

**BOOK REVIEW:  
ENERGY CRISIS IN PAKISTAN**  
Authored by Muhammad Asif<sup>†</sup>

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Muhammad Asif is a leading figure among Pakistani scientists. In previous works, Asif has written about Hydro-energy and Kalabagh Dam, the contemporary phenomenon that can provide the country with substantial economic growth but is understood locally (in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh, provinces of Pakistan) as an overwhelming social tragedy by few time-servers.

This book is a welcome addition to the already scare literature on energy crisis in Pakistan. By taking up broad conceptual issues, this book moves beyond straight thoughts about Pakistan's social and economic areas of studies. It is divided into seven chapters with a sequence of themes focusing energy, institutional framework, recent surge of energy crisis in Pakistan and sustainable energy options.

The first two chapters, entitled: 'Energy and its Wider Dimensions', open with interesting parallels elaborated by Asif as energy and sustainable development, fossil fuels, nuclear energy and renewable energy resources. The author points out the successive culmination of development in energy resources from coal to oil reserves and their depletion (p. 14).

After highlighting depletion of oil reserves and global warming, the author proposes that to safeguard the future of coming generations, the world thus has to move towards low-carbon energy systems (p. 22).

The author gives a full and detailed account of oil-driven foreign policy of global actors and geo-strategic conflicts in the twentieth century. He says the geo-politics of the present day has been increasingly influenced by pursuit for energy resources (p. 31).

Asif gives a detailed background of energy as a

historical source of influencing foreign policy by the British. He says that 'one of the main motives behind Nazi Germany's invasion of Poland and the Soviet Union was also to control their oilfields' (p. 45). He links this co-relation with the post Second World War and post Cold War eras by highlighting the US policies to dominate the oil-rich areas of the world, especially Middle East.

In chapter three and four, Dr. Asif describes Pakistan's energy agencies, its framework and the energy crisis. He begins with a brief discussion of the poor policies and reckless attitude on the part of concerned energy authorities (p. 81). He talks about integrative functions of energy resources, and in particular the bonds that people construct when creating energy alternates like hand fans, steeling electricity by different cable wires and so on.

But this is little more than a cursory review, and Asif is more interested to describe ritualistic and performative nature of energy culture adopted by the successive governments in Pakistan.

The book explores at greater length how people construct socially acceptable and unacceptable expressions of energy and power generation and how the domestic political economy of energy consumption is experienced by, and leads to disputes between the government and the governed.

This he highlights not only with text but also by few but very important pictures showing public expression of frustration. Text as well as pictures give a very serious situation of energy crisis in Pakistan (pp. 100, 107-111).

Chapter five argues for changes that include promoting policy and decision-making process of energy and natural resources in Pakistan and the

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role of the relevant stakeholders.

After giving details on practical difficulty of dealing with energy issues, Dr Asif analyses the role of academia, industry and energy departments in Pakistan. He says that lack of vision, corruption and nepotism are responsible factors in hampering the development of the energy sector. He specifically mentioned corrupt practices in privatization of energy departments like KESC, the hasty deal on Independent Power Producers (IPPs), and politically motivated snatching of power projects from WAPDA.

Asif says that energy discussion in Pakistan cannot be complete without mentioning Kalabagh Dam. He quotes ex-WAPDA chairman Shamsul Mulk who believes: "The greatest beneficiaries of the Kalabagh Dam project will be NWFP (present day Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) and denying the project is denying the fruits of the Indus Basin. Kalabagh is also going to benefit Sindh by supporting its agriculture with increased level of water.'

The last chapter is focused on solutions to the energy problems facing Pakistan. Asif highlights coal as alternate source of energy in Pakistan and its huge reserves which remained untapped. He further goes on by mentioning nuclear energy, hydropower, solar energy, and solar thermal power.

While this is a highly commendable volume, a chapter on India-Pakistan-Iran gas and oil pipeline project and Caspian Sea Oil politics would have been a great addition. However, it should still be said that it would be difficult to produce a more comprehensive and impressive book with such minute details from a single author in this field.

It will be counted as an important and pioneering contribution to the energy sector and crisis in Pakistan. This book will appeal to scholars and practitioners belonging to energy and renewable resources and the masses affected by the energy shortage in Pakistan to know what caused such a great crisis in their country. Postgraduate students and activists would like to acquaint themselves with the complexities of energy praxis and activism in Pakistan.

#### **About the book**

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