

BOOK REVIEW

T.V. Paul, *The Warrior State: Pakistan in the Contemporary World*, New Delhi: Random House, 2014, Pages: 257, Price: Rs. 499.00

Books that try to test theories by analysing the practice normally tend to be very intense. Paul's *Warrior State* is not an exception to the rule. Delving into his "weak state" "strong state" analyses in earlier literature, this book focuses on Pakistan's insecurity paradigm, based on the political history of the country generally, and wars particularly. Also analysed in the process are the nature of the elite – both civilian and military, and its contribution (rather lack of it) to the state since inception. The author tries to test his "weak state" theory, making use of the prevalent war-making and development of state (relationship) literature based on analyses of a range of other countries to explain the state of Pakistan as it stands today.

The Warrior State presents the political developments in Pakistan in a coherent way, with one chapter flowing into the next, in a continuum. For Paul, the state's Hobbesian view of the world (where "war is a natural state of affairs", p. 4) is responsible for what Pakistan is today. The author pinpoints the reasons for Pakistan's situation: against military elites prone to "group think", the absence of a strong demand for institutional reforms (normally made by powerful social and political groups), weak civil society groups (retreating after initial activism), lack of demand for institutional reforms, and outside aid compensating for economic shortfalls (pp. 29–30). Paul holds external factors responsible for not seeking transformation and perpetuating status quo, calling the United States a case of "lost opportunities and misguided policies", and secondary supporters like China and Saudi Arabia as unlikely candidates seeking the change in view of "their own aversion to democracy" (p. 30).

The eye-catching idea in the book is the "geostrategic curse" akin to "resource curse" in which resources like oil can turn out to be a curse for countries, which have them in abundance, explaining how Pakistan (its elite) has not been able to use its geopolitical advantages as assets for national development or nation building. Rather, it became a "rentier" state, its elites taking this rent from great powers as well as Islamic countries. According to Paul, post-Independence Pakistan developed a "hyperpolitik" worldview, overstating the external threat to the state and understating

the domestic imperative. Its quest for strategic parity with India, which has been an obsession with Pakistan, (“the conflict with India is about territory, power, status, and national identity”, p. 95) resulted in the military’s dominance over the state on the one hand and on the other, prevented emergence of viable domestic (civilian) political institutions and economic development. According to Paul, the basic problem is the structural asymmetry with India, which is unbridgeable despite some things in Pakistan’s favour “...the competition with its neighbour creates intense warrior tendencies” in its elites (p. 126).

Dependent on foreign aid, the resultant “rentier” state “least globalised in terms of economic categories of trade”, “hotbed of transnational terrorism”, “home of Al Qaeda and Taliban”, which saw the rise of its military especially after the 1971 war, betrays absence of vision for peaceful coexistence. Continuation of security problems is in the material interest of the army. The US aid from 1960–2012 amounting to US\$ 73.1 billion benefitted the military (pp. 20–21).

Particularly interesting and analytical are Chapters 2, 6 and 8 that deal with the causes of Pakistan’s warrior state status, religion, and the state. They sum up the status of the warrior state. The focus of Chapter three, “A Turbulent History” is on the three wars with India. The Kargil war has been mentioned (p. 60) as well as the War in Afghanistan. Paul maintains, “Warrior state mentality will hold its sway over Pakistan” (p. 65). To Paul, Pakistan “has had little chances to develop a coherent democratic system”, with only a “weak civil society in favour of a liberal democracy”, (Pakistan) has ended up as a garrison or praetorian state (p. 71).

Chapter 4 brings in the concept of “garrison state”: preoccupied with national security where the military (economically and by promoting its values) enjoys high standing in society. Pakistan falls in this category, as it views protecting borders more important than the welfare of citizens. In fact to describe Pakistan, Paul says that the term garrison state is more appropriate than praetorian state because of deeper penetration by the military as the most dominant actor in society where military values and culture dominate the societal ethos profoundly. A praetorian state may exist without military values penetrating deeply into society (p. 72), “...quintessential national security state concerned primarily about protection of national borders, physical assets, and core values, largely through traditional military means” (p. 73). Unlike Europe, where there is a case for “war made the state and the state made war”, the process of war-preparation creating strong states did not prove true for Pakistan. While the former became developmental states, where

education and trade were given significance, ensuring that economic security was seen as national security all together; it was not the case in Pakistan.

Paul says Pakistan has not been able to progress because of the “geostrategic curse” – (similar to the “resource curse” that plagues oil rich autocracies). To quote him, “A key effect of the “geostrategic curse” is the tendency to continue on the same path of easy money, i.e. playing “double games” (by the elite) “to extract financial resources from its key allies”. (p. 291) The money, interestingly has not been used to “fight terror” as promised, “...the aid has disincentivised democracy”. While the elite has been astutely “milking the geostrategic rent, not developing or extracting sufficient resources from its society” (p. 33). “What to talk of transforming the society”, the military, as the main beneficiary of the rentier state, has done nothing to improve even the “extractive and integrative” powers of the state. No thought is given to the “security dilemma” either in the bilateral (India Pakistan) or multilateral (China, India, and Pakistan) sphere. Different elements in the elite’s approach to security include: viewing Pakistan as a successor state to the Mughal Empire; a state built for protection of Muslim interests; a state built on Islamic principles should strive for protection of Islamic ideas; conflict with India is natural and that strategic parity and balance of power are necessary to avoid defeat; India is “unlikely to honour partition agreement”; as a weaker state striking first is needed; and Afghanistan under all circumstances be brought under Pakistan’s control” (pp. 25–27).

Religion is traced in Chapter 6, which marks the interplay of Islamism and politics in the post-independence Pakistan. The chapter argues that the country has become increasingly a Sunni– dominated society in which status of other Islamic minorities – the Shias, the Ahmadiyahs and the Sufis, “has become considerably more tenuous” (p. 128) and how the elite has tried to use Islam as a unifying force against multiple identities of people (p. 129). The crucial factors of sectarian differences, and sub-sectarian cleavages, as well as ethnic identities have been explained. How the different leaders tried to interpret Islam, the debate between Jinnah and Mawdudi (p. 136) or how the relatively secular Ayub dealt with religion; Bhutto’s political gambling, treatment of the Ahmadiya issue are all dealt with before discussing Islamisation under Zia when Islamist doctrine became a much more fundamental part of politics and education (p. 139).

The strength of the book lies in analysing the post-colonial state in the theoretical context as it exists in western theatre specifically as well as by comparing it to many countries (Turkey, Indonesia, Egypt, South Korea, Taiwan) in the broader area of postcolonial political development. (Chapter 7)

In fact, few would disagree with his conclusion that says “the Pakistani military indeed shows how a protector can become a *protection racketeer*” (p. 185, emphasis added); or “...its neighboring states and the great powers can at best minimally help guide them in positive direction. Internally the elite has to adopt semi-secular or at least tolerant quasi-Islamic state model and begin considering development as its core mission”. (p. 196) Again, calling a “pragmatic-minded elite and tolerant and liberal society essential for transformational change”, Paul is right in concluding “without such a change the purpose of Pakistani state will remain narrow and out of date” (p. 197).

Despite its simple narrative, the book at places overdraws from the War (and War preparations) and States Development Theory – the circumstances and the time taken by the West to form states are far different from developing the world generally and Pakistan particularly. In an attempt towards general application of the State Formation in Europe Theory that war-making played a crucial role in the long-drawn-out process of state formation, Paul tries to say that the reverse appears to be true in the case of contemporary Pakistan. The fact that it is formed on the basis of religion, the only other being Israel, puts it in a different category, although there is hardly any event connected with military history or strategy that has been left out in the 250-page book. However, this leads to the usual problem in such literature. The main argument is buried under voluminous factual history.

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Vishal Chandra, *The Unfinished War in Afghanistan 2001–2014*,
Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses, Pentagon Press, New Delhi,
2015, Pages: 340, Price: INR 1,495.00.

Afghanistan has been in a state of war and internal unrest for over four decades. If the overthrow of King Zahir Shah by Daoud Khan in 1973 was to bring in a new era of modern statehood to Afghanistan, it sadly did not happen.

Instead, Afghanistan's regime backed by the USSR soon became a pawn in the Cold War between the two super powers leading ultimately to the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in 1979, which lasted for ten years. The US backed Mujahedeen finally succeeded in driving out the Soviets in 1989, but once again, the Soviet withdrawal followed by immediate loss of interest and support from the US led to the emergence of hundreds of independent well armed militias leading finally to the emergence of the Taliban and their take-over of Kabul in 1996. Their association with Al-Qaeda and the 9/11 incident in particular, forced the US and the entire world to once again focus on Afghanistan and the need to militarily degrade the "Taliban Al Qaeda combine". What commenced thereafter has been continuing and despite the US-NATO calling off its combat mission on 31 December 2014, the war in Afghanistan continues.

Vishal Chandra's book focuses on this decade plus long period of the continuing war since 2001. He traces the history of this war torn country and at each point in the book puts in a word of caution against the "responsible and successful end to the combat mission in Afghanistan". He emphasises that merely raising and equipping the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), the international pledge to provide financial aid or the swearing in of the new President, Ashraf Ghani in 2014 would not bring about peace in the country. The Taliban remains potent and resilient and the government in Kabul is still fragile, confronted with a host of old and familiar challenges to its legitimacy and survival. In his introductory remarks the author says, "The post-2014 Afghanistan may not casually relapse into a state of total civil war, but at the same time it is logically impossible to think of a stable and peaceful Afghanistan in the near future". The author warns against the Pakistan-sponsored and armed Afghan groups, which have the potential to once again plunge the country into deeper chaos and anarchy. The author is severely critical of the short-sighted US military aims of 2001 when it sought to destroy the Al-Qaeda by over-reliance on air power.

The book has been divided into eight thematic chapters, each focussing on critical issues affecting Afghanistan and the region's peace and future. Issues in each of the chapters have been dealt with in minute details, a clear evidence of the author's deep insight into Afghanistan affairs and the result of his detailed interaction with important stakeholders in Afghanistan, India and elsewhere in the region. Facts in the book are supported by well laid out and researched data in the form of tables. Some of the tables give details of Afghanistan's cabinet like the "Afghan Transitional Administration" (p. 22), the first Afghan government, 2004–2009 (p. 48), the second elected government (p. 68), etc. They have been painstakingly compiled from various

sources as there is no official single source information available on such important issues.

The first chapter, *New Order, Old Politics*, deals with the continuing conundrum in the Afghan politics wherein despite so many attempts at change, factional politics and conflict still rule the roost. The author highlights the various phases of failed transition, which have successively deconstructed the structures of old socio-political orders but failed to bring about new institutional structures. Even the ouster of the Taliban from power and the Bonn Agreement failed to effectively institutionalise the political transition of Afghanistan. He also highlights failed attempts by Abdul Haq, a prominent anti-Soviet Pashtun Militia Commander whose attempts at an anti-Taliban political alternative did not find adequate support. The internal dissensions and divisions within various groups at the Bonn Conference in 2001 and the Loya Jirga later have been highlighted wherein the country was once again parcelled out among various militia commanders.

Chapter Two, *Tryst with Democracy*, commences with the Constitutional Loya Jirga in 2004 and ends with the hope that the 2014 presidential elections will provide a lasting political solution. The author states that the nascent democracy in Afghanistan is being tested and churned, and he admits that a state, which has been at war for over three decades, cannot be transformed into a stable thriving democracy in a short span of time. The author discusses the Bonn Process of 2001 in detail. For the UN, the credibility of the Bonn process was at stake and it was felt that an in-perfect election in Afghanistan would be preferred to a wrecked process at Bonn. The elections of 2004 and President Karzai's difficulty in mustering up his cabinet in an attempt to appease various militia commanders too is discussed in detail. Karzai's limited authority in his first term and the chaotic presidential elections of 2009 too has been highlighted.

Chapter Three, *Opposition Politics and Karzai the Master Survivor*, discusses the emergence of various opposition groups in Afghanistan, especially the National Front of Afghanistan (NFA), which, as per the author, was a manifestation of the socio-political polarisation in the Afghan polity. In September 2007, the Chairman of the NFA, Burhnuddin Rabbani is quoted to have argued that peace cannot be restored until Karzai includes all anti-government factions, including the Taliban. Karzai and his ability to survive despite all odds have been discussed in detail. With virtually no mass support base, criticism among his government and severe conflict in the later years with the US, Karzai, still managed to continue as president. His conflict with the US over transfer of prisons, night raids and not signing the Bilateral Security

Agreement with the US despite its acceptance by the Loya Jirga have been discussed in detail.

Chapter four, *Taliban Back into Power Play*, discusses the re-emergence of the Taliban on Afghanistan's political stage in 2004–2005. For this, the author puts the blame on the US, which, in March 2002, just a few months after the Taliban defeat, withdrew its Special Forces, Drones and satellites to prepare for war in Iraq. The lull in Afghanistan gave many opportunities for the Taliban resurgence. Pakistan too seized the opportunity to revert to its pre 9/11 policy of supporting the Taliban. The author discusses in detail other factors leading to the Taliban emergence including the Taliban being seen by some as the “sole organised Pashtun force”, the rise of Jalal-ud-din Haqqani, and as effective use of media by the Taliban.

Chapter five, *Politics of Taliban Reconciliation and Reintegration*, discusses the various nuances of the process with the Taliban initiated in different forms by the US as well as the Afghanistan government. It highlights how the Taliban have rebuffed the process repeatedly. It also highlights the incompatibility of the Taliban ideology with the inherent religious and social diversity of Afghanistan. With the drawdown of international troops from Afghanistan, the Taliban feels the need for a negotiated settlement or reconciliation. The author highlights the ambiguity with regard to the process as well as the multiple channels of contact. Referring to the White Paper presented at the London Conference in January 2010 as well as the High Peace Council formed in September 2010, he cites key challenges to the reconciliations process, which include “Lack of clarity”, the “Taliban unwillingness” as well as the “Politics of power devolution” as key factors responsible for the failure of the process.

Chapter six, *Quest for a National Army*, is a very brief chapter wherein the author discusses in brief the evolution of the ANSF, the challenges in the funding of the nascent but rapidly expanding armed forces. He discusses some of the major challenges to the development of the full military potential of the ANSF, the key factors being the “inability of ANSF to cope up with the rapid expansion”, problems of cohesion and motivation, high rate of attrition and desertions, and threat of Taliban infiltration leading to “Green on Blue” and “Green on Green” attacks. The author concludes by saying that the rush to increase numerical strength without emphasis on quality soldiering does not bode well for the future of ANSF.

Chapter seven, *The Other Key Neighbours-Iran, India, China and Russia*, is the longest chapter and perhaps the most important. The Afghan quagmire has deep roots in regional geopolitics (including Pakistan) and no study of

Afghanistan can therefore be complete without a detailed analysis of such issues. Giving a run down on Pakistan's strategy, the author states, "Perhaps, Pakistan is the only state in the world which acknowledges the threat from terrorism and also claims to be fighting against it, all of it without ever clearly identifying or stating as to who actually is a terrorist". The author discusses in detail Iran's importance to the Afghan issue including the positive role played by Iran at the Bonn conference in 2001. On India, while acknowledging the significant role played by it in the reconstruction of Afghanistan and the positive public perception in Afghanistan, he admits several policy constraints, especially the Pakistan factor and the geographical constraint of direct connectivity. The author strongly recommends that India stays positively engaged with Afghanistan and keeps a close watch on the developments. The author illustrates how China has remained engaged with whosoever has been in power in Kabul and how its economic agenda has dominated its relations. China's growing concern over the rising threat of violence and terror in Xinjiang province which could have roots through Afghanistan too has been factored in. As for Russia, its reluctance to get directly involved is clearly highlighted although Russia is compelled to remain engaged due to wider regional ramifications, especially in the Central Asian Region.

Chapter eight, *The Unfinished War*, is the last chapter wherein the author comments on how the political stalemate has been effectively manoeuvred by the Taliban and that the Western forces may have won "battles" but not the "war". The failure of the US administration to address the fundamental issue of Pakistan's continuing support to the forces of terrorism is again highlighted. The author ends with a note of caution on Afghanistan's quest for peace and stability, especially due to the lack of clarity in the US strategy on Afghanistan post 2014, the underdeveloped ANSF and the continuing resilience of the Taliban.

The book is a very well researched work of a scholar who has gone into details to bring forth all facts on various critical issues affecting Afghanistan's future. It is a timely publication as Afghanistan steps into a new era in 2015. For a student and researcher on Afghanistan's contemporary issues, it is ideal study material.

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David Brewster, *India's Ocean: The Story of India's Bid for Regional Leadership*, New York: Routledge: 2014, Pages: 244, Price: Rs. 7058.00.

The book under review presents a coherent argument about India's natural aspirations in the Indian Ocean and how it will shape India's relationship with other stakeholders in the region. The author puts forth his hypothesis that India aspires to be the dominant power in the Indian Ocean and has tried to answer whether it would be able to achieve that or not.

While arguing that the balance of power in the Indian Ocean is gradually shifting because of the struggle between India and other extra-regional powers for domination, he stresses that India remains a poor country compared to the other Indian Ocean powers, hence delaying it from reaching its goals. India, still a regional power with potential to achieve great power status, demands that it be recognised and treated as one, even though it is nowhere close to it. India's strategic thinking continues to be influenced by its British imperial legacy and Nehruvian tradition of "strategic autonomy" and it would most likely be a guiding principle in the future as well. Brewster believes that there is an Indian version of the Monroe Doctrine and even though it has provided limited results in South Asia, it would be the likely policy that India would implement for its Indian Ocean domination. However, unless the concern of minor powers is addressed by India, which it could not achieve despite an attempt by former Indian Prime Minister I.K. Gujral, chances are that it would meet the same fate in the Indian Ocean Region. For this policy to succeed it is important that other states recognise India's special status in the Indian Ocean. India's growing proximity with the US and its allies could end up portraying India as a player in team US.

Brewster explains in detail India's past relationship with South Asian, Southeast Asian and other extra-regional countries. Interestingly, while he goes into great details in explaining the dynamics of India's partnership with Australia and the United States in the Indian Ocean, he does not give due importance to India's steadily rising security ties with Japan and Japan's interests in the Indian Ocean. Although there is significant scope for cooperation between India and Australia, he highlights the difficulty of building a productive relationship between an emerging power with great power aspirations and an active middle power. He diagnoses that the mutual view regarding the importance of each other for their respective security is responsible for the current nature of the Indo-Australian relationship. His prognosis is that even in future, other than as a potential energy supplier, Australia would find it difficult to make

itself an indispensable partner to India. Australia on its part may not easily accede to the idea of the Indian Ocean as “India’s Ocean” and would rather seek to extend US predominance in the region for as long as possible. This seems more accurate because of the fundamental difference that exists between the approach of Australia and India with regard to their security. While India is against any multilateral security cooperation, Australia prefers to work in a US-led coalition. This probably implies that the India-Australia relationship might progress if a bilateral approach is taken.

With respect to India’s relationship with the United States, the author presents the fairly well known debate about why India is hesitant to form a formal military alliance. However, he suggests that India is now getting used to US presence and is looking to cooperate because the US endorses India’s aspirations of being recognised as a global power. The US’ lack of support for the Indian presence in the Persian Gulf, the level of naval cooperation between the US and Pakistan, and the Indian fears of being perceived as a junior partner of the US are some of the irritants in the relationship. Although the US has become one of the largest defence equipment suppliers to India in recent years, which showcases the increasing trust in the relationship, the author seems a bit sceptical about the future of the India-US relationship by suggesting, “India will be an unpredictable maritime security partner to the United States”.

The author presents a well-reasoned case of how India’s aspirations are likely to come into direct conflict with China’s interests in the region. While China enjoys advantage vis-à-vis India on land, India has the same advantage in the maritime domain, and this is the cause of the larger competition between them. China, while maintaining its advantage on land, tries to neutralise India’s advantageous position in Indian Ocean. China refuses to recognise India’s sphere of influence in the Indian Ocean as well its claim to the great power status, which the author feels infuriates India the most. According to him, despite some convergence of interests, rivalry between India and China is already underway in the Indian Ocean, which is only likely to get more severe in the future because of their mutual threat perceptions. The author suggests that the possession or absence of a network of bases and facilities to maintain and repair ships would be the best indicator of China’s future intentions in the Indian Ocean Region, something which China is already involved in.

Author suggests that India’s efforts at consolidating and expanding its sphere of influence in the Indian Ocean and elsewhere, suffer because of the lack of any coordinated strategic plan. On the question whether India would seek to establish a new security order in the Indian Ocean, which recognises

its special status, the author suggests that it would be very difficult for India to do so because of the unwillingness of many countries to take a collective measure. However, this is the best possible option by which countries could ensure regional security and keep China's rising power in check. China can be contained not by isolation but by its integration in the regional order. India has significant advantage against China due to its good relationship with the US. However, the leverage could be reduced if the partnership is perceived to be taking the shape of an anti-China alliance and thus, becoming a slippery slope for India. He concludes that India's objective of strategic autonomy could constrain or delay the growth of the Indian strategic influence in the Indian Ocean.

The book is a good read for those who wish to understand the current great power politics in the Indian Ocean, given with a detailed background. The author's analysis about India, China and the US, and the dynamics of their engagement, which would most likely shape the politics of the Indian Ocean is logical. In the end, Brewster views India as a country that has a huge gap between rhetoric and capabilities, when he concludes that India is not yet a great power but demands to be recognised as one on the basis of the potential that it has.

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