

# **Pakistan at the Crossroads: Domestic Dynamics and External Pressures**

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The Obama administration considered Pakistan ‘the most dangerous country in the world’ and the US Joint Chiefs of Staff worried about insurgents gaining control of nuclear weapons. One of the challenges of thinking and writing about Pakistan is to understand how the scar tissue of its short history influences policy today. The traumas of Partition are well known, but several other historical events helped shape modern Pakistan. The India–China war of 1962 led directly to China becoming Pakistan’s ‘all weather friend’. The loss of East Pakistan in 1971 was a crushing blow and prompted the Army to adopt the role of guarantor of territorial integrity. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 led to the terrorism and Kalashnikov culture in Pakistan. Is Pakistan at a crossroads or does it remain on an inexorable path towards disaster? Was the Army Public School massacre of 2014 really the moment, when the army decided that ending internal subversion was the main national security priority, ahead of countering India? This book helps to answer these questions.

This edited volume is a work of renowned scholars, who have assessed the politics and economics of Pakistan and the challenges faced by its military and civil leadership, domestically and diplomatically. This book will not only shed some light on the domestic problems, which Pakistan is facing; in fact, it will also discuss the external threats and the diplomatic relations of Pakistan with different countries. It is divided into two parts: Part I deals with the domestic scene, as the title depicts, and explains the domestic issues, which Pakistan has been facing since its inception. Part II of the book deals with international dimension discussing the diplomatic relations of Pakistan with its immediate neighbours as well as the US, China and Saudi Arab.

The chapter ‘The Military and Democracy’ has discussed the civil military relations and the mode of military disengagement from politics and how military remained strong enough to maintain its strategic and political influence in the post authoritarian content. The major source of friction between civil-military relations

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were the exercise of military prerogative especially in the management of National Security Policy. This friction led to political instability in Pakistan after Musharraf's regime. The other chapter 'Operational Dynamics of Political Parties in Pakistan' describes that political parties have kept a modicum of democracy in place in Pakistan as a source of legitimacy through the Parliament. They structure the political conflict by rationalising the message of contending forces providing a sense of order to the fluid situation. Philip Oldenburg has focussed on the rise of judiciary from 2007-2009. According to him, though, the gains of judiciary are fragile, but now it enjoys the same status as military and government and it has succeeded in earning the trust of public. Therefore, it can play a significant role in putting Pakistan on the road to an effective and genuinely democratic government.

Discussing about the turmoil in FATA, Mariam Abou Zahab has given the analysis about the dynamics of Talibanization in FATA by pinpointing the socio-economic factors and discusses the issues regarding population displacement and its consequences. Shahid Javed Burki, in his chapter on the economy, argues that Pakistan could have been a BRIC nation, had it not been for the bouts of political uncertainty. Disconcertingly, however, the best growth rates were recorded during the periods of military rule under Ayub Khan and Pervez Musharraf. Burki also points to Pakistan's inability to raise sufficient taxes and its tendency towards dependence on overseas support.

Avinash Paliwal has discussed how the policy of India has changed after 2001, despite of signing the agreement with Afghanistan on Strategic Partnership during Karz's government, India remained resistant in providing lethal weaponry when asked. After the departure of Karzai, the marginalization of India in Afghan affairs is apparent. Afghanistan's stance on whether to accommodate demands of Pakistan or develop a combat strategy, is now very clear. It is applying dual policy. On one hand, Ghani government was engaging with Islamabad diplomatically, whereas, Afghan Chief of Intelligence Rahmatullah Nabil was building capacity and growing links with Latif Mehsud, number 2 in the TTP hierarchy. Though, it was handed over to Pakistan by the US later. So, this all gives a clear image of dual policy of Afghanistan and we can assume that there seems to be no end game in sight for Pakistan in Afghanistan.

While, discussing US relations with Pakistan under Obama administration, Christopher Jafferlot named it as 'clientelistic' relations, which is not very right as both were involved in Soviet-Afghan war-1979, and after 9/11, Pakistan accepted US assistance on its own terms. During the war against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, Pakistan required all US aid to flow through government agencies. And after 9/11, Musharraf adopted the twin-track 'compartmented' approach, which enabled

Pakistan to provide vital assistance to the US in tracking down al-Qaeda terrorists, while, ensuring that groups like Lashkar-e-Tayyiba remained relatively untouched. There is also a misconception in this chapter regarding Pak-China relation, which states that Pakistan kept oscillating relationship between the US and China, which is wrong as the later has been constant since Sino-Indian war-1962. This chapter has discussed how China became all weather friend for Pakistan after this war. In the last chapter, Sana Haroon has discussed the relations of Pakistan with Muslim world especially with Saudi Arabia and Iran and their political, religious and economic development since 1947.

In nutshell, this book has assessed Pakistan as an 'eye of storm' because of the challenges, it has been facing since its inception, and its geostrategic positioning in regional and global politics. Advertently, the arguments debated in this book are not much sustaining the facts on ground, such as, portraying Pakistan's foreign relations as 'clientelistic'. Pakistan is a sovereign state with independent foreign policy objectives and upholds its resolve to eradicate terrorism domestically, regionally as well as internationally.

## Reference

Christophe Jaffrelot, ed. *Pakistan at the crossroads: Domestic Dynamics and External Pressures*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2016.