now divides the old princely state of Kashmir between the territories “occupied” by India and Pakistan—have not been formally accepted by Pakistan's neighbors. With the war in Afghanistan going on ten years after it began and with the Indian state of Kashmir in revolt against New Delhi, both borders could be redrawn.

Malleable frontiers are not the only reason for which Pakistan, even after more than three decades of independence, remains a country in search of nationhood. It continues to be politically unstable, without institutions that can be considered viable. Since 1947, the country has tried about a half-dozen different political systems and four formal constitutions, promulgated in 1946, 1956, 1962, and 1973, respectively. General Zia ul-Haq's drastic amendment of the 1973 constitution produced a political system that had little resemblance to the one operated by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.<sup>1</sup> At the time of independence, the administration of Governor-General Jinnah drew constitutional authority from the Act of India, passed by the British Parliament in 1935 and amended by the India Independence Bill of 1946. These two bills gave near-dictatorial powers to the governor-general. Jinnah's outlook, however, was democratic, and by the time he became governor-general, he was too ill to become a dictator. In addition, his successor, Khwaja Nazimuddin, was too genial to make full use of the powers these two acts had bestowed on him. Their successors—first Ghulam Muhammad and then General Iskander Mirza—were considerably less scrupulous. Both used the acts of 1935 and 1946 to increase their power; accordingly, the constitution of 1956—the first of the three constitutions to be introduced since independence—adopted a parliamentary system in which the power of the head of state was highly constrained. The 1956 constitution had a short life; it was abrogated by General Ayub Khan, who went on to provide the country with a new political system.

Ayub Khan's constitution, promulgated in 1962, introduced a presidential form of government. Presidential elections were held in 1964, and even though Ayub Khan was challenged by Miss Fatimah Jinnah, the sister of Pakistan's founder, he won an easy victory. Installed in March 1965 as Pakistan's first elected president, Ayub Khan lasted in office for only four more years. In March 1969, following a spirited and often violent campaign against him and his political system, he was thrown out of office by General Yahya Khan, the commander-in-chief of the armed forces. For the second time in eleven years (1958–1969), the country was without a constitution and under martial law. General Yahya Khan remained in office for thirty-three turbulent, eventful months.

He ordered elections to pick yet another constituent assembly, but the polls resulted in the total polarization of politics in the country. The Awami League, a secessionist party, triumphed in East Pakistan, and the majority of the seats in West Pakistan were won by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's Pakistan People's party (PPP).

There were fundamental differences of opinion between the Awami League and the People's party concerning the political structure that needed to be erected. The differences could not be resolved, and the political situation deteriorated rapidly. By March 1971, only three months after the elections, East Pakistan was prepared to secede from the Pakistani Union. After nine months of an exceptionally bitter war, troops from West Pakistan surrendered to a combined force of Indian army and Bengali separatists, called *Mukti Bahini*, and Bangladesh, the erstwhile East Pakistan, emerged as an independent state in December 1971.<sup>2</sup>

Discredited by its defeat in East Pakistan, General Yahya Khan's army went on to surrender political power in West Pakistan. On December 20, 1971, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was sworn in as the president and chief martial law administrator—a strange combination of offices for a civilian politician who had campaigned for half a decade against military rule. It took Bhutto nearly twenty-two months to produce the country's third constitution. This one, introduced on August 14, 1973, was different from the constitutions of 1956 and 1962. Unlike the constitution of 1962 but like that of 1956, it created a parliamentary form of government; unlike both, however, it specified a bicameral legislature, with the upper house—the Senate—given the power to maintain the balance between the country's three smaller provinces and Punjab, the largest.

The first election under the new constitution was held four years later, in March 1977. The official results showed a landslide victory for Bhutto and his Pakistan People's party—a result so lopsided that the opposition cried foul play and launched a street movement against the government. The movement became violent, and the army had to be called in to restore law and order in the major cities. The army succeeded in controlling the agitation and, with its prestige thus restored, its commander, General Zia ul-Haq, removed Bhutto from office on July 5, 1977.

General Zia's coup d'état was the third in Pakistan's history, but there was a difference: He suspended but did not abrogate the constitution, and he did not immediately assume the office of the presidency. Fazal Elahi Chaudhry, the president from Bhutto's time on, was allowed to remain in office, and the assumption of power by General Zia ul-Haq was given a semblance of legitimacy when the Supreme Court declared that the extraordinary political developments that followed the elections justified the declaration of martial law. After remaining in office for a

little more than seven years, General Zia asked the people of Pakistan to vote in a referendum on whether they approved of his efforts to Islamize Pakistan. An affirmative vote not only would be seen as a vote of confidence in Zia but also would indicate the people's wish for him to continue in office for another five years. Very few people voted in the referendum—the rate of participation was less than one-quarter of the total registered voters, but the government declared it successful for the president and his policies. Having gained legitimacy for his rule, at least in his own eyes, Zia allowed the long-postponed general elections to be held in February 1985.

The elections evoked an enthusiastic voter response and led to the induction of a civilian administration under Prime Minister Muhammad Khan Junejo that remained in office for slightly more than three years under General Zia's watchful eyes. Junejo persuaded Zia to lift martial law in December 1985 and accept a form of government in which executive powers were shared between the president and the prime minister. This system was inherently unstable; neither the military president nor the civilian prime minister was comfortable with it. Junejo was dismissed by the president in May 1988, and a caretaker government was appointed to hold general elections. There are good indications that Zia would have changed the system in favor of a presidential form of government prior to the elections. However, before he could implement his plans, he was killed in an air crash on August 17, 1988.

Zia's death and the general elections held in November 1988 brought the Pakistan People's party back to power under Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. The return of the Bhuttos to Islamabad (Mrs. Nusrat Bhutto, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's widow, was appointed the senior minister in her daughter's cabinet, and Asaf Ali Zardari, Benazir Bhutto's husband, became politically active behind the scenes) did not signal the end of the Zia era. Benazir Bhutto stayed in office for only twenty months; in August 1988 she was dismissed by President Ghulam Ishaq Khan on charges of corruption and mismanagement. Khan called for another general election, and in October 1990, the PPP was soundly defeated by a coalition of political parties that were sympathetic to Zia and his legacy. Another government was sworn into office in November 1990, under Prime Minister Mian Nawaz Sharif. This was the sixth administration to take office in the five years following Zia's decision to return Pakistan to some form of democracy.

In the spring of 1991, Pakistan seems as far from defining its political identity as it was in August 1947, the year of its birth. Since then, Pakistan has endured many crises: in October 1958, when the military, under General Ayub Khan, intervened in politics for the first time; in March 1969, when President Ayub Khan was forced out of

office by popular opposition; in December 1971, when the country split into two parts and the "eastern wing" of East Pakistan became the independent country of Bangladesh; in July 1977, when Zia entered politics at the head of Pakistan's third military government; in April 1979, when Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the prime minister deposed by the military, was hanged in Rawalpindi; in March 1985, when Zia returned some political power to a civilian government; in May 1988, when the power given to the civilians was resumed by Zia; in August 1988, when Zia was assassinated; in November 1988, when Benazir Bhutto became prime minister; and in October 1990, when Benazir Bhutto's party lost decisively in the national and provincial elections to return a conservative government to Islamabad. Chapter 2 is the story of these developments.

Political turbulence was bound to affect economic development, but Pakistan's economy has managed to grow at a respectable rate. The ups and downs of the economy—periods of stagnation alternating with periods of remarkable dynamism—are discussed in Chapter 3, along with the growth of Pakistan's gross domestic product (GDP), which, in the forty-four years since independence, has averaged over 6 percent per annum. At the time of independence in 1947, the provinces that were separated to form the two wings of the country—East and West Pakistan—were considerably poorer than those that remained in India. In 1990, in West Pakistan—the present-day Pakistan—according to one estimation, the average income per head of the population was twice as high as that in India and Bangladesh.<sup>3</sup> In fact, but for the country's turbulent political history and its adverse effect on the economy, Pakistan today might have had a much higher level of per capita income. In 1990, the World Bank classified Pakistan as a low-income country—a country with a per capita income of less than the equivalent of US\$500. Of the forty-two countries in this group, Pakistan had the highest per capita income in Asia—there were thirteen countries with a higher income level, all but four (Haiti, Sri Lanka, Yemen, and Indonesia) of them in Africa.

Indeed, Pakistan exhibits many of the characteristics of a middle-income country: It is less dependent on agriculture than most low-income countries and has an industrial sector that is comparable in size and diversity to those in many middle-income nations; it has a vast reservoir of highly trained laborers; it has a large middle class that numbers more than 30 million people; and it is as urbanized as the more developed countries of East Asia and the Middle East. In fact, Pakistan today could well be a middle-income country with a per capita income of well over \$500. It continues to be ranked among the poor countries because successive governments failed to follow a consistent set of policies for developing the country's remarkable economic potential.

As it has in politics, Pakistan has also experimented with several economic strategies. It tried many different economic systems. From 1947 to 1958, manufacturing was the politically favored sector. It received a great deal of government attention and a large amount of resources. Consequently, industries developed quickly during this period, but agriculture, the largest sector of the economy, was neglected. The government of President Ayub Khan followed a different set of objectives; during his period, agricultural output increased at a rate not common in the Third World. The rate of growth of the GDP, at nearly 7 percent per annum, was among the highest in the world. Then, under Prime Minister Bhutto's Fabianism, the economy was drastically restructured. Large industries, banks, and insurance companies were nationalized; the government also increased its presence in the sectors of health and education. Consequently, the economy lost the momentum it had picked up during the period of Ayub Khan. The government of General Zia ul-Haq adopted Ayub Khan's model of economic management, and the economy returned to the growth path it had followed in the 1960s. In 1988–1990, Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto undid most of what her father had done a decade and a half earlier. It appears, therefore, that Pakistan would have fared much better if successive governments had not so completely changed their approach toward economic development. The economy paid a heavy price for the inability of the governments to stay the course.

In developing this story, Chapter 3 explores the interaction between politics and the economy, the structural changes that have occurred in the economy since 1947, the problems the economy currently faces, the potential of the economy, and, finally, the policies that were adopted by the government of General Zia ul-Haq within the framework of the Sixth Five-Year Plan (1983–1988) and those pursued by Benazir Bhutto during her 20 months in office.

Chapter 4 deals with the problem of the low level of social development in Pakistan. Very low levels of literacy—particularly among women—and high rates of fertility pose problems that have to be solved in order to lay the basis for rapid economic growth in the future.

The problematic frontiers that Pakistan was assigned to manage and defend from the time of its birth meant that relations with the outside world would necessarily become an extremely important preoccupation from the very first day of the country's existence. Chapter 5 reveals the nature of these frontiers, which bespoke uneasy relations with practically all neighbors—in particular, Afghanistan and the Soviet Union to the north, and India to the south. For a time, China also looked on with apprehension as Pakistan became an active member of several treaty organizations put together by U.S. Secretary of State John

Foster Dulles. Relations with Iran remained warm until Ayatollah Khomeini came to power; thereafter, a degree of uncertainty prevailed as the leaders in Pakistan found their northwestern neighbor to be somewhat unpredictable. In view of their enormous wealth and Islamic fundamentalism, the rich oil-exporting countries across the Arabian Sea have also become important for Pakistan.

During its relatively brief existence, Pakistan has engaged in three major wars and a series of small skirmishes. The first two wars, in 1948–1949 and 1965, respectively, were fought over the disputed state of Kashmir; the third war, in 1971, was fought over Bangladesh; and periodic skirmishes have occurred between Pakistan and the Pathan and Balochi tribes that live in the “unsettled area” between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

The foreign relations of a country so preoccupied with its neighbors would naturally have a profound impact on both political and economic development. Chapter 5 continues with a description of the conduct of Pakistan’s foreign policy and traces its impact on the political and economic growth of the country.

A short concluding chapter pulls together the various strands from the five previous chapters of the book and assesses Pakistan’s future prospects. The challenges facing the country are enormous; so, too, is its potential. Only time will tell whether Pakistan will realize its potential or be overwhelmed by its problems.

## NOTES

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1. For an excellent analysis of Pakistan’s constitutional history, see Kamal Azfar, “Constitutional Developments During the Zia Period,” in Shahid Javed Burki and Craig Baxter, *Pakistan Under the Military: Eleven Years of Zia ul-Haq* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1991), pp. 49–86.

2. For an analysis of the circumstances that led to the creation of Bangladesh, see Rounaq Jahan, *Pakistan: Failure in National Integration* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972).

3. These estimates are based on the data generated by the United Nations International Comparison Program (ICP) that has developed measures of real GDP on an internationally comparable scale using purchasing power parities (PPPs) instead of exchange rates as conversion factors. For a description of the methodology employed and the country estimates made by the program, see the World Bank, *World Development Report 1990* (Washington, D.C.: 1990), pp. 246, 257–258, and Table 30 (pp. 236–237).



