Bashir / Crews

Under the Drones

In the West, media coverage of Afghanistan and Pakistan is framed by military and political concerns, resulting in a simplistic picture of ageless barbarity, terrorist safe havens, and peoples in need of either punishment or salvation. Under the Drones looks beyond this limiting view to investigate real people on the ground, and to analyze the political, social, and economic forces that shape their lives. Understanding the complexity of life along the 1,600-mile border between Afghanistan and Pakistan can help America and its European allies realign their priorities in the region to address genuine problems, rather than fabricated ones. This volume explodes Western misunderstandings by revealing a land that abounds with human agency, perpetual innovation, and vibrant complexity. Through the work of historians and social scientists, the thirteen essays here explore the real and imagined presence of the Taliban; the animated sociopolitical identities expressed through traditions like Pakistani truck decoration; Sufism's ambivalent position as an alternative to militancy; the long and contradictory history of Afghan media; and the simultaneous brutality and potential that heroin brings to women in the area. Moving past shifting conceptions of security, the authors expose the West's prevailing perspective on the region as strategic, targeted, and alarmingly dehumanizing. Under the Drones is an essential antidote to contemporary media coverage and military concerns.

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