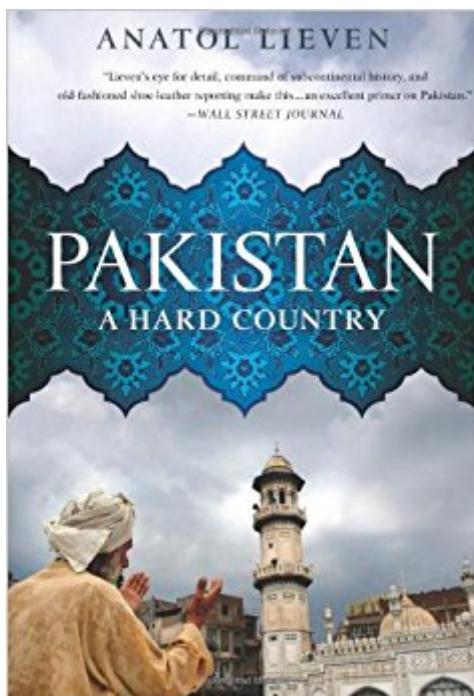


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# Pakistan: A Hard Country



## Synopsis

In the past decade Pakistan has become a country of immense importance to its region, the United States, and the world. With almost 200 million people, a 500,000-man army, nuclear weapons, and a large diaspora in Britain and North America, Pakistan is central to the hopes of jihadis and the fears of their enemies. Yet the greatest short-term threat to Pakistan is not Islamist insurgency as such, but the actions of the United States, and the greatest longterm threat is ecological change. Anatol Lieven's book is a magisterial investigation of this highly complex and often poorly understood country. Engagingly written, combining history and profound analysis with reportage from Lieven's extensive travels as a journalist and academic, *Pakistan: A Hard Country* is both utterly compelling and deeply revealing.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Lieven (Chechnya), who has reported on Pakistan off and on for 20 years, offers a compelling argument for reorienting Western interests (and investments) in its wars in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Given its enormous population (six times that of Afghanistan), the key role Pakistani intelligence plays in Western efforts against terrorism, the strong ties between Pakistan and Western countries (especially Britain), and the fact that Pakistan's army is one of Asia's strongest (complete with nuclear weapons), Lieven writes, "Pakistan is quite simply far more important to the region, the West and the world than is Afghanistan: a statement which is a matter not of sentiment but of mathematics." His extensive history and cartography of the country comes equipped with solid policy prescriptions—•for drone attacks to be ceased and for the U.S. to acknowledge

how powerfully the bungled invasion of Afghanistan contributed to instability in the region— and particularly the growth of the Taliban. Though his language can occasionally be patronizing, Lieven's writing is generally excellent. He wrestles huge amounts of material into a coherent whole, cogently explaining the intricate and interconnected roles played by kinship, regional allegiances, religion, and the military, shedding light on the country "in all its complex patchwork of light and shadow." (Apr.) (c) Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Kirkus, February 15, 2011;Lieven breaks down his study by specific region; considers the structures of justice, religion, the military and politics in turn; and, finally, in a skillful, insightful synthesis, addresses the history of and issues concerning the Taliban, both Pakistani and Afghani. A well-reasoned, welcome resource for Western "experts" and lay readers alike. —Edward Luce;Everybody nowadays seems to take a view on Pakistan. Very few know what they're talking about. Anatol Lieven is that rare observer - a scholar who writes like the best kind of foreign correspondent about a country that he takes and measures on its own terms. Pakistan, a Hard Country offers an intimate and compellingly relevant portrait of an increasingly pivotal nation to the future of the world, for better or for worse. It fills a large gap in our understanding.— The Huffington Post, April 3, 2011;Over the last decade, Lieven has been one of the smartest and most fair-minded commentators on the global situation, and in this important, very timely book, he explains the regions, classes, history, and prospects of Pakistan with equal value for both the neophyte and the expert. Based on Lieven's first-hand knowledge of the country for the past 20 years.— The Economist, April 7, 2011;If I had to review the book 'Pakistan: A Hard Country' in one line I would say it is brilliant. The book is well researched, informative, insightful, but most of all for a country that finds itself often in headline news for the wrong reasons, empathetic.— The Age, May 20, 2011;In his fine new book Pakistan. A Hard Country, Lieven argues that while the state is weak, Pakistani society is immensely strong.— The New Statesman, May 12, 2011;does much to counter lazy assumptions about the country that proliferate elsewhere.— The Spectator, May 13, 2011;His analysis of networks and systems is precise; his accounts of his travels illuminating as well as entertaining.— The Guardian, May 1, 2011;Lieven's Pakistan: A Hard Country is one such blow for clarity and sobriety; Lieven overturns many prejudices, and gives general readers plenty of fresh concepts with which to think about a routinely misrepresented country.— The Independent, May 5, 2011;Lieven's feat lies in his remarkable,

flesh-and-blood portrait of the nation, ranging across demographic swathes and including a chorus of voices from farmers to intelligence officers. The picture is one of a semi-anarchic nation mired in police savagery, institutional corruption, population bulges, water shortages and the risk of catastrophic environmental disaster following last year's floods.â€” The New York Times Book Review, June 26, 2011;Ambitious;a sweeping and insightful narrative.â€— Newsline Magazine, June, 2011;Pakistan: A Hard Country manages to be clear-headed and realistic, a welcome respite from the scare-mongering that taints so many western accounts of Pakistan.â€— The Organiser (India), June 26, 2011;This book is about the best that has been published in recent times about Pakistan.â€— MoneyLife (India), June 18, 2011;Pakistan-A Hard Country is one of the most detailed accounts of a country which often seems like it is held together by chewing gum (or willpower, if you like);but what still makes it tick? Anatol Lieven knows, and it shows in this work.â€— &#147;Thanks to Mr. Lieven's sound scholarship and perceptive insights in &#145;Pakistan: A Hard Country,&#39; readers will come away with a clearer understanding of why it is such a complex, conflicted country and why it will continue to be of vital interest to the United States long after the last American soldier has come home from Afghanistan.â€—Policy Review, August/September 2011;His experience as a reporter gives Lieven both the tone of an insider and a vast affection for the country, which he credits for giving him "some of the best moments" of his life. In an attempt to explain the world's sixth-most populous nation in under 600 pages, Lieven ranges widely, touching upon everything from the rise and fall of landed families in the Punjab to the sloth of the national police to the garish dÃƒÂ©cor in wealthy homes. To this ambitious task the author brings both thoroughness and an impressive familiarity with his subject.â€— DAWN.com, August 2, 2011;a thought-provoking and widely influential new bookâ€— DAWN.com September 2, 2011;Lieven's is the one I would most strongly recommend to anyone wishing to learn about Pakistan&#133;. The book is shot through with sharp insights and flashes of mordant wit that make it a pleasure to read.â€— &#147;The gulf between&#133;the multiple realities most Pakistanis know - and how outsiders perceive their country is wide and deep. Lieven's book is an ambitious and much-needed attempt to bridge it. The most striking thing about the book is its informed and consistently sensible tone. This tone is not heard much in discussions about Pakistan, and it is refreshing. Lieven writes in an affable, conversational voice, but not a casual one. His observations are precise and judicious.â€— Financial Times, April 22, 2011;Pakistan, as Anatol Lieven explains in this thorough analysis of the internal sources of this resilience, will not

disintegrate easily; He deftly tackles the misperception in the west that Islamist groups might easily sweep through Pakistan. — The Nation, April 13, 2011; This book could hardly be timelier. Lucid and well informed, he deals carefully with Pakistan's well-known problems. He raises hope, avoiding the hysteria and partial judgment that disfigure much contemporary writing on the subject. Above all, he emanates a deep affection bordering on love for the unfortunate, beleaguered, magical Pakistan. — The New Republic, May 5, 2011; his book may be described as the most informed Gazetteer on contemporary Pakistan. Instead of the too often repeated narrative of Pakistan's history and ills, he offers a broader sweep into the condition of the provinces, the climate, the political parties and their personalities; and, in his best chapter, an important discussion of how today's Taliban represent a continuation of similar uprisings a century ago. — Dallas Morning News, May 9, 2011; Since the death of Osama bin Laden in Pakistan last week, it's become increasingly clear that anyone hoping to follow international affairs should perhaps have begun watching that country some time ago. Fortunately, Pakistan: A Hard Country serves as an outstanding primer; even reading just the introduction is supremely useful; Lieven crafts a lucid and thoroughly fascinating whole from a wealth of information; Lieven's writing is excellent, especially crucial in a book tackling a topic with which many readers are entirely unfamiliar. Moreover, he clearly loves the place and its people. Pakistan: A Hard Country is the work of one of those rare writers able to see his subject in all its complexity, without either turning away or becoming a partisan of one perspective or the other. — IBN Live, May 19, 2011

Personally, reading this book left me feeling that I know so much more about Pakistan than I did before, & that I understand so much more than I did before, & yet, because of the spiral, inter-connecting, complexities of its society, history, culture & the sheer inundation of all kinds of -isms at play, it left me feeling that I still cannot construct a cogent mental summary of what I had read. But that's me. And, I reckon that that's true of Lieven too. Meticulous in his research, & frank in his commentary - Lieven himself seems to find these rich connections, document-able, & still somehow nor summable into a whole. But that's not to take anything away from the great work that this book is. It is neatly, to the extent possible, divided in themes - introductory, evolution of Pakistan as a nation state; societal structures: justice, religion, military, politics, & then the states ending with a chapter on the Taliban. Note that economics is a glaring miss- except as a chapter in the introduction - but as you'll realize, this grouping is probably right from the point of view of what really are the defining structures in Pakistan, & economics, sadly, is not one of them. In chapter after

chapter, Lieven weaves - for writes seems terribly limiting - the Pakistani experiences together. The concepts of justice are twisted by ideas of honor, religion divides; India unites & patronages mean a more equitable income distribution at the cost of a weaker state. Radicalism & progress are both thwarted by many plural & strong identities & the commentaries of many Pakistanis - diligently documented by Lieven - either add to this complexity or illuminate depending on your own ability to connect the deluge of dots together. There are certain attempts at humour in a largely serious work just as there is a certain amount of sympathy & empathy that emanates from Lieven about Pakistan where he seems to have spent a lot of time. This is particularly apparent to me, as an Indian, when Lieven, with some degree of regularity, compares the "negatives" in Pakistan with India, & finds them no worse than the Indian experience - & does not cite anything where India is perhaps comparatively better. I recommend this book highly because of its nuances & details & the insights it brings. The fact that stitching these isolated insights into a coherent model of a country remains a painstaking task says more about the country than about the book. And I would have loved to have seen more on Pakistani food, music & cricket. @souvikstweets

brilliant, highly readable account of history, culture, politics, sociology of pakistan. excellent background for the works of rashid ontaliban; jihad in central asia; descent into chaos&pakistan on the brink - the latter two focused on pakistan. this book and rashid's books deserve 5 stars - but i leave the fifth star to experts, as my opinion is strictly that of an interested amateur. alas, the recent attacks in and around peshawar - reportedly by taliban - on major secondary school and university tragically illustrate what challenges both pakistan and afghanistan must cope with in continuing to build viable constitutional democratic polities to which both countries are (heroically) committed and determined to achieve.

Anatol Lieven's "Pakistan" is an amazingly informative and well written book. Part One introduces the nation and its modern history. Those who follow the shallow coverage of the western media will realize how much we have been misinformed. Part Two details the political, justice, religious and military aspects of Pakistani society. Part Three takes us through the large and varied regions of Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan and the Pathans. Lieven's descriptions of the great cities of Lahore and Karachi are sufficiently fascinating that they may reshape the views of persons not intimately familiar with the nation. Throughout the volume the author carefully distinguishes between the Afghan and Pakistan Taliban and this discussion is wrapped up in Part Four. This knowledge is critical to any understanding of how the Pakistani government makes decisions regarding its own

longterm interests which sometimes may be in conflict with current and temporary interests of the United States. Lieven's prose brings the area and its issues into full focus.

Out of date currently, but excellent review of the cultures of tribal patronage, familism, corruption.

This is a superb profile of Pakistan by a Westerner who has spent years living in and traveling around the country. The insights are deep, and they convey the complexity of Pakistani society with just the right balance of conceptual framework and revealing stories. This book should be required reading for every member of the U.S. government who has influence over America's relationship with Pakistan. The book has changed my own formerly simplistic view of Pakistan: I now see it as a critically important country that is struggling with very complex legacy issues - many of its own making, some resulting from its colonial past, and some caused by U.S. policy. Anyone wanting a more informed, insightful understanding of Pakistan should read this book.

I really appreciated this book because it - very correctly - plays down the (Western media generated) hype about Islamism and other trivialities, and focuses on the truly phenomenal force of climate change. You just have to visit Pakistan or India - or any country in south east Asia and maybe even Africa - and realize, first hand, this is the real issue affecting people on an existential level - even though they themselves may not be cognizant of it. It is a sad fact that religious extremism and bombings are far more sexy than global warming and desertification. It would help if we just tuned all the rubbish that the media inflicts upon us and went out and experienced things for ourselves.

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