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REVIEW ARTICLE HAQQANI

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SHEDDING LIGHT ON BOTH PUBLIC AND HIDDEN AGENDAS

OF PAKISTAN'S RULERS. REVIEW ARTICLE BY OLIVIER IMMIG

In July 2005 Husain Haqqani published his timely announced *Pakistan: Between Mosque and Military* at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Besides being a visiting scholar at 'Carnegie' for a number of years now as well as an associate professor at Boston University, Mr. Haqqani also is a well-known international publicist on South Asian topics. He combines some remarkable qualities, among them a sound and profound analytical approach, and an ability to report his findings in lucid style and wording. Mr. Haqqani throughout the years spoke with numerous influential Pakistani, carefully taking notes all the time. His prominent political role (he served as an advisor on international relations to three civilian Pakistani prime ministers) enabled him to do so. Another important asset to Mr. Haqqani's solid scholarship is to be found in his private and public life taking place largely in the USA. Being a critical academic in Pakistan is quite a different undertaking in many ways.

In 'Between Mosque and Military' Haqqani instantaneously makes it clear that all military Pakistani leaders, and there have been quite a number of them since 1947, from the early days of Pakistan's inception to the present have relied on the same ideological framework in ruling their country. This so-called 'tripod' consists of: maintaining the territorial integrity of Pakistan through a strong, dominant military presence in all state affairs by continued confrontational politics versus India; maintaining the ideological 'unity' of the country by promoting an Islamist nationalist ideology; heavy reliance on continuing American economic and military support by serving as the "West's eastern anchor" in South Asia. Of course, a number of democratically chosen civilian rulers have been able to try their hand at governing this 'ethnic mosaic' called Pakistan as well. After all, the Great Leader ('Quaid-i-Azam') Muhammad Ali Jinnah meant to establish a *democratically* ruled homeland for Indian Muslims. Unfortunately, Mr. Jinnah died soon after independence; some years later the first prime minister of the country, Liaquat Ali Khan, was murdered. Soon, the military took over.

Haqqani reveals a carefully hidden, but obviously powerful, repetitive pattern in Pakistani military coups. All coups are carefully planned, and well in advance. They are preceded by carefully orchestrated disorder and demonstrations in the streets. These riotous movements against ruling chosen governments are invariably led by small but influential Islamist political parties, usually well-funded. Although religious parties like the Jamaat-e-Islami and Jamiat-e-Ulema Islam never do well at election time, they mysteriously do succeed in mobilizing angry crowds against civilian leaders. Thus, they enable the military to

‘reluctantly’ step in once more to ‘clean up the mess’, usually within hours after its announcement to do so, and without any significant opposition from within its own ranks. The first claim from any military leader always is to declare that the army was ‘provoked to act decisively’ by an unjustly acting civilian government. Follows the usual mumble bumble about ‘preserving the national unity’, etcetera. Interestingly enough, there never has been any form of protest from Islamic parties against military regimes... On the contrary.

This coup-pattern can readily be applied to the take-over from Nawaz Sharif as staged by general Musharraf in 1999, and as such it is highly revealing. However, Mr. Haqqani conveniently skips any description of the great public relief that was generally experienced in Pakistan when Musharraf took over. The country’s elite, most intellectuals, the media and the public at large felt not sorry at all for the forced departure of Mr. Sharif. Why not? Which is not meant to state that military coups are sufficiently legitimated by a ‘doctrine of necessity’ or any other twisted notion: military belong in their barracks, and should only come out if so ordered by a civilian leader.

It is precisely at this point that some fundamental flaws in Pakistan’s founding ideology come to the surface – flaws that ever since have enabled military and Islamists alike to acquire far more than their fair share of power. Sharif intended to sack Musharraf. But to be able to do so, he obviously felt obliged to sent off his once trusted commander to an airport in India – or, if Musharraf wished to avoid that deep humiliation, to let him crash with his plane. The mere fact that Musharraf still firmly holds on to the reigns of power today, while civilian leaders like Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif are living abroad, once again serves to illustrate that, ultimately, state power solidly remains in military hands.

Obviously, it is a risky task for any civilian politician, premier or president, to replace an army chief. A military leader, on the other hand, can sack a prime minister virtually at will – by asking and banishing, or by simply throwing him or her behind bars. The so-called ‘balance’ within the ruling troika (army, president and prime minister) is illusive. Islamic parties duly play their part and, especially since the UI Haq era (1977-1988), pick up the huge rewards. All this, however, is a far cry from secular parliamentary democracy, religious freedom, and Pakistan being a safe haven for all muslims from the subcontinent, as intended by Mr. Jinnah. Unfortunately, the state of Pakistan always has been made up by a number of ethnicities and nations, in spite of any founding ‘Two Nations’ theory. This is reflected, among others, in the enduring absence of solid political parties that are truly operating nation-wide, and attracting a national electorate. Maybe it is for that reason that Mr. Haqqani pays only scant attention to them.

Being a convinced democrat and Pakistani citizen, Mr. Haqqani in his concluding chapter entitled ‘From Ideological to Functional State’ offers an approach to dismantle this seemingly everlasting Pakistani power structure. Haqqani distinguishes three intersecting ‘fault lines’: between civilian and military, among

various ethnic and provincial groups, and between Islamists and secularists. Repeated election results support his statement that 'Most Pakistanis would probably be quite content with a state that would cater to their social needs, respect and protect their right to observe religion, and would not invoke Islam as its sole source of legitimacy:...'

Nevertheless, the key to advancing secular politics over religious sentiments, and its accompanying democratic reforms, sound instead of forced economic and regional rivalry, firmly remains in military hands. The military should be persuaded to gradually turn over their power to elected governments, since their all-powerful national position is based on the early days of Pakistan's vulnerable existence. The key question is, of course: who shall be able to persuade the soldiers? Which benevolent leader, or leaders, will step forward, if ever, to carry out this complex process?

Letting politics run its course, primarily under the rule of law instead of that of the military, seems a risky affair. It might even lead to another dismemberment of Pakistan. Balochis in particular, like Bengalis did before them in 1970, might well choose to run their own political and economic affairs. Would a downsized Pakistan and an independent but presumably weak state of Balochistan (making up almost half the territory of Pakistan!) signal an end to the activities of Islamic radicals?

It remains the gruesome dilemma of the state of Pakistan, present since its birth; any meaningful loosening up of the old 'steel ring' of the military ideological and political presence inevitably will threaten its very existence. The greatest threat to Pakistan's continued existence has always been its rich ethnic composition and rivalry, which has never been successfully overruled by any national ideology. Small wonder, in this respect, that 'arch foe' India always mainly functioned as an ideological enemy, rather than an actual military menace. Even today, Baloch nationalists in Pakistan are 'accused' of receiving Indian support and encouragement.

Recently, newly energized radical Islamists are putting forward their political demands, enhancing rather than diminishing Pakistan's political complexities. In 2007 in Pakistan national elections are supposed to be held, that is, if in the meantime Mr. Musharraf does not decide otherwise. It promises to be a veritable spectacle, with the active participation of former prime ministers like Mrs. Bhutto and Mr. Sharif. Whatever the results may be, it takes far more than elections to arrive at that highly desired point; a truly functional state.

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