

**Book Review  
By  
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**'South Asia Papers:  
A Critical Anthology of  
Writings,' by Stephen  
Philip Cohen**

The book entitled '*South Asia Papers: A Critical Anthology of Writings*', by Stephen Phillip Cohen is a collection of sixteen essays by a leading analyst and scholar on South Asia's civil military relations, security and political issues. The book's chapters are drawn from more than 150 published pieces by the author and every essay presents a detailed and well researched insight into various periods of South Asian military history and military sociology.

While making preparations for *South Asian Papers'* publication the author revisited his previous writings on the subject and has indicated where his analysis was proved inaccurate by subsequent policy developments and events.

Though the book chapters are primarily focused on India but the author has also added a few essays on civil-military relations in Pakistan, security problems faced by it as well as difficult strategic choices the country had to make in its seventy years history. Chapter One of the book describes the author's personal research puzzle that influenced his research interests. Subsequent research done by the author, mostly on South Asia, was the choice he had made early in his career. His work includes research on how military power and its supporting institutions had shaped relations in the region and within states that constitute the region.

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Chapter Two deals with contemporary problems pertaining to India's defense and civil-military relations. With regard to civil-military relations the author observes that Indian society continues to be divided between military and non-military classes. He states that the origin of this division between military and non-military segments can be traced to the Hindu caste system. The caste system embedded in Hindu belief system did not allow members of certain castes, particularly those belonging to lower castes to become warriors. Chapter Three discusses unclear role and blurred parameters of jurisdiction of the viceroy and commander-in-chief in British Indian colony. In the light of a dispute between Lord Curzon (Viceroy) and Lord Kitchener the military commander in which Kitchener prevailed and Lord Curzon had to resign. Outcome of the dispute, in the opinion of certain analysts defined the prominence of military in state's decision making process. Chapter Four and Five discuss Indian National Army (INA) and how its establishment had contributed to the democratization of British Indian armed forces by recruiting soldiers from all castes and ethnicities.

Having developed the context of discussion on contemporary India in the first few chapters, Cohen focuses on India's potential for achieving great power status and the hurdles in its way. In this context, the author mentions disintegration of Soviet Union and problems of state building in Pakistan and threat to Pakistan's security. Pakistan's membership of SEATO and CENTO also find a place in the discussion on Pakistan's security.

The author, with his long experience of researching in India and his knowledge of South Asian strategic and security issues, recommends a regional approach to enhance security of both India and Pakistan. In this context, he also supports a US-Pakistan

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nuclear deal on the pattern of US-India deal. But in the author's view, such an agreement should be crafted to strengthen non-proliferation regime instead of promoting nuclear proliferation.

Cohen perceptively sums up the dilemma of Pakistan and India and impediments in their bilateral relations. Pakistan's army, according to Cohen is a bulwark in the way of political extremism in the country. But while playing its role it cannot, not at the same time, guarantee promotion of moderation in the state institutions. India's dilemma is that it would like a Pakistan which is strong enough not to fall apart but not so strong as to be able to stand up to India and challenge its supremacy in the region.

The author's writings show his keen interest in dynamics of South Asian politics and security. The bilateral interaction between India and Pakistan, and how their armed forces influenced the political and military decision making. Chapter Thirteen is dedicated to Kashmir. In the author's view both sides lack the political will and commitment to resolve this dispute. He acknowledges the fact that both countries cannot ignore the fact that the Kashmir dispute had strengthened their identities and suggests that they should find a way to work around this reality. The last two chapters dilates on India-US relationship, specifically during the Reagan administration, and how a botched US alliance fed Pakistan's crisis. Cohen explains the highs and lows of US-Pakistan relations such as poor conceptual foundation of this relationship and consequences of, off and on again alliance, mistakes, lessons learnt and forgotten.

Though the book contains essays by the author penned over a period spread over two decades but many concepts discussed by him are still relevant to the contemporary India and Pakistan.

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This marks the real value of the book which is written in a lucid style and makes the discussion on complex issues easy to understand even for those who may be uninitiated in the disciplines of international relations and strategic studies.

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