

PAKISTAN FOR MILITARY

The founder of Pakistan Nohammed Ali Jinnah was not a good muslim instrict religious sense. He was aware of the problems of the political implications of the divisions in the territory of Pakistan in 1947 and tried authoritarian measures which did not work as planned. He dismissed the Congress-led Government in North Western Frontier Province which before partition wanted to be a part of India, appointing a Muslim League leader as Chief Minister. In Bangladesh which seceded after the civil war in 1971 he had forced the introduction of Urdu as the only state language. These are two illustrations of the problem at the initial stage of the birth of Pakistan. Recently, ethnic sectarian conflicts and tensions have put two states on unstable ground— Punjab and Sindh. The province of Baluchistan had faced violent activities demanding its autonomy as a separate state or a part of confederation which were suppressed by violent military rule.

Political instability has marked Pakistan's history since 1953 when Governor-General Ghulam Muhammad dismissed the country's first civilian government. Since then army chiefs and political leaders had dismissed as many as 10 civilian governments that ruled for 27 years. The remaining 33 years were ruled by consistent direct military rule.

When one raises the issue of military-industrial-political complex, it exists clearly in today's Pakistan. From this perspective, Pakistan can be compared with Burma (Myanmar) with one point of difference, Burma does not have the serious political problem of sectarian ethnic diversity Pakistan faces.

Seen in the context of ethnic and cultural diversity in Pakistan, one can look at Pakistan's use of militants to fight Soviet occupation of Afghanistan about 28 years ago. For over two decades, the military and its powerful Inter Service Intelligence (ISI) had liberally funded myriad militant groups most of them Islamic fundamentalists. Now they may have turned into unemployed *jihadis* owning destructive weapons.

According to the author of a recently published book, "Military Inc : Inside Pakistan's Military Economy" Ayesha Siddiqa. the Pakistani military owns hundreds of businesses and millions of acres of land. According to her, the army has turned into an independent class involved in owning the corporate sector, their welfare foundations, running thousands of businesses ranging from petrol groups to industrial plants. She describes this relationship as "Milbus" which stands for military business. In Pakistan, according to her report, it operates in all three sectors—agriculture, manufacturing and service.

While army in Pakistan controls politics and economy, it neglects important social service such as funding schools. According to a report in the *Guardian Weekly* (June 24, 2007) government funding of public schools have declined ;leading increases in enrolment in madrassas often subsidised by Saudi Arabia's monarchy. Many poor Pakistani students unable to go to public schools tend to go to madrassas where free but ultra-conservative educaion is given. Nearly one million students are enroled in madrassas. Most of them are likely to be religious fundamentalists rather than open-minded liberals.

Another factor disturbing Pakistan politics is the power in many backward areas of local feudal zamindars enforcing loyalty. Many such zamindars are reported to have private prisons and private armies.

Given the circumstances one can question whether the shift in government from Musharaff to a civilian or a coalition partnership will bring about any basic social and political change in Pakistan in near future. There is a gap between the rhetoric of free election and reality of change in politics and its basis of social and economic structure.

With the assassination of Benazir Bhutto Musharraf's plan to democratise the military rule after the January 8 elections [now deferred?], has suffered a serious jolt. Parliamentary democracy or no parliamentary democracy, Pakistan's complex power equation seems to be getting more complex with every passing day. The process of disintegration that started with the abolition of East Pakistan continues unabated. Now the very existence of Pakistan as a nation state is threatened and threat is coming from within. □□□ 31.12.2007

[Contributed]