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Fighting to the End: The Pakistan Army's Way of War

Shashank Joshi

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'crush' Al-Qa'ida and 'kill' Osama bin Laden transformed into 'clear', hold [and] build' national governance.

Although *Why We Lost* details the tactical-level generalship of the various military leaders who were in charge of operations in these two countries, it never fully addresses how they endeavoured to build campaign plans in the absence of clear strategy and articulated end-state goals and objectives. While Petraeus succeeded in Iraq, he failed in Afghanistan because, Bolger insinuates, he failed to ask the right questions, especially 'who is the enemy?' Conversely, Bolger notes, McChrystal framed his planning with three questions: 'Can we do this mission? How would we do it? What will it take to do it?' The result was a new approach to designing strategy – from the bottom up and inside out.

This issue of strategy-making in the two wars would also benefit from more discussion on the role of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs, especially Myers, Pace and Mullen as well as Lute (now US ambassador/permanent representative to NATO). This is the other end of the 6,300 mile screwdriver, and one must analyse what is happening at the 'turning end' to understand how the screw was, or was not, turned. The book likewise fails to ask tough questions of Secretaries Rumsfeld, Gates and Panetta. It is true, as Richard Brennan noted in a recent article in *Foreign Affairs* (November/December 2014), that 'military planners anticipated with eerie accuracy the dreadful state of affairs that exists there [Iraq] today'; however, as Max Boot observed in the same edition, generals 'developed an emotional attachment to the strategies they implemented [as] the Pentagon's can-do culture also got in the way.' Ultimately, Bolger demonstrates that whilst US tactical leadership was superb, the strategic leadership – in CENTCOM and in the Pentagon – was not.

One interesting observation by Bolger as to 'why we lost' in Iraq and Afghanistan was a failure to optimally utilise intelligence. The US is addicted to 'perfect' intelligence, with the use of drones and the rigorous integration of human intelligence combining to

create a sound intelligence picture that informs tactical-level special forces and precision strikes, whilst still struggling at the strategic and operational level, as well as with cultural differences between combat commanders and intelligence professionals. The disdain of 'operators' and commanders for the diligent work of intelligence professionals – and the resultant friction – only made the latter more reticent to go beyond what Bolger refers to as 'bean counting' (a more factual tally of enemy capability) to more useful, but more risky, analytical forecasts.

In the end, however, 'why we lost' perhaps comes down to the US failure to ask the important strategic question: how does this end? Secretary of Defense Cheney asked that question in 1991; Major General Petraeus demanded of his staff 'Tell me how this ends well' before the 2007 Surge in Iraq. Bolger states that 'As before, Franks did not spend much time on that phase-four [post-combat] stuff' (p. 118), with CENTCOM repeatedly upbraided by Washington for doing so. Instead, it focused on the 'front end', as other senior leaders believed the 'back end' would sort itself out. This hope proved ill-founded: US strategic leaders were blinded by cultural bias – and the lack of detailed Phase-IV planning across the government, combined with hubris and a lack of human and cultural intelligence, caused many of the problems Bolger identifies.

Absent an all-unifying strategy, first crafted by civilian and military leaders together, and then implemented by the military, along with the rest of the organs of power, it is very hard to reach 'the end'. In this regard, Bolger's quotation of Rory Stewart's famous conclusion that every year would be the 'decisive year' is both insightful and incisive. 'Doing what we've always done' – that is, falling back on a default strategy – is rarely a good leadership technique; it is a very poor one for running multiple campaigns against tenacious enemies who *do* have a strategy. Bolger shows that by failing to answer key questions – 'Who is the enemy?', 'What are our interests?', 'What is our responsibility to enable our civilian leaders by giving them the full measure of professional advice?' – the generals of

the US Army contributed to the failures of the Iraq and Afghanistan campaigns. But without addressing in detail the strategic vacuum in which they worked, and how they tried to fashion a strategy, Bolger does not fully explain 'why we lost'. ■

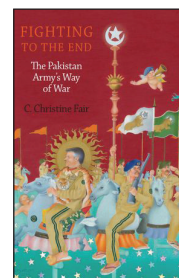
Don Thieme is a career US Marine infantry officer with multiple overseas assignments, as well as an Olmsted Scholar and MIT Seminar XXI Fellow. He currently teaches National Security Affairs – Policy Analysis at the US Naval War College. The views expressed are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of the Navy, Department of Defense or the US Government.

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Fighting to the End: The Pakistan Army's Way of War

C Christine Fair

Oxford University Press, 2014



The foreign-policy *zeitgeist* is often well captured in art. In the 1910s, British novels featured gripping plots of German espionage. Throughout the Cold War, Russian villains filled American films. And after 9/11, Islamist fanatics took their place. It was therefore revealing that in the most recent series of *Homeland*, a prominent American television series about the CIA, reputedly a favourite of President Barack Obama, the enemies came from the ranks of Pakistan's military intelligence service, the ISI.

The show and its plotlines – Pakistani spies, infused with anti-American zeal, working to cultivate jihadist and kill Americans – accurately represent Western disillusionment, and then outright anger, with an army

which, just a decade ago, headed what was hailed as a front-line state in the War on Terror. But why has Pakistan's army sponsored Islamist militants at home and abroad, overthrown elected governments, and persistently done so despite the extraordinary human and financial cost within Pakistan's borders?

C Christine Fair, a professor at Georgetown University, has written what is at once an intellectual biography, psychiatric evaluation and work of philology. *Fighting to the End* draws on thousands of books and essays produced by serving or retired Pakistani officers to distil the army's strategic culture. Given the army's political, economic and cultural grip on the nation, this is also, by default, the country's strategic culture. These texts, warns Fair, are replete with 'bizarre' and 'non-credible' arguments, 'racist and xenophobic stereotypes', and religious fervour (pp. 29–34): Qur'anic battles merit deeper analysis than wars with India (p. 39); while jihad against the 'kufar' and 'mushriks' (unbelievers and apostates) is exalted as an important motivation for professional soldiers (pp. 96–97). Whole articles, written by ranking officers in respectable military journals, resemble jihadist propaganda. All of this sustains a corrosive ideology of perpetual, ideologically driven struggle with India, the nurturing of Islamist radicals at home and abroad, and contempt for democracy.

Fair traces these beliefs to three things.

First is the 'two-nation theory' that brought Pakistan into being, the resulting ambiguity in the relationship between Islam, democracy and nationhood, and a resulting antipathy toward 'Hindu' India (p. 69). The emphasis on Islam as a unifying force – nationally, and within the army – took a conservative turn from the 1970s. Fair quotes a senior officer from this period as lamenting that 'the Service Chiefs sounded more like high priests than soldiers' (p. 84). This religiosity continues to have many effects, including outright military delusion ('no power on earth can subdue the valour of the Mujahidin', p. 99); an emphasis of Sunni Islam 'to the exclusion of other Muslims and non-Muslims' within Pakistan (p. 75); and the routinised reliance on

'patently Orientalist, if not outright racist, concepts' such as the 'Hindu psyche' (p. 162).

Second is the contentious process of partition in 1947, which reinforced Pakistan's conviction that India would never accept its smaller neighbour's independence (p. 65). Fair notes that this belief is resistant to all facts – notably that, 'with the exception of 1971, Pakistan was the initiator of every war with India' (p. 165). Yet it persists, and Fair doubts that 'any amount of countervailing evidence can mitigate Pakistani fears' (p. 165).

Third, Fair argues that Pakistan inherited British narratives about the subcontinent's defence, and particularly the idea of Afghanistan as a neutral buffer against Russian threats (pp. 112–15). She deftly dismantles the canard that Pakistan's sponsorship of Islamist proxies in its neighbour came only at the behest of the CIA in the 1980s, and shows how the army and intelligence services began this process in the 1960s – long before the Soviet Union invaded its neighbour. Between 1973 and 1977, for instance, Pakistan's army trained 5,000 militants to fight in Afghanistan (p. 122).

In sum, Pakistan is 'a greedy and ideological state', such that even solving the Kashmir dispute 'will not satisfy its hunger, and may embolden it' (p. 22). According to Fair, this revisionist fervour is 'deeply assimilated in Pakistan's civil society and sustained through the public and private media, through public education, and in the country's bureaucratic and political institutions' (pp. 265–66). Scholars and journalists who dissent are threatened 'with physical harm ... to the author or her family members', including 'lethal methods against intransigent journalists' (pp. 35–36). This is no hypothetical matter. Investigative journalist Saleem Shahzad, who had been looking into links between Al-Qa'ida and the Pakistan Navy, was murdered in 2011; and the Obama administration later acknowledged it had 'reliable and conclusive' evidence implicating Pakistan's intelligence service, the ISI.

The consolidation of civilian rule, economic shocks that force the army to accept liberalised trade with India, and

changing patterns of recruitment within the army might all contribute to limited shifts in policy. But real change would require the army to 'abandon its practice of describing the rivalry with India in civilizational terms', which would in turn threaten its own 'ideological commitment to the two-nation theory' – the founding rationale of the Pakistani state (p. 268).

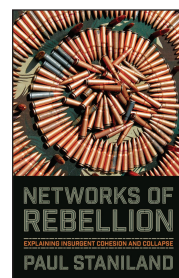
Fair is scornful of those who think the Pakistan Army is changing its ways, or will realistically do so in response to monetary, symbolic or territorial incentives. In the final pages of *Fighting to the End*, she exhorts policy-makers to consider how best to 'contain the threats that emanate from Pakistan, if not Pakistan itself' (p. 282). This is a sobering message, starkly at odds with decades of American policy and the perennial lure of seemingly professional, ordered armies in disordered countries (Egypt is another recent example in this regard). Yet it will resonate with a generation of Americans – notably soldiers – who have witnessed first-hand the contradictions of Pakistan's partnership with the United States. In Rawalpindi, the men in khaki can hardly complain: *Fighting to the End* damns the army using its very own words. ■

Shashank Joshi is a Senior Research Fellow at RUSI and a PhD candidate at Harvard University.

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Networks of Rebellion: Explaining Insurgent Cohesion and Collapse

Paul Staniland
Cornell, 2014



Paul Staniland is a social historian who looks at groups rather than people, behaviours rather than personalities