

Review Article

Allah, Army, And America In Pakistan^{*}

Hassan N. Gardezi^{}**

Introduction

Tariq Ali. *The Duel: Pakistan on the Flight Path of American Power*. New York: Scribner, 2008.

Zahid Hussain. *Frontline Pakistan: The Struggle with Militant Islam*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2007.

Shuja Nawaz. *Crossed Swords: Pakistan, Its Army, and the Wars Within*. Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Ahmed Rashid. *Descent into Chaos: The U.S. and the Disaster in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Central Asia*. New York: Penguin, 2008.

The four books under review together reveal the saga of Pakistan's journey from crisis to crisis as a postcolonial state, from the obscurity of its birth in 1947 to its present fame as the 'epicenter of global terrorism'. Each author takes an insider's look at the country's internal contradictions and its entanglements in global conflicts in his own way, Ali as a New Left activist, Hussain as a journalist, Nawaz as a broadcaster and military historian, and Rashid as news reporter and analyst of international relations.

Of the four titles, Nawaz's book on the political history of Pakistan's army is the best documented. The author belongs to an extended family of Pakistani military officers, a connection he has used well to gain access to the archives of the army headquarters (GHQ) in Rawalpindi. This archival material is supplemented with some of the hitherto unused documents and correspondence found in the American government departments that throw light on the evolution of U.S.-Pakistan relations. One will have to agree with Owen Bennett-Jones's one-line blurb printed on the dust jacket of the book: 'To understand Pakistan you have to understand the army and to understand the army you need to read this book'.

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^{**} Dr. Hassan N. Gardezi is a senior Sociologist based in Canada.

Rashid's book is a hefty sequel to his 2000 publication on the rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan, which became an instant bestseller in the aftermath of 9/11.¹ The present volume, however, does not show much original research and lacks the sense of purpose that was so evident in his earlier book. While writing the present volume he seems to follow the pattern of U.S. think tanks that do re-search within the framework of U.S. foreign policy objectives. In his own words: 'This book is about American failure to secure the region after 9/11 to carry out nation building on the scale that could have reversed the appeal of terrorism and Islamic extremism' (p.xlii).

While Rashid's book has a regional context, Ali's book *The Duel* is focused on Pakistan's domestic politics and external relations as these have evolved over time under strong U.S. influence. His ideological affiliation with the New Left is well known and he does not hesitate in projecting his political nuances in his writings, even employing polemics when necessary, to make his point. He can quite frankly pronounce the presence of NATO forces in Afghanistan as 'imperialist occupation' and the U.S. ambassador in Islamabad as the 'U.S. viceroy in Pakistan'. He also has a knack for spicing up his narrative with episodes bordering on gossip, generally to put the high and mighty of this world in their place.

Hussain's book, the slimmest of the four, is a rather straightforward journalistic record of events that gave rise to militant Islamist formations in Pakistan, especially after General Zia came to power and involved the country into America's proxy war against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan.

Despite what separates each author from the other, one point of consensus exists among them. When it comes to explaining what has shaped the course of Pakistan's history and produced its most critical events, they all agree on three key factors: politics of religion, ascendancy of the army in the state and societal structure of the country, and subservience to the geopolitical goals of the United States. Nawaz summarizes the three pithily: 'Allah, Army, and America' (p.xxxi).

The infusion of religion into Pakistan's politics is an exercise as old as the country itself. Historically it has emanated from two different sectors, the state sector of civil and military leaders who have ruled the country since its birth in 1947 and the non-state sector of mullahs, Muslim clerics, organized in Islamic political parties, but also operating in a variety of other formations that claim to be the defenders of 'true Islam'. Initially the leaders in the state sector were politicians who

¹ Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000).

belonged to Muslim League, the political party that successfully led the Pakistan movement under British colonial rule. The party in those days was headed by an anglicized barrister, M.A. Jinnah, a towering figure whom Ali portrays as a British loyalist (pp.33–34). The most politically active cadres of the party belonged to a class of secular-minded, English-educated Muslims of pre-partition India whom Pakistan's eminent political historian, Hamza Alavi, has labelled the 'salariat'.²

Once Pakistan was created, carved out of the Muslim majority areas of the South Asian subcontinent, those Muslim League leaders who came into power faced the challenge of running a pluralist state predominantly Muslim in religion but divided into language-based ethnic or subnational identities: Bengali, Sindhi, Balochi, Pakhtun, and Punjabi. Although this was not a unique situation for a postcolonial state, it did not sit well with those in power who imagined Pakistan as a strong unitary national state. They made it their mission to 'stamp' an overriding national identity on the country and to downgrade 'the existing identities of regions comprised within the new state' (Ali, p.35).

To these leaders, Islam, the religion of the majority, seemed to be a convenient marker on which to construct the overall national identity of Pakistan. The choice of religion for this purpose also served the need of the state sector leaders to bolster their image of piety in the face of a vigorous propaganda campaign launched by small but very vocal Islamist political parties that were left out of power to vilify them as secular 'unbelievers,' unfit to rule a Muslim country (Ali, p.44).

The approach taken by the state leadership to institutionalize the imagined national identity took the form of infusing Islamic symbolism, semantics, and beliefs into the constitution that was being framed for the new state. In 1949 the first prime minister of Pakistan, Liaquat Ali Khan, presented a motion known as 'The Objectives Resolution' in the Constituent Assembly that was designed to give an Islamic character to the supreme law of the land. The resolution stated that sovereignty in Pakistan rests with Allah alone, and it also affirmed the role of the state to 'enable' the Muslims of Pakistan to order their lives in accordance with the teachings of Islam. This was followed by a 1952 report of the Basic Principles Committee of the same assembly which recommended that a board of *ulema* (Islamic scholars) be appointed to ensure that no legislation contravened the injunctions of Islam. The committee recommended further that only a Muslim should be eligible to become head of the state and that the country be named an Islamic republic.

² Hamza Alavi, 'Nationhood and Communal Violence in Pakistan,' *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 21:2 (1991), p.157.

When the constitution was finally enacted in 1956, all these recommendations and the Objectives Resolution were incorporated in it. To these leaders Islam was now officially the 'ideology' of Pakistan.

Before elections could be held to form a constitutional government, however, the army chief, General (later Field Marshal) Muhammad Ayub Khan staged a military coup in 1958, abrogated the constitution, and seized power first as chief martial law administrator and later as president.

Ayub had received his military training and socialization during the British colonial rule when the army rank and file was taught to shun politics and look down upon politicians. While he had no love for politicians in general, he displayed a special distrust of mullahs in politics. Nawaz (p.xxxi) quotes an excerpt from the dictator's diary: '[The] mullah regards the educated Muslims as his deadliest enemy and rival for power'. The quote ends by forecasting a 'battle' with the mullah that 'though unpleasant has to be waged sooner or later in the interest of a strong progressive Pakistan'.

Although what Ayub wrote in his diary sounds prophetic in the context of the battle now raging in the northwest of Pakistan between the Islamist extremists and the state army, he did little to take on the mullahs during his own time in power. Throughout his direct and indirect control of the state affairs in Pakistan he remained committed to 'chasing out the leftists and communists from whatever corner of the country's political and social system they occupied' (Nawaz, p.98), while making concessions to the mullahs. In 1962 when he unveiled his tai-lor-made constitution (prescribing a presidential system and indirect elections for Pakistan) the prefix 'Islamic' was dropped from the name of the republic, but quickly restored when the mullahs protested. The provision for an Advisory Council on Islamic Ideology and an Islamic Research Institute to assist the government in reconciling all laws with the teachings of Islam in the new constitution, along with the requirement that the head of the state be a Muslim, was also a concession to the mullahs.

Most critical for Pakistan's future was Ayub's interest in boosting the strength of the army in rivalry with India. To achieve this goal he forged a series of cold war defense alliances with the United States converting Pakistan into what Ali calls 'a U. S. satrapy' (p.56). In 1954, as chief of the army General Ayub was instrumental in leading Pakistan into a wide-ranging Mutual Defense Agreement with the United States and signing South East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), a U.S. sponsored regional pact against the Soviet Union. The following year Pakistan joined another defense treaty against the Soviet Union, the

Baghdad Pact, together with Iraq, Iran, Turkey, and Britain. By the mid 1950s a U.S. Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) was fully imbedded in the Pakistan Army's GHQ in Rawalpindi. Significantly for U.S. cold war interests, its Department of Defense, in collaboration with the CIA, initiated in 1956 the creation and training of a guerrilla force within the Pakistan Army to be employed to fight the Soviets should they break through and occupy the country. This later became a permanent commando unit of the Pakistan Army under the name of Special Services Group (SSG), which incidentally spawned General Musharraf, the fourth military dictator of Pakistan. Nawaz describes in fascinating detail Ayub's role in engineering these military pacts and other mutual defense arrangements with the U.S. State Department and Pentagon officials, first as Pakistan's army chief and later as defense minister and head of the state (pp.92–121).

In short, by the time Ayub had fully established his grip on Pakistan, with the self-awarded rank of field marshal, all three formative elements in the country's troubled history, Allah, Army, and America, were in place and ready to spill out their contradictions.

In 1960, Pakistan found itself caught in the middle of a dangerous cold war clash. On 1 May the Soviets shot down a U.S. spy plane, a U-2, flying over their air space. Unknown to Ayub and his ruling junta this high-altitude plane had taken off from an airbase near the provincial capital of Peshawar, a so-called 'communications' facility run by the CIA as part of the U.S.-Pakistan defense agreement. For several days the U.S. administration tried to cover up the incident with fabricated stories. But on 7 May, when an irate Soviet premier Khrushchev startled the world with graphic evidence of the plane's wreckage, produced for the media the U-2's bailed-out pilot alive, and threatened to wipe Peshawar from the face of the earth, President Eisenhower took personal responsibility for the affair, raising cold war tensions to a climax.

As for the military aid that came Pakistan's way by entering into cold war alliances with the United States at the great risk of courting the enmity of neighboring USSR, it was squandered by the time Ayub was halfway through his dictatorial rule. In September 1965 his government launched a covert offensive into Indian-administered Kashmir. India retaliated with an attack across the international border at Lahore. For three weeks India and Pakistan fought pitched battles, both sides making unrestricted use of U.S.-supplied weapons and inflicting heavy losses on each other.³ The war ended with a UN-sponsored ceasefire on 23

³ U.S. weapons started flowing into India in 1962 with the eruption of Sino-Indian military clashes on their Himalayan border. The Western powers

September and a peace agreement later in January, brokered by the Soviet premier, Alexey Kosygin. To the utter dismay of Pakistan's rulers the United States, their staunch cold war ally, not only abstained from coming to their side but also cut off military aid to Pakistan. Nawaz presents a detailed and well-documented account of this war and its after-math (pp.203–44).

The war also exacerbated the contradictions of Pakistan's nationhood. The political leaders of East Pakistan, the home of Bengali Muslims, intensified their demands for full autonomy from the West Pakistan-based central government. The war accounted for this trend in two ways. First, when the Pakistan Army was engaged in battling India on its western borders, East Pakistan was completely cut off, left to its fate, isolated and defenseless. Second, the war aggravated the economic disparities that had been growing between East and West Pakistan under the Ayub regime's laissez-faire developmentalist policies. For example, in per capita income East Pakistan lagged behind West Pakistan by 36.4 percent in 1964–65. After the war this in-come gap increased to 45.6 percent in 1969–70 (Nawaz, p.256). The 1965 war in fact worsened the economic situation throughout the country. This proved to be a catalyst in raising the level of political discontent and precipitating a mass revolt against the Ayub regime. The field marshal had to resign as president of Pakistan in 1969. While bowing out, however, Ayub handed over rule to yet an-other army chief, General Yahya Khan.

General Yahya began his rule under martial law promising to hold free and fair elections, which did take place in December 1970. In East Pakistan, which had the majority of the population, a Bengali nationalist party, the Awami League, swept all the national assembly seats while the West Pakistan allocation of seats was shared by a number of parties, most going to Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP). The government therefore had to be transferred to the Awami League and its leader, Mujibur Rahman. But General Yahya and his West Pakistan-based establishment tried to stall the transfer of power for fear of losing their monopoly of state power to Bengalis who were considered their ethnic rivals. As a result the people of East Pakistan took to the streets in protest against noncompliance of election results and denial of their democratic rights.

were alarmed at the swift victory of China in these clashes raising the specter of India being overrun by a communist country. The United States and Britain offered to rush in military aid, which Prime Minister Nehru could not refuse.

In March 1971 General Yahya's men launched a bloody crackdown to quell the street protests, thus triggering a full-fledged civil war, with the people of East Pakistan now demanding total separation from the state of Pakistan. At that moment all indications pointed to a long-drawn-out civil war between Pakistan's national army, staffed almost entirely by Punjabi soldiers, and emergent Bengali guerrilla bands joined by a few East Pakistani units of the army and police, which had deserted their posts. The war ended in November, however, when India moved its armed forces into East Pakistan on the side of the separatist fighters. Dhaka, the capital of East Pakistan, fell to the Indian Army on 16 December, clearing the way for the secession of East Pakistan, which became Bangladesh.⁴

The Pakistan Army high command now turned to Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, whose party, the PPP, had won a majority of the national assembly seats from West Pakistan in the 1970 elections, to lead the territorially diminished state.

As prime minister, Bhutto introduced some of the social democratic reforms he had promised in his election manifesto, and used his legislative majority to enact a standard parliamentary constitution for what was left of Pakistan in 1973. But he was unable to put democratic rule on a sound footing. To begin with he weakened his own position by purging the Left activists from his party who had helped him win the elections on a pro-people socialist platform and by filling his cabinet with unscrupulous landlords known as 'feudals' in Pakistan. Second, instead of taking a bold and principled stand against his Islamist opponents, Bhutto made concessions to them. He conceded to their demand to retain all the previously enacted Islamic provisos in the 1973 constitution. Furthermore, in a rather bizarre move, he had the unorthodox Ahmedi Muslim sect excommunicated from the fold of Islam by an act of parliament in order to appease the Islamist parties that had long been whipping up religious hatred against the Ahmedis.

⁴ Space does not permit here to cover the many intriguing episodes involving national and international players in the secession of East Pakistan. Nawaz and Ali deal at some length with the whole affair in their books. Hamza Alavi (pp.87–90) tells us how as a young activist he showed up in Calcutta in disguise at the time to work for the unification of West Bengal and East Bengal (East Pakistan) into an independent state of 'United Socialist Bengali Republic,' a project being contemplated in those days by some sections of the Indian Left, including the Communist Party of India (Marxist). Prime Minister Indira Gandhi pre-empted the Left project by her military invasion of East Pakistan to speed up the formation of Bangladesh.

Perhaps the greatest contradiction in Bhutto's governing priorities was his policy of building the post-secession Pakistan into a strong military power, albeit subject to his civilian rule. He wasted no time in replacing the heavy weaponry the Pakistan Army had lost in the 1971 war with India, turning to China and Iran for supplies in the face of a U.S. embargo. The army continued to swallow over 40 percent of the national budget. Bhutto also initiated Pakistan's project to build a nuclear bomb as a national priority with heavy involvement of the military establishment.

While taking these steps the prime minister was no doubt vigilant to the possibility of a refurbished army trying to dislodge him from power. To ward off that possibility Bhutto retired some senior officers whose loyalty he did not trust. A group of junior officers suspected of conspiring against his rule in 1973 were tried and harshly punished. The post of commander-in-chief of the army was downgraded to chief of army staff. A clause (Article 6) was also inserted in the new constitution making it a crime of 'high treason' to abrogate or subvert the constitution; this was aimed at deterring any potential coup maker. Nevertheless, on 5 July 1977 a military coup did bring down Bhutto's rule. The coup maker was his obsequious chief of army staff, Gen. Zia-ul-haq, whom he had handpicked for the job a year earlier over six other senior generals.

On the eve of the military coup Bhutto had just been re-elected with a land-slide majority in fresh general elections he had called for March 1977. But, alleging that the election was rigged, his opposition, led by Islamist parties, had come out in the streets inciting violent protests. Using these protests as an excuse General Zia took over the government announcing that his sole aim was to restore order in the streets, hold free and fair elections within ninety days, and reinstate democratic rule. He soon reneged on his promise, however, and settled down to rule Pakistan. (He perished along with the U.S. ambassador in the mysterious crash of his C-130 aircraft some eleven years later.)

With no popular mandate to rule, and having implicated Bhutto in a dubious homicide case and sent him to the gallows by manipulating the higher judiciary, Zia turned to religion to legitimize his rule. Following the earlier constitutional dressing of his predecessors in power to give Pakistan an Islamic identity, he went a step further to claim that he had a divine mandate to bring *real* Islamic order to Pakistan and that he would not relinquish power until that pious work was completed.

The centerpiece of his self-styled divine mission turned out to be the implementation of orthodox *shari'a* laws gleaned from the manuals of medieval Islamic caliphates prescribing penalties of public floggings

and hangings, amputation of limbs, and death by stoning. Although the gorier of these punishments were rarely administered in public, there was an orgy of public floggings, Taliban style, not only for ordinary crimes but in many cases for political dissent. Women and non-Muslim minorities came in for special punitive treatment, the former under the Islamic penalties for adultery and the latter under draconian blasphemy laws. The Jamat-e-Islami, Pakistan's major Islamist party, relegated thus far to the margins of political power by the voting public, was upstaged by the dictator as a key player in formulating Zia's Islamization scheme and taking over the ministries of information and education.

The most insidious of Zia's moves was the infusion of the Islamic religion into the armed forces. Observance of Islamic rituals and beliefs was made a part of the daily routine in the corps and part of the criteria of promotion in ranks. Clergy from a proselytizing fundamentalist Islamic party, the Tablighi Jamat, were called upon to preach at the Pakistan Military Academy (PMA). The maxim of *Jihad fi sabeelillah* (*jihad* in the path of God) was added to the motto of the Pakistan Army.

This introduction of religion in the affairs of the army, a fighting force, was bound to produce some volatile consequences. In the mid 1980s a group of radical Islamist officers tried to outdo their chief by hatching a plot 'to bring about an Islamic revolution and establish a theocratic state' (Hussain, p.21). Their plot was discovered in time and crushed. A similar but more serious plot was discovered again in 1995 during the civilian rule of Benazir Bhutto. The process of Islamizing the army had a lasting impact on the discipline and professional ethics of the soldiers. It produced a new breed of officers ready to espouse political causes in the name of Islam. The conduct of such officers posted in the army's Inter-services Intelligence Directorate (ISI) was to prove highly destabilizing for the future elected governments of Pakistan and fostered Islamic militancy in the country as a whole.

The greatest opportunity for Zia to flaunt his self-styled Islamic mission and consolidate his dictatorial rule came rather suddenly when in neighboring Afghanistan a coalition of communist parties, the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), staged a revolt against the remnants of the country's monarchy and ceased power in April 1978. The event immediately attracted the interest of Zbigniew Brzezinski, the national security advisor to U.S. president Jimmy Carter, who saw in this development a chance for the United States 'to give Russia its Vietnam,'

by drawing the Red Army into Afghanistan.⁵ Brzezinski mobilized the CIA to initiate a massive covert operation against the communist rule of the PDPA in collusion with the Zia dictatorship and some Afghan Islamist leaders his regime was sheltering in Pakistan.

Whether enticed or not, a contingent of Soviet troops did arrive in Kabul to prop up the PDPA rule, which was suffering from internal dissension as well at the time. It was this fateful event, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, which eventually led to the end of the cold war, technically at least, and the beginning of the global 'war on terror'. With the generous financial help of the Saudi kingdom and the logistical support of Zia's army, the CIA was able to mastermind a proxy guerrilla war in Afghanistan in the form of Islamic *jihad*. Zia, the most brutal military dictator of Pakistan, was 'whitewashed and transformed into a plucky freedom fighter against the Evil Empire' (Ali, p.122). The previously embargoed U.S. aid began to flow to his regime once again in unprecedented quantities as soon as Ronald Reagan replaced Jimmy Carter in 1981.

With free access to Saudi oil money and Pakistan's military training facilities, intelligence services and Islamist organizations at its disposal, the CIA mobilized some 35,000 Islamic militants from forty-three Muslim countries to fight the Soviets in Afghanistan (Rashid, pp.39–40). Among them was the now infamous prodigy Osama bin Laden, an engineer by profession, chosen personally by Prince Turki al-Faisal, head of the Saudi secret service, and sent to Afghanistan to build roads, bunkers, and tunnels for the transportation and storage of weapons as well as to lead the Arab contingents of *mujahideen* (holy warriors) in *jihad* against the 'Soviet infidels' backing the PDPA government.

Islamic militants converged on Afghanistan from all corners of the world through the northwest passages of Pakistan. Along with them came some very deadly baggage, both material and ideological, previously alien to the region. The material component consisted of the latest weapons of guerrilla warfare that U.S. technology could produce or Saudi oil money could buy on the international market, including the Stinger missiles that crippled the Soviet Air Force in Afghanistan. On the ideological side came the fanatical *Wahabi* orthodoxy of Saudi Islamic faith, taking the shape of *jihadi* culture taught fervently in Pakistani *madrassas* (religious schools) engaged in brainwashing militants to fight the 'the enemies of Islam'.

⁵ Brezenski's interview appeared in *Le Novel observateur*, 15–21 January 1998.

After a decade of battling the biggest guerrilla war machine ever mobilized in history, the Soviets called it quits. Mikhail Gorbachev, calling the Afghanistan engagement his country's 'bleeding wound,' withdrew his army in February 1989 in compliance with the terms of the Geneva Accords signed by Afghanistan, Pakistan, the USSR, and the United States under UN auspices in April 1988. The main clauses of the Accords stipulated noninterference in each other's internal affairs, return of the Afghan refugees camped in Pakistan, withdrawal of the Soviet troops from Afghanistan and monitoring of the agreement by the United Nations. The only clause honored, however, was the one pertaining to the withdrawal of Soviet troops. The Soviets went home to nurse their collective wound but Afghanistan and its people were kept bleeding due to noncompliance by Pakistan and its abettors.

General Zia died in the crash of his plane on 16 August 1988, shortly after dismissing his own prime minister, Junejo, who had signed the Geneva Accords. The onus for their implementation was now on the shoulders of newly elected Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, the daughter of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. During her electoral campaign in November 1988 she had promised to recognize the PDPA government in Afghanistan headed by Dr. Muhammad Najibullah and to seek a political settlement of the war. When elected she was visited by the Soviet foreign minister with a proposal to allow Najibullah to continue for a transitional period of six months, which she found acceptable (Nawaz, p.424). As prime minister, however, she lacked independence to pursue her own Afghanistan policy. The elections of November, which she won, were allowed only reluctantly by the military establishment and manipulated heavily by Zia's successor in the army, General Aslam Beg, who used the ISI to rig the elections so that Bhutto's party would not have an absolute majority in the parliament. The powerful ISI also had its own agenda: keeping the pot of Islamist insurrection or *jihad* boiling in Afghanistan.

The door to a negotiated settlement of the ongoing guerrilla war in Afghanistan was finally closed on Benazir Bhutto when she paid her maiden visit to Washington and London as prime minister in June 1989. After a 'very cordial' meeting with George Bush (senior), she announced her total agreement with him that Najibullah must go as a precondition for any political settlement with Afghanistan, and in London she was bluntly told by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher that war in Afghanistan will continue until complete 'military victory' was achieved.⁶ So the CIA and ISI stayed the course, funding, arming, and

⁶ *Manchester Guardian*, 16 July 1989.

training the international hordes of *mujahideen* to wage their holy war against the PDPA government even after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991.

Finally, in April 1992 Kabul fell to the *mujahideen* fighters and Najibullah was forced to seek refuge in the UN compound. For the United States and its al-lies this was the moment of triumph, a complete 'military victory'. Within days, however, Afghanistan had plunged into a bloody civil war. The *mujahideen* warlords nominated to an Afghan interim government by Pakistan's ISI and waiting in the wings to establish their 'Islamic' rule over Afghanistan went for each other's throats over the control of territory and resources, resorting to heavy gun battles. It was in these battles that much of Kabul was destroyed and more Afghan civilians were killed than had ever died during the holy war against the Soviets. The naked face of *jihad* was now unveiled.

This is largely a missing chapter in the literature on anti-Soviet/PDPA *jihad* instigated by the United States and the books under review are no exception in regard to this omission. There is a myth which even Ali repeats in his book that 'once the Soviet Union had withdrawn its troops, Washington had lost interest in the country' (p.136). The United States in fact did not lose interest in Afghanistan until three years after the withdrawal of Soviet troops. The U.S. proxy war continued in breach of the 1988 Geneva Accords until the PDPA government was defeated in 1992 and Afghanistan was plunged into a civil war among the *mujahideen* warlords.

For the next four years Afghanistan suffered a total collapse of its civil institutions, although the façade of an interim government in Kabul under the Tajik Islamist leader Rabbani and his defense minister Ahmed Shah Masud remained in place. The country was emptied of its educated professional class. Modern education came to an end as did the day when girls could go to school and women to work. Museums and cultural monuments were plundered or destroyed for being un-Islamic. Much of the agricultural land was laid waste by feuding *mujahideen* warlords and the rest was put under poppy cultivation. Heroin factories sprang up on both sides of the Afghanistan-Pakistan border and trade in the narcotic multiplied. Rashid observes: 'Warlords seized people's homes and farms for no reason, raped their daughters, abused and robbed the population and taxed travelers at will' (pp.12-13).

Neither did the people of Pakistan escape the bitter legacy of their state's involvement in the U.S.-instigated Afghan *jihad*. It left its ugly marks and enduring distortions on the entire institutional structure of society. There was a phenomenal increase in the intimidating power of the Islamist political parties co-opted by Gen. Zia and his ISI to wage

jihad in Afghanistan. They began to follow their own political agendas after the Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan, operate their own military institutions, and raise their own militias to launch attacks on other Muslim sects and on non-Muslim minorities. *Jihad* to liberate Kashmir from India became a new focus of their militancy. The massive infusion of deadly weapons into Afghanistan also began to spill back across the border into Pakistan, causing a dramatic increase in sectarian killings, political murders, and armed robberies. And most importantly for Pakistan's state structure, the ISI generals began to act independently of the government in setting up their own foreign policy agendas while engineering alliances among Islamic political parties against secular politics and political parties.

In the meantime out of Afghanistan's Hobbesian anarchy arose yet another Islamic militia around 1994 by the name of Taliban (literally meaning students) under the leadership of Mullah Omar. This militia was raised mainly from the Afghan refugees camped in Pakistan and from the students of Saudi-funded *madrassas* run by Pakistani Islamist parties. Himself one of the *mujahideen* who had fought in the anti-Soviet *jihad* and lost one eye, Omar promised to curb the excesses of *mujahideen* warlords. By this time Pakistan's military establishment and its secret service, the ISI, was also disenchanted with the fractious *mujahideen* government it had installed in Kabul and decided to throw its weight behind Mullah Omar's Taliban. The ISI had access to a huge cache of weapons, 'enough supplies to equip a corps,' stored at a camp inside Afghanistan which it handed over to the Taliban militia giving it a tremendous boost (Nawaz, p.479). Hamid Karzai who had earlier participated in the anti-Soviet/PDPA *jihad*, also gave fifty thousand dollars and 'a cache of weapons' to the Taliban (Rashid, p.13).

Reinforced with all this cash and weaponry the Taliban overran the *mujahideen* strongholds and checkpoints in Kandahar, captured Herat in 1995 and Kabul in 1996, chasing Ahmed Shah Masud, the star of anti-Soviet *jihad*, along with the interim president Rabbani, out of the capital. They also dragged Najibullah out of the UN compound and hanged him by a lamppost with his dismembered genitals stuffed in his mouth. Within two years Mullah Omar's Taliban had established their control over all of Afghanistan, except a small area in the north controlled by a coalition of ethnic Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Hazaras, known as the Northern Alliance (NA).

Pakistan recognized the Taliban government, the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, soon after Kabul was captured in 1996, followed by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirate. The United States too welcomed the establishment of Taliban rule although it did not give it

formal recognition. For Washington the rise of the Taliban carried the promise of accessing the vast Central Asian oil and gas reserves via Afghanistan and Pakistan, a prospect that is discussed at length in Rashid's book. For the Afghan people and society, however, the rise of the Taliban proved to be yet another calamity.

Having consolidated their control over Afghanistan, the Taliban, many of them bearing the mental and physical scars of a prolonged guerrilla war that had started with the anti-Soviet *jihad*, began to rule Afghanistan with a pathological religious zeal. They massacred *Shias* (a minority sect of Islam), dispossessed women of their jobs, confining them to their homes and *burqas* (veils), banned female education, burned films and cinema houses, and smashed TV sets and VCRs. And they would periodically gather in Kabul's disused soccer stadium to watch their adultery convicts, generally women, stoned to death.

In the meantime the foreign holy warriors began to drift out of Afghanistan to their homelands, including Osama bin Laden, who returned to Saudi Arabia. But this hero of the anti-Soviet/PDPA *jihad* soon ran afoul of the Saudi royals because of criticizing them for supporting the United States in the 1991 Gulf War against Iraq and harboring U.S. (infidel) soldiers in the holiest land of Islam. Saudis forthwith stripped him of his citizenship and bin Laden moved to Sudan where he is said to have set up the initial base of his own *jihad* organization, Al Qaeda. However he had to move out of Sudan as well, reportedly under U.S. and Saudi pressure on the Sudanese government. In the summer of 1996 he was back in his familiar bunkers of Afghanistan traveling via Pakistan, this time as the guest of the Taliban leader Mullah Omar.

After bin Laden's second coming to Afghanistan there were renewed attacks on U.S. targets around the world; these began with the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center in New York, for which an Egyptian resident cleric in the city, Sheikh Abdel Rehman, was convicted and jailed. This incident was followed by the bombing of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998, provoking the Clinton administration to retaliate by lobbing some seventy state-of-the-art Cruise missiles on Sudan and Eastern Afghanistan. The Afghanistan strikes were launched from Pakistan's territorial waters in the Indian Ocean, hitting Osama bin Laden's training camps in which a number of Pakistani, Arab, and Afghan militants were killed. Bin Laden apparently escaped. In October 2000 the American destroyer USS *Cole*, docked in the Aden port, was attacked, killing seven-teen U.S. sailors. The Islamic *jihad* was clearly on again, but this time against the very superpower that had helped unleash it in the first place. U.S. strategists obviously did not

know what they were getting into when they opted to use Islamic *jihad* as a cold war weapon against the Soviets in 1980.

After the Cruise missiles failed to do their job, the United States tried to mobilize the international community through a series of UN resolutions demanding that the Taliban close the *jihad* training camps in Afghanistan, stop providing sanctuary to terrorists, hand over bin Laden, and so on, but with little effect (Rashid, pp.18–19). The Taliban kept muddling along with their atrocious rule of Afghanistan. Pakistan's army, which was back in power as a result of Gen. Pervez Musharraf's coup in October 1999, continued to support the Taliban in its own interest. And the United States itself continued to negotiate, albeit unsuccessfully, with the Taliban leadership not only for the extradition of bin Laden, but also hoping to cut deals with them for the opening of oil routes from the Central Asian states through Afghanistan.

Then occurred the tragic events of 9/11 and the retaliatory bombing of Afghanistan. On 11 September 2001 two hijacked passenger planes slammed into the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York and another one hit the Pentagon building in Washington, D.C., causing much grief and rage in America and horror around the world. Soon thereafter President George W. Bush declared a 'war on terror'. Rashid writes that the enemy defined in as vague a term as *terror*, enabled 'neocons' advising Bush to convince him to broaden the war into 'a global conflict with Islam' (p.xlvii). Afghanistan was singled out as the immediate target of war under the euphemistic code of 'Operation Enduring Freedom'. The objective at any cost was to oust the Taliban regime, which was hosting Osama bin Laden, the assumed culprit of the 9/11 atrocity.

For Pakistan's latest military dictator, Musharraf, the U.S. decision to attack Afghanistan came as a blessing from the blue. As Nawaz notes in his book, Afghanistan's tragedies have a way of becoming a boon for Pakistan's dictator-ships. Just as 'the tin pot dictator' Zia became the key ally of the United States in the *jihad* against the Soviets, Gen. Musharraf became a central figure in the U.S. war on terror, 'feted and eulogized' by President Bush (p.538).

On 14 September 2001 Musharraf promptly accepted a list of seven U.S. demands to assist with the attack on Afghanistan, turning his back on the Taliban whose rule his government had fully supported thus far. Rashid writes that, un-known to the people of Pakistan, Musharraf had granted enormous facilities to the U.S.-led coalition forces to attack Afghanistan. 'CENTCOM planes flew 57,800 sorties out of Pakistani air bases. Karachi's seaport and airport were handed over to the Coalition, while U.S. naval operations (from Pakistan's coastal waters) were...the

largest in size, duration and depth that the U.S. Marine Corps had conducted since the Korean War' (Rashid, p.91).

On 7 October, laser-guided bombs and Cruise missiles began to rain death and destruction on Afghanistan to oust the Taliban regime and to kill, or capture alive, Osama bin Laden. As CNN began to captivate its worldwide audience with apocalyptic booms and mushroom clouds of bunker-busters and cluster bombs, the people of Afghanistan found themselves with no place to hide. From the TV screens it looked like the entire population of Afghanistan was on the move. What was left of the cities from past destruction was being reduced to rubble and rubble into dust. Men, women, and children, leaving behind their mud huts, bombed villages, and their dead, were running helter-skelter with their meager belongings loaded on their bent backs, donkeys and carts, some reaching the Pakistan border only to be beaten back by border guards. UN agencies pleaded in vain for bombing pauses to allow the delivery of food and relief supplies to people already facing starvation in that year of the long drought. How many innocent civilians were killed, maimed, or starved to death? No one knows; no one was counting. Rashid, quoting a 20 May 2002 *Guardian* article, writes that the United States dropped 1,228 cluster bombs releasing a quarter of a million bomblets that continue to kill or maim civilians years later (p.98).

Like most strategic analysis literature, however, Rashid's arguments are advanced within a framework that skirts the fact that the U.S. attack on Afghanistan precipitated a human disaster of great magnitude. He argues instead that the al-most exclusive reliance on aerial bombardment, with a minimal deployment of U.S. troops on the ground, was a mistake that allowed Taliban and Al Qaeda fighters to escape into Pakistan with or without the support of Pakistan's ISI. For the ground assault on the Taliban positions the U.S. commanders had enlisted the support of the Northern Alliance, the traditional adversary of Taliban — a far from a reliable and disciplined force. The 'Great Escape' of Taliban and Al Qaeda leaders, Rashid concludes, 'would have enormous implications on the subsequent U.S.-led war on terrorism' (p.93).

The said escapees did indeed regroup in Pakistan's semiautonomous tribal belt along the Afghanistan border known as the Federally Administered Areas (FATA). By 2002 they were able to recruit some fighters from the Pakistani *madrassas* and Afghan refugee camps to start low-intensity guerrilla attacks on the outposts of the Karzai government installed in Kabul by the United States and its allies after the rout of the Taliban. Since those beginnings the post-9/11 conflict in Afghanistan has escalated into a formidable unconventional

war between the U.S.-led coalition troops, called the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), and the Taliban insurgents ('resisters,' as Ali puts it), claiming more and more combatant and civilian lives year after year with no end in sight. The Taliban have re-emerged as an illusive but invincible force, reviving the debate as to whether a military solution to the conflict in Afghanistan is possible at all.

The question being asked ever more frequently is whether the ISAF can win the war against Taliban and Al Qaeda. Rashid seems to believe that the war is winnable *provided* the United States and its allies commit a much larger force to Afghanistan than the present strength of some 100,000 U.S. and NATO troops, with the aim of increasing the level of security needed to launch an effective pro-program of economic development and nation building that has been neglected so far. In order to provide that level of security it is also crucial in Rashid's view to eliminate the Taliban safe havens on Pakistan's side of the border, which operate with the support of Pakistan's army and ISI. Easier said than done!

On the other hand Ali is of the view that what was initially seen as a 'necessary police action against Al Qaeda following the 9/11 attacks is now perceived by a growing majority in the entire region as a full-fledged imperial occupation' (p.241). Resistance to ISAF operations is being fed by NATO's indiscriminate bombings, misconduct by the occupation troops including mercenaries, and the harassment and extortions that officials of the Karzai government inflict on the people. 'Occupation itself has been the main recruiting sergeant,' writes Ali, and the failure of the ISAF offensive cannot be blamed simply on Pakistan's government and the ISI, which no longer have control over a diffuse and widespread movement of resistance (pp.242-43). The only 'preferable and workable' solution to end the problem is a complete withdrawal of the U.S. and NATO troops from Afghanistan, preceded or followed by a regional pact involving Pakistan, Iran, India, Russia, and possibly China to guarantee and support a functioning national government in Afghanistan with a serious social and economic plan to rebuild the country and provide basic necessities to the people (Ali, p.247).

Rashid's analysis is confined within the parameters of Afghanistan policy under discussion in Washington since Obama took over the U.S. presidency. One doubts, however, if the Obama administration can successfully switch from a war mode to a security and development mode by sending another 40,000 troops to Afghanistan as General Stanley McChrystal, commander of the U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan, has recommended. What Ali suggests is a plan that makes more sense but does not fit in the realpolitik of the U.S.

dominated global power structure. He is nevertheless correct in saying that 'the solution is political not military and should be sought in the region, not in Washington or Brussels' (p.243). What is open to question in this respect is the likelihood of India and Pakistan burying the hatchet and working together independently of U.S. pressure to promote peace in the region and help Afghanistan rebuild itself.

One thing is quite clear though. No solution to the problem of militancy and war in Afghanistan can be contemplated without consideration of Pakistan. The stronghold of the Afghan Taliban is among the Pakhtun ethnic tribes, half of whom live in the FATA belt of Pakistan, separated from Afghanistan by a porous border imposed by the British colonial power in 1883. It is understandable therefore for the Taliban to have established their bases in FATA after they were driven out of Afghanistan in 2001. Since 2001 the Pakistan Army has launched three ineffective offensives, reportedly under U.S. pressure, to expel the Taliban and Al Qaeda militants from the Waziristan agencies of the FATA belt, losing in the process over two thousand of its soldiers. A fourth offensive is now under way. Thousands of Pakhtun families from FATA have fled to cities inside Pakistan or across the border into Afghanistan, leaving the region a battlefield over which U.S. drone planes fly freely in disregard of Pakistan's sovereign air space, firing missiles at suspected Taliban and at alleged Al Qaeda dwellings and hideouts.

Pakistan and its people have continued to bear the brunt of mounting Islamist violence in the aftermath of the 2001 U.S. bombing of Afghanistan. In 2007 a Pakistan wing of the Taliban in FATA appeared, called Tahreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), meaning the Taliban Movement of Pakistan. Since the formation of TTP, then headed by a young Pakhtun militant, Baitullah Mehsud, suicide at-tacks, bombings, political assassinations, and commando-style raids with deadly weapons have escalated significantly against targets throughout Pakistan, including its urban areas.

The formation of TTP came at a critical time when a process of political transition was taking place once again from military to civilian rule in Pakistan. In March 2007 Gen. Musharraf tried to sack the chief justice of the Supreme Court for going too far in defending the civil rights of people victimized by his regime. To his surprise this triggered a mass protest against his rule led by the legal community, now famously known as the lawyer's movement. Threatened by this movement Musharraf agreed to a deal brokered by his friends in the U.S. administration to allow Benazir Bhutto to return from exile and contest election for the office of prime minister under the condition that she

would keep Musharraf as president. Unfortunately, Bhutto was assassinated while on her election campaign trail in December 2007, allegedly by Baitullah Mehsud's TTP operatives. Elections went ahead in February 2008 without Bhutto. Her party, PPP, won the largest number of national assembly seats and formed a civilian government in coalition with two other parties. A few months later Musharraf was forced to re-sign as president and his place was taken by Asif Zardari, the widower of Benazir Bhutto.

During the last days of Musharraf's rule Islamic militants with connections to the TTP had gotten so bold that they forcibly occupied Pakistan's prime tourist area, the scenic Swat Valley in the north, drove out the local administration, and proceeded to impose their barbaric version of *shari'a* law, resorting to blowing up girls schools, flogging the 'sinful,' and beheading people to demonstrate their power.

Then in early April 2009, a video surfaced showing a wailing teenage Swat girl being flogged by a bearded man while others held her on the ground with face down. The playing of the video on Pakistani and international TV channels blew the lid off the patience of the people with Islamists and their antics. First the official spokesmen tried to claim that the video was a fabrication, which failed to appease the outraged public. Questions also arose in the United States on the safety of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal in the face of militants having established their rule so close to the national capital. The Pakistan Army was finally moved to launch a serious operation on April 26 to recover Swat from the grip of the militants. However, the usual prevarication of Pakistani authorities in dealing with the Islamists made the military operation in Swat very costly in human terms. As the army's heavy tanks and helicopter gunships went into action against well-entrenched militants, many civilians were killed and some 3 million men, women, and children had to flee from the Swat Valley and neighboring districts, most ending up in treeless tent cities in the plains under the blazing summer sun.

While the Swat military operation was still in progress, another incident took place that seems to have strengthened the resolve of the army as well as the militants to battle it out. On 5 August 2009 a Hellfire missile launched from a U.S. drone plane killed Baitullah Mehsud, the TTP leader. It did not take long for the TTP and its affiliated Islamist parties to hit back with a new wave of horrendous attacks on human and institutional targets inside Pakistan. It began with a suicide attack on 27 August instantly killing twenty-two Pakistani border guards at the Torkham crossing into Afghanistan, the main entry point for truck convoys that deliver supplies to the NATO forces. The following month, September, was relatively quiet but beginning on 5 October, when a

suicide bomb exploded in the UN Food Program building in Islamabad, the major cities of Pakistan have been rocked almost daily by an avalanche of deadly militant attacks, for which TTP has claimed responsibility. The most audacious of these attacks was a 22-hour commando-style assault on Pakistan's military headquarters in Rawalpindi during the weekend of 10–11 October, leaving twenty-three dead including some senior officers. The attackers blasted their way deep into the highly fortified nerve center of Pakistani state's premier institution.

This latest wave of attacks by Islamist militants, which in just two weeks of October 2009 claimed 170 lives and countless others wounded and maimed, is be-coming ever more deadly. As the government has reinforced defenses around its institutional assets, the TTP militants have expanded their targets to crowded bazaars and public places, claiming a greater toll of innocent civilian lives. For Pakistan it is indeed the moment of truth. The country's ruling class must now reflect dispassionately on what their homeland has lost and gained by decades of infusing religion into the affairs of the state, subjecting the country to long periods of military rule, and catering to the geopolitical interests of the United States.