

Book Review

**Hafeez Malik (ed.), *Pakistan: Founder's Aspirations & Today's Realities*,
Oxford University Press, 2001,
468 pages, Price: Rs. 595.00**

In order to assess Pakistan's performance as a state over a period of fifty years, Hafeez Malik, the learned editor of this volume, organised an international seminar at Villanova University in October 1997. He carried out this exercise under the auspices of the Pakistan-America Foundation, in collaboration with the Centre for Arab and Islamic Studies. Scholars and public figures from the United States and Pakistan presented their well-researched papers on specific issues. These papers now constitute the chapters in this book.

Talking about constitutional developments, S.M. Zafar, holds that the capacity of Pakistani society to sustain the stress of making and unmaking three constitutions living through various Martial Laws, suffering the tragic shock of losing East Pakistan as part of the country and witnessing massive corruption in politics and yet being able to preserve national identity and seek to establish a system based on ballots and accountability, is an exceptional phenomenon in itself and a source of great hope. It is now for the leaders to ensure that no constitutional crisis takes place in future. There is a limit to Pakistan's patience to withstand such shocks!

Taking stock of the role of the Judiciary vis-a-vis constitutional crisis in Pakistan, Dr. Javid Iqbal says that during the past fifty-year history of Pakistan, the country has passed through numerous constitutional crises, and as a consequence, the superior courts have been called upon to resolve them. He opines that in the

first decade, main reason of the crisis was the peculiar nature of the Provisional Constitution of Pakistan. This was based on the Government of India Act, 1935, with some modifications wrought by the Act of Independence in 1947. The Provisional Constitution remained in force for a period of nine years (1947-56).

Continuing his arguments, the learned writer says that this Provisional Constitution retained the office of the Governor General who represented the Crown and exercised his broad discretionary powers. On the other hand, it laid down the structure of a democratic government. The Constituent Assembly enacted laws for day-to-day affairs of the state and was expected to frame the future constitution.

Viewed in this background, the struggle for supremacy started between the Legislators on the one hand and the Executive Authority on the other. The struggle assumed the form of a conflict between democracy and autocracy, and the Judiciary, whose autonomy and independence were guaranteed under the Provisional Constitution.

Another is of the firm view that if these organs of the state perform their responsibilities independently within their own spheres, democracy can flourish and the people can enjoy the fruits of independence.

In his lengthy and well-researched article: *Role of the Military in Politics - 1947-97*, General Khalid Mahmud Arif, brings out that during the past fifty years in Pakistan, flawed democracy and self-serving dictatorship alternated between themselves and now democracy has emerged out of this contest like a phoenix out of the ashes of authoritarian rule.

This phenomenon, however, provides hope for the future. The General thinks that military dictators were not the sole spoilers of the democratic order. To him, the performance of some elected rulers was no less ruthless and undemocratic. He makes us believe that the military rulers were not, per se, against the political system but they had desired to replace their "misused and faulty" parts.

General Arif further reveals that the military rulers had preferred a presidential form of government. FM Ayub had introduced one, but the Constitution had collapsed with him.

Yahaya Khan's constitutional misfortunes were too obvious to miss. General Zia, on his part, had also desired a presidential form of government but he was persuaded not to do so. Instead, he held partyless general elections, which to his consternation, had failed to gain support of the elected members.

In his essay: "Political Development in Pakistan", Craig Baxter holds that Pakistan is a state that faces numerous problems in the development of political, economic and social system. Also it has international issues that impose themselves on a fragile political system. To overcome these shortcomings, he underscores the need of state building, nation-building, economy building, participation and distribution.

Taking stock of Pakistan's nuclear capability, Munir Ahmad Khan, is convinced that in Pakistan, the nuclear programme enjoys the widest possible public support and the political parties are all in favour of maintaining the nuclear option. Over the last twenty-five years, in spite of many changes, at no stage, did any government agree to give up the nuclear option or withhold its support from the national nuclear programme. For Pakistanis, the nuclear option is regarded as an essential element for national security and survival. They argue that Pakistan needs this option against a larger militant and aggressive neighbour, which has not yet given up the idea of undoing Pakistan.

The author is of the firm view that India seems to be on a collision course not only with its smaller neighbours but also with major powers, notably China and Japan in Asia and US and Russia outside. In this way, India is not only a regional problem but also a global problem in the making. Pakistan, in no way; poses any threat to India. Pakistan's primary concern is its security, development and survival. Therefore, it is far more anxious to resolve the nuclear and Kashmir issue than India. It has always responded positively to any proposal for making South Asia a nuclear free zone or strengthening non-proliferation regime in the area. It perceives a real threat from India and is anxious to take all political and defensive measures to blunt this threat.

The author is convinced that nuclear capability or nuclear weapons are not the root cause of the problems between India and Pakistan. These are, on the other hand, the by-product of mutual

mistrust and suspicion. The basic issues are political and security related. Unless these issues, the foremost being the Kashmir issue, are resolved, there will be only limited progress in the nuclear and other domains.

In his essay: "Foreign Policy: Relations with the West, China and Middle East", Abdul Sattar, former Foreign Minister of Pakistan, holds that Pakistan has completed the fifty years of its existence and is once again on its own yet, unlike the difficult years following independence, when fledgling state was virtually defenceless and without financial resources, Pakistan can now display reliable self defence capacity and can mobilize domestic resources for economic development. Now, with the dawn of the new century, the country is, finally, coming to grips with the internal challenges of political modernization and good governance.

Next, taking stock of indo-Pakistan relations, with particular reference to the nagging problem of Kashmir, Robert Wirsing, says that since its inception, Pakistan's foreign policy of forging closer relations, verging on an alliance with the United States, was operative until 1991. This was the period of the Cold War, and Pakistan accordingly derived strategic advantages. Now at the global level, the geo-strategic environment has undergone a strategic sea-change. No great power, especially the United States, is now going to go out of the way to help Pakistan, especially in its conflict with India. The natural habitat of Pakistan foreign policy, if it is imaginatively crafted, is the Middle East, Persian Gulf region, Central Asia, and China. Yet, Pakistan would remain quagmired in its confrontational interaction with India over Kashmir and would be unable to play a meaningful role.

Hafeez Malik maintains that Pakistan would be well advised to improve its relations with Russia. Russia is no longer a superpower, but remains a great European power and will continue to have a strong influence in Central Asia as well as in South Asia.

Nor should one ignore the fact that Russia has officially assumed the role of a successor state to the Soviet Union. Despite Russia's fall from the pinnacle of superpower status, it still can be an alternative source of technology and defensive military hardware, and a partner in diplomacy for Pakistan, especially in Central Asia and South Asia.

Hafeez Malik deserves our gratitude for bringing out such a useful collection of well searched Papers.

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