



Carey Schofield. *Inside the Pakistan Army: A Woman's Experience on the Frontline of the War on Terror.* London & New Delhi: Biteback Publishing & Pentagon Security International, 2011.

Amit Ranjan

It is maintained by many scholars that “every country has an Army but in Pakistan, the Army has a country.” Keeping this in mind, British writer Carey Schofield

in her well-researched book has made an attempt to look into many aspects of the omnipresent and most powerful institution in Pakistan. Allowed unprecedented access to all facets of the Army by General Pervez Musharraf over about five years, Schofield doesn't offer a comprehensive assessment of the Pakistan Army in this book but it is apparent through what she does examine that she admires the institution greatly as the only body that transcends the divisiveness arising from tribal and religious differences in Pakistan.

It's not that the path of Pakistan's Army has been very smooth. Several times it has faced criticism and public outcry. After the defeat and the dismemberment of Pakistan's eastern part in 1971, the Pakistani Army faced vicious criticism from its people. Another crisis of its sixty four years of existence was when Osama bin Laden was killed in an operation conducted by the USA's Navy SEAL commandos at Abbottabad, near the home of the Pakistan Military Academy and the regimental centres of two of the country's most prestigious regiments (1). Numerous questions have been raised and conspiracy theories keep on emerging over the connivance of the Pakistani Army with the most dreaded terrorist leader. The truth is yet to be revealed.

As the most powerful institution in the country, the Army could not avoid being an example of Lord Acton's comment that "absolute power corrupts absolutely." Many of Pakistan's own intellectuals accuse the Army of being more interested in making money than defending the state. They describe the military as parasitical, insisting that it grabs the best land (both agricultural and commercial) for its senior officers, monopolizes large components of the country's economy and seizes the most lucrative state contracts for companies that it runs. Opponents argue that the ills that beset Pakistan are the result of a corrupt and predatory Army (2). The leading defence analyst of Pakistan, Ayesha Siddiqa, has used the term *milibus* to explain the business interests of the Pakistan Army.¹

Schofield finds that the Army suddenly became very powerful in Pakistan as a consequence of the death of Governor General M. A. Jinnah in 1948 and the 1951 assassination of his political successor Liaqat Ali Khan, which left the country rudderless and created a leadership void. Beyond those two, there were no politically

¹ Ayesha Siddiqa, *Military Inc: Inside Pakistan's Military Economy* (London: Pluto Press, 2007).

matured leaders at that time. This situation led the Army to intervene to do its duty, i.e. to integrate and protect the newly born country. Once it developed a taste for political power, the Army steadily took over the country on a number of pretexts. "Whenever there is a breakdown in ... stability, as has happened frequently in Pakistan, the military translates its potential into the will to dominate, and we have military intervention followed by military rule." However, General Karamat adds, "as far as the track record of the military as rulers in the past is concerned, I am afraid it is not much better than the civilians."²

At the level of social demography, changes are taking place in Army. In its early years, the Pakistani Army was officered by the sons of landed families and successful professionals; the country's prominent families all had someone in the Army. Young men entering into the Pakistan Military Academy (PMA) nowadays tend to come from less affluent backgrounds. President Musharaff in particular wanted to open the Army up to people who did not come from established Army families. The modern Army is porous, and open to talent; the current Chief of Army Staff, General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani, is the son of a Non-commissioned officer (19). Still, Gentleman Cadets (GCs) in the Pakistan Military Academy at Kakul come from the Military College Jhelum, Lawrence College, Ghora Gali (whose students are called Gallians), Army Burn Hall College in Abbottabad and St. Patrick's school in Karachi (77-78). At the PMA, the cadets coming from madrasahs, too, are easily visible.

The army is intensely aware of the threat of extremism penetrating the ranks and tries to ensure that soldiers are inoculated against radicalism through constant exposure to sound religious education and informed debate (23). Still, a few zealots manage to sneak inside the structure and attempt to lure soldiers and officers into the ranks of the extremists but susceptible individuals are, the Army believes, gradually spotted (100). One such incident involved a group that preaches the caliphate called Hezb-i-Islami (headquartered in London), which managed to penetrate the Special Services Group (SSG). The SSG and III Brigade had been targeted units because their personnel might be in position to assassinate President Musharraf and the Corps commander (101).

² General Jehangir Karamat, cited in Shuja Nawaz, "Army and Politics" in Maleeha Lodhi, ed. *Pakistan: Beyond The Crisis State* (New Delhi: Rupa Publications, 2011), 81.

The Pakistan Army has set the Pakistani political order according to its own interests. In 1971, four days after the ceasefire with India, General Yahya Khan was persuaded (by the Army-run Inter-Services Intelligence, many believed) to hand over power to Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who became President and Chief Martial Law Administrator, the same positions that Yahya had held (57). Even Benazir Bhutto and Mian Nawaz Sharif were in and out of power according to the wishes of the Army. The Prime Ministers had made certain wild decisions in haste and had to pay for them. After removing General Jehangir Karamt from the position of Chief of Armed Services, Nawaz Sharif appointed General Musharraf as Army Chief because he was without powerful social-professional links (118). Also, Sharif thought that General Musharraf, being a Mohajir, could not harm the Punjabi Prime Minister, but he forgot the fact that the Army works as an institution. General Musharraf was well supported by the institution to go against Mian Nawaz Sharif.

The Pakistan Army has played the role of obedient client to the USA's interest in south Asia and the adjoining region. After getting hefty economic aid, the Pakistani Army trained Mujahideens to fight against the Soviets in Afghanistan. Since the ghastly act of 9/11, they are fighting the US-led war against terror in their own tribal areas (70). Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) of Pakistan has played an important role in both wars and is a powerful military institution in Pakistan. It has about 25,000 professional personnel, including civilians. The military enlistees come and go but civilians remain (112). The ISI has set up cells to carry out their operations; the Kashmir cell was set up some time after the Afghan Cell. They rely upon SSG and ex-SSG personnel to train fighters and launch operations (114).

In the last three chapters, Schofield talks about the Army operations against militants which were being carried out during her research stay in Pakistan. She gives details about operations like the Angoor Ada raid in South Waziristan and Operation Shakai Valley, Deoghar. She also discusses the 2008 killing of Major General Ameer Faisal Alavi, DG SSG, whom she met a number of times during her field work for this book.

This book has not many references because the author, due to her painstaking field research, has come out with her own narrative about the Pakistani Army. It is also written in what scholars call a journalistic way of writing, where you do not use

theories, and in what historians call the story-telling approach or style of writing. Despite all, it is very informative and well-articulated work by the author.

Amit Ranjan is an Assistant Professor (Guest) in Delhi University, New Delhi. He has just submitted his Ph.D. on "The Political Economy of Water Conflicts in South Asia: A Case Study of Inter-provincial Water Conflicts in India and Pakistan." His areas of interests are Indian foreign policy, water conflicts, internal security and Pakistan.