





coffin, described in detail by Schmidle, is “Operation Silence,” the storming of the Red Mosque in Islamabad to dislodge opposition forces led by Abdul Rashid Ghazi; Bin Laden himself condemned the President’s actions (154).

Never one to shy away from a dangerous situation, the author then heads for the Taliban-controlled Swat Valley, only a four-hour drive from the capital, what he calls “a different kind of Pakistan” (158), a visit made possible only through the protection and *laissez-passer* of Iqbal Khan, the District Amir, a journey which permits Schmidle to meet a large number of Taliban commanders (167). Back in Islamabad, Benazir Bhutto had just recently returned from exile, and her presence in the country, added to the pressure on Musharraf stemming from the lingering Chaudhry affair, lead the President to impose a state of emergency, seen by many in Pakistan as meddling by the CIA on Musharraf’s behalf. At the end of December 2007, Benazir Bhutto was assassinated, plunging the country into yet another political crisis, and paving the way for Asif Ali Zardari to inherit the Pakistan People’s Party and thus confront Musharraf; eight months later he resigned the Presidency. Schmidle closes the book with a surreal description of his second departure from Pakistan, tracked by “the agencies” as he leaves with a US Embassy escort in a bullet-proof car, amid news reports of his own kidnapping (229).

Nicholas Schmidle worries about the future of Pakistan – not simply the Pakistan of violence, not simply the Pakistan which is a keystone of geopolitics, but the Pakistan with a human face, where people construct their lives among poverty and insecurity, where people worry about educating their children and obtaining medical care. Practical, everyday worries so often overlooked in Western accounts of Pakistan, and that Schmidle’s book does an excellent job of bringing to the fore. *To Live or to Perish Forever* is recommended for those readers who want to attach human faces and individual stories to the “problem” of Pakistan.