

The State of Pakistan Today*

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Pakistan has been the focus of international attention because of continued internal instability, its encouragement to fundamentalism and extremism, its obtuse foreign policies and its reluctance to introduce democratic reforms. Pakistan's position in the Failed State Index for 2006 jumped to ninth place ahead of Afghanistan which was at tenth place. In 2005, it was at thirty fourth place. It can, therefore, safely be assumed that Pakistan has been moving in a negative direction. Internally, mounting insurgency in Balochistan, trouble in FATA, problems in Northern Areas and Shia-Sunni sectarian strife have created unstable conditions, which have been the result of policy failures of Musharraf's military regime. Pervez Musharraf's authoritarian rule and military's vice-like grip on all the organs of Pakistani nation state have not contributed to peace, stability and meaningful development in the country. Its policy of seeking strategic depth in Afghanistan through aiding Taliban and its unaltered policy of cross-border terrorism against India as an instrument of state policy continue to cause anxiety to the US, the international community and India. Musharraf has made many promises to its neighbours and international community but has been either unwilling or unable to fulfill them.

After the 11 September 2001 attacks in the US, Musharraf had promised to check extremism, rein in jihadis and reform internal and external policies. But after almost five years his promises remain unfulfilled. Nor have the US and the West realised any returns from the enormous effort and investments in their ally on terror. Training for Taliban and jihadis who embark on missions to Afghanistan and Kashmir continues to be provided on Pakistani soil and finance appears to be no problem. In July 2006, *The Economist* highlighted these issues and defined Musharraf as destroyer of democracy, reneging on his promises to reform some of the most radical madrassas and allowing terrorist groups to function from Pakistan. Banned organisations like Lakshar-e-Taibaa and Jaish-e-Mohammed were even allowed to adopt orphans in POK and provide relief aid to earthquake affected people in order to win over the population to provide more volunteers for jihad. Further, the military government fiercely protects access to AQ Khan lest he give away secrets of Pak military's collusion in selling nuclear technology to North Korea, Libya and Iran.

*Pakistan 2005. Edited by Charles H Kennedy and Cynthia A Botteron (Karachi : Oxford University Press), 293p, Rs. 550.00, ISBN 0-19-547120-2.

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Pakistan has so far escaped the label of rogue nation by joining the US's global war on terror. But Pakistani elite's ambiguous approach in its internal and external policies does not augur well for Pakistan becoming a modern, stable, prosperous nation state in peace with its neighbours.

This book covers the period up to end 2004. However, many of the premises "and conclusions made in the book are still relevant. The issues covered in the book include politics, economics, internal policies and external policies of Pakistan.

In the run up to forthcoming elections in 2007 in Pakistan, the ruling elite have been painting a very rosy picture of the economy. No doubt Pakistan's macro-economic indicators show an upward trajectory. The rate of growth of GDP for 2005 was 8.5 percent as against six per cent in 2004. Faisal Bari and Aqil Shah in their well researched essays point out that there are micro impediments to growth. There has been poor management of the institutions and a failure to manage institutional challenge. Aqil Shah very rightly observes that Pakistan's economic difficulties have deep roots in the political economy of national (in)security under which the needs and demands of military override those of rest of the polity. He concludes that external aid by its very nature helps authoritarianism and does not contribute to balanced economic growth. He recommends that economic policy should be brought under elected officials and is of the view that economic development ultimately rests on political stability and democratic legitimacy.

A number of other economists have warned that long term sustainability of Pakistan's economic growth is uncertain and critical mass required for sustained economy is absent. Pak economy is heavily dependent on the munificence of the US and international economic institutions. A change in strategic situation may affect Pakistan economy adversely. Increased internal instability and disorder would affect inflow of foreign exchange remittances as well as GDP growth. Political and military establishment has not fundamentally altered its perceptions on military security and has not given adequate attention to other areas of human security.

Though the elections are due in 2007, Musharraf and his present set up i.e. Pakistan Muslim League (Qaid-e-Azam) and ISI are already working overtime to ensure success of Musharraf and his political allies. If elections are held in a free and transparent manner, the mainstream parties i.e. Pakistan People's Party and Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz Sharif) are likely to make a comeback. But that can not be allowed to happen because it will threaten military's corporate interests and even the personal well-being of Pervez Musharraf. In this context Charles H. Kennedy's very

insightful and excellent essay on ten steps which all military dictators have followed albeit with some minor changes here and there to enforce their rule, is by far the most penetrative analysis of the ways of Pakistani coup makers. First step is to give plausible excuses for dismissing the elected governments, issue proclamations and orders and get them endorsed by judiciary through intimidation and stratagems. Thereafter, take measures to eliminate political opponents and arrange to become President and reinvent local government. And after having intimidated civil bureaucracy and judiciary re-write the constitution and orchestrate elections. However, he blames both Pakistan's military and civilian leadership for their failure to develop a stable constitutional system.

While discussing India-Pakistan relations, Robert G Wirsing concludes that break with the history of hostility is in its infancy and ultimate fate of improvement in relationship will be determined by its leadership. That may be true as a general conclusion but the military leadership of Pakistan has a vested interest to continue to maintain a certain degree of hostility against India to maintain its pre-eminence in Pakistan's polity. Further, a certain degree of threat of 'Islamic peril' and instability would enable Pakistan to continue engaging the US and receive economic and military aid in lieu. In another paper written in January 2005 (not of this book), titled, "Pakistan Transformation: Why it will not (need not) Happen", Robert Wirsing had recommended that the US needs to jettison, once for all, the poorly advised determination, inherited from Clinton administration, to "decouple" its relations with India and Pakistan. He offered some cogent reasons as to why there will not be any strategic transformation of Pakistan and why the US should pursue its national objectives and how Pakistan can contribute to policy objectives of the US. To an Indian reader these arguments would appear to be offering apologies for Pakistani establishment's intransigence and mindsets.

Rasul Bakshsh Rais's essay on India-Pakistan relations covers the familiar ground and reaches the familiar conclusion that unless core issue of Kashmir is resolved there is no likelihood of improvement in relations. India insists on normalisation first and Kashmir later or simultaneously. The bombings in Mumbai, Varanasi, Bangalore and Delhi with their linkages to terrorist infrastructure in Pakistan have put brakes on the ongoing peace process.

Musharraf had used the stratagem of educational requirements to temporarily neutralise the most daunting of his opponents during general elections of 2002. This aspect has been very well analysed by Cynthia A Botteron in her essay. An interesting chapter in the book is on the madrassa system of education in Pakistan where Christopher Candland concludes

that the portrayal of madrassas as training grounds for Islamic terrorists' is largely misguided. He believes that the roots of militancy in Pakistani society do not lie within institutions for Islamic education. A debatable conclusion, which goes against the general discourse but his hypothesis, is well argued. And it is not only madrassas which have been providing education in terror, even the mainstream government schools through their text books have been stressing on jihad *qital* (killing), *shahdat* (martyrdom) and *mujahideen* (holy warrior) philosophies.

The book is eminently readable and is a good reference material for serious researchers, analysts, students and policy makers.

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