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Governing Pakistan

PAULA R. NEWBERG

Abstract: Almost seven decades of contentious civil-military relationships in Pakistan have subsumed domestic and foreign policies under the umbrella of a rigid state. The six books reviewed here examine the causes and consequences of this inelasticity and, both directly and indirectly, argue for new understandings of Pakistan's politics.

Keywords: accountability, civil-military relations, democracy, governance, justice, non-state actors, order and disorder, rights

REVIEWED BOOKS

Gary J. Bass: *The Blood Telegram: Nixon, Kissinger, and a Forgotten Genocide* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013).

C. Christine Fair: *Fighting to the End: The Pakistan Army's Way of War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

Laurent Gayer: *Karachi: Ordered Disorder and the Struggle for the City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

Cabeiri deBergh Robinson: *Body of Victim, Body of Warrior: Refugee Families and the Making of Kashmiri Jihadists* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 2013).

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Aqil Shah: *The Army and Democracy: Military Politics in Pakistan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014).

Osama Siddique: *Pakistan's Experience with Formal Law: An Alien Justice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

*"There's always a way of working when there's chaos."*¹

Pakistan's long, discontented summer of 2014 was enough to drive any country to distraction. The Army's Operation Zarb-e-Azb in Waziristan—delayed long enough to allow many militants to relocate to safety—displaced over a million civilians and created a humanitarian crisis for which the government seemed oddly unprepared.² The Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) revealed gaping national security holes by attacking Karachi's Jinnah International Airport twice. A human rights attorney Rashed Rehman was gunned down for defending a young academic accused of blasphemy, the assault of two journalists cast a shadow on the intelligence services, beloved community activist Parween Rahman was assassinated in Karachi, besieged minority religious communities remained under serious threat from sectarian extremists, and an extended campaign against polio vaccinators threatened public health at home and abroad. Just when things seemed to have reached their nadir, late monsoon floods submerged vast portions of the country, from Kashmir in the north to Sind in the south.

Each of these events—harsh in impact as well as, in some cases, intent—shines an unforgiving light on the decaying state of pluralism and tolerance in Pakistan, and the profound difficulties that the state encounters, and often creates, in establishing conditions for democracy, civic peace and future prosperity.

In August, anti-government demonstrations led by cleric Muhammad Tahir ul Qadri (some of whose followers were killed in Lahore earlier in the year³) and politician Imran Khan riveted the country with their stubborn, often intemperate and unnervingly changeable demands. In short order, they turned Islamabad into a bloody battleground as demonstrators attacked government buildings and demanded the resignation of Prime Minister Mian Nawaz Sharif, who had been elected by a considerable majority just fifteen months earlier. Inevitably, rumors of an imminent *coup d'état* traveled swiftly across the country.

Qadri's and Khan's monsoon protest rallies, which both labeled "revolutionary" (turning the Urdu, *inqilab*, at once into a term of curiosity, derision, and fear), were curious interventions in a democratic transition that, while very far from perfect, seemed more stable than many Pakistanis had anticipated. Khan's quirky populism-from-above arose from what he belatedly characterized as fraudulent 2013 elections. Qadri's faithful followers targeted the state's purportedly unprincipled actions and corruption. But for their reputed personal ambitions—both seek the allegiance of the Punjabi middle class that usually supports Sharif's Muslim League, and were thought to have struck deals with various military factions and

religious constituencies vying for power and influence beyond that offered by the Constitution—their actions might have highlighted the diminution of fundamental rights across the country, and the calculated indifference of political parties to the security of state and citizens alike. After all, personal insecurity is a threat that young Pakistanis fear the most, and injustice ranks high among citizen complaints.⁴

Before the Islamabad demonstrations, optimists might have suggested that, Sharif's disinclination to attend its sessions notwithstanding—and his unilateral, preemptive decision to call in the military to protect Islamabad—parliament has gradually become stronger (although mostly on the watch of the previous government). Pessimists might continue to ask why the specter of army rule is always the standard against which political progress is measured; realists and idealists alike will note that the balance among the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government has yet to work as it was constitutionally intended. As President, Pakistan People's Party's Asif Zardari let the army take decisions relatively independently, and thus paradoxically gave parliament space to grow by leaving it alone. Sharif—who, significantly, is not the executive—chose to confront the military on matters it has long believed to be its own, and while he has no doubt suffered accordingly, these issues may have created some bargaining room for him with the army, if not the protestors. He brought treason charges against former President (and General) Pervez Musharraf, sought friendlier relations with India, and promised Afghanistan that Islamabad would no longer meddle in its affairs. Which faction of the military will triumph in this year's disputes—defenders of the state, defenders of particular ideologies or policies, or officers seeking greater influence—will remain an open question for some time to come.⁵

Governing Pakistan has always been a hard job, and these competing views of political propriety describe the stretched seams of a state that continues to have trouble managing the complexities that define its existence. For some, the summer's cascading tragedies evoke memories of former political transformations—particularly General Mohammed Zia ul Haq's fateful July 1977 *coup d'état*, which followed a similar agitation against an allegedly rigged election and brought militarily dispensed theocratic politics to Pakistan. Some Pakistan-watchers worry that undisciplined street politics will bring the military retribution of Cairo's Tahrir Square or Kiev's Maidan to Islamabad, even as others wearily view 2014 as the latest version of a family feud.⁶

This kind of call-and-response politics reflects a continuing battle of ideas and ideals that have yet to be settled in the body politic. The country bears the burdens of uneven economic development and persistent social and class disparities, rocky political loyalties and divisive sectarian divisions, and foreign policies that often weaken governance while claiming to strengthen national security. Perhaps most interesting, this summer's events called attention to *how* Pakistan governs, not just to the perpetual chatter about *who* governs (and who profits from that governance). Together, the choices of *who* and *how* to govern depict a state that struggles with its

past, often muddles through its present, and seems minimally equipped to handle challenges that lie ahead. These matters are central to a number of new books about Pakistan's history and governance.

Encountering the State

The 1973 Constitution, enacted after a long period of military rule and a brutal civil war, charges public representatives with shepherding in an egalitarian society, in part through the protection of human rights. This has been an elusive quest: in the last bumpy decades, more attention has probably been paid to constitutional articles that cautiously permit security forces to abrogate citizen rights, allow the dismissal presidents and prime ministers, and circumvent the independence of the judiciary. The brief sections that outline the functions and authority of the armed services (some 140 pages into the document, under the label "miscellaneous") state simply that under the Federal Government, the military will "defend Pakistan against external aggression or threat of war, and, subject to law, act in aid of civil power when called upon to do so." This is not a simple instruction: the definitions of aggression, threat of war and especially, aiding civil power, are always sources of contention. Administration after administration—including the Sharif government this August, by invoking Article 245 to seek military protection for Islamabad during the Khan and Qadri actions—has called on the army to deal with essentially political problems seemingly beyond the capacity of politicians to solve.⁷

Because the military has so often been granted broad responsibility for some state activities under the aegis of aiding civil authority, and because separately it has seized power for extended periods of time, the strained relationships between and among civil and military institutions have come to comprise an alternate history of the state development. Moreover, each civil-military encounter has almost inevitably engaged the courts: suits are filed to support or counter the army's role, and on frequent occasion, judicial oversight has been curtailed—generally by dictate—to provide additional latitude for military action.

For this reason, Pakistan's many roads toward and away from democracy seem often to be interpreted as parables about the army. Equally important, the intersections among army action, army rule, judicial sanction and occasionally, parliamentary prerogative, have created an historical template for Pakistan that is understood through state structure and institutional behavior rather than via the processes of politics.

The military's institutional (separate from policy) self-interest transects its political inclinations in different ways. From the beginnings of the Pakistani state, the army has appropriated to itself a protective and often intrusive role in governance. When a few officers disagreed with the first government's policies

toward contested Kashmir, they came together briefly in what was then labeled a conspiracy against the government and the state. A few years later, the army responded to the long and often fruitless labors of the 1950s Constituent Assembly, as well as what the army chief considered to be wrong-headed foreign policy decisions, by fomenting the first *coup d'état*. The pattern has continued, with civil government either imploding or giving way to army rule over disagreements about politics and policy.

Pakistan's military finds uncertainty uncomfortable (and doesn't mind saying so), and often equates the rough and tumble of politics with unacceptable insecurity. As Aqil Shah shows persuasively in *The Army and Democracy: Military Politics in Pakistan*, the army's low tolerance for disorder—otherwise a constant in a rough and tumble place like Pakistan—has had the effect of diminishing prospects for democracy. Its way with power, as Prime Ministers have learned from the 1950s through to his century, joins blunt instruments with back-door manipulation to protect the military's self-interest in patronage, finance, and ultimately, policy. These practices have turned the army into the state's perpetual shadow: it doesn't have to do anything in order to be heeded.

Shah's focus is on the army—and the military more broadly—as “an institution of the state.” This limited role should be self-evident, but as *The Army and Democracy* demonstrates, the army's broad, self-defined guardianship of the state to which it belongs has often countered those who hold formal political power and in the process, thwarted the state's democratic prospects. This is not a new idea, but Shah's meticulous institutional treatment of the military is illuminating and valuable.

If Pakistan's military thinks of itself as the guardian of the state then who, Shah asks, guards the guardians? This question has become increasingly important as the military crafts perilously close operation relationships at the center of governance, exercising power without, as once was habit, taking power. Unremitting conflict has become the norm in Pakistan's regional relationships, insurgency has become the *modus vivendi* for groups in peripheral regions to press their claims, armed militancy has become the preferred way of doing business for sectarian radicals, and *jihadis* have often become clients of the army and proxies for its policies. The effects of such strife on state practice and indeed, on the state's concept of itself, are profound.⁸ Before the army became a primary and then paramount player in the state, it might have been viewed—or viewed itself—as a neutral protector of state interests, and arbiter within the state. Today, it is often a semi-autonomous actor (a role without constitutional sanction) with priorities that can—through a variety of means that are not, strictly speaking, democratic—determine the focus of policy and behavior for civilian government. At home, its choices determine when there is civilian government (*coups d'état* are simple instruments when an army chief has the backing of his corps commanders) and the shape that governing can take (even when there is something that resembles democracy).

Shah's incisive analysis of civil-military relations traverses conventional policy arguments, as well as institutional psychology, army teachings, and the military's interpretation of its responsibility in a state that is constantly in transition. His discussion of military training highlights a critical point: trainees are never instructed in the nature of the military's subsidiary role in the state. After all these years of military intrusion in politics, why not? The answers, one can assume, are revealingly circular and politically unsatisfying. Intervening has become both habit and safety net in a weak political system—in Shah's words, the army has adopted a "tutelary" role that remains largely unquestioned. As a result, the army is available to protect those politicians who seek its safe haven and retaliate in numerous ways against those who do not. No wonder political disputes, Khan's and Qadri's among them, so often land in the army's lap.

The conclusion seems simple: training must change, and reforming the rest of the civil-military structure is critical if some form of democracy is to take hold and flourish. Making this happen, however, is no easy task. There are at least three contentious, proximate arenas in which restructuring is vital to Pakistan's democratic development: the army's role in making policy, the military's patronage of armed non-state actors, and the regulation of military behavior. All intersect with entrenched military and civilian behaviors.

The first has been the subject of intense discussion for decades: a previous Army Chief was dismissed for proposing that the military have a direct say in foreign and security policy, various foreign patrons have weighed in on this issue, and as Shah notes, the current government has given military leaders a formal committee role in the cabinet. Were it not for the appropriate role that the military has so often played in Pakistan—the journey from tutelage to meddling can be very short—this might be considered routine. As the summer's events seemed to make clear, the military can, or is allowed to, turn any dispute into an opportunity, a practice that weakens civilian rule by implication if not design. As things stand now, however, the second issue—the army's patron-client relationship with insurgents (against whom it otherwise is supposed to be fighting) confounds not only this structural problem, but future civil-military relations as a whole: ultimately this practice can result in a civilian government's effort to circumscribe *any* larger institutional role for the military. The mores and ideas that motivate military involvement with armed non-state proxies call into question the military's attitudes toward democracy, specific foreign policy objectives (including negotiations with the same non-state actors), and its broader views of Pakistan's governance. The introductory sections of the Constitution discuss loyalty to the state, obedience to Constitution and law, and high treason—unheeded guidance for dealing with those allies and proxies fighting directly against the state.⁹ Shah carefully situates this issue in the context of democratic development rather than military perquisites or traditional security arguments, a choice with which the military might not agree.

The third matter—regulating military accountability and responsibility—has always proved problematic in Pakistan. Students of the 1971 War know well that serious issues of domestic and international legality remained unresolved when the army surrendered in Dhaka. The Hamoodur Rahman Commission Report,¹⁰ which investigated reasons for the military's defeat, came down quite hard on the troops and their leaders for their cruelty toward civilians. But the Report embedded its criticism of army actions in a dialectical justification of its role and posture, mixing East Pakistani grievances with Indian government agitation, internal criticism with external threat. Pakistan is portrayed as much the victim as the perpetrator of massive violence. Shah, as well as Christine Fair in *Fighting to the End: The Pakistan Army's Way of War*, notes that by blaming (Hindu-majority) India, the Commission might have thought it was softening the blow of its criticism of military behavior. But that very conduct aggravated future relations with India as much as it influenced internal Pakistani politics.

The question of a war crimes tribunal was never settled: Bangladesh traded away a trial of Pakistani officers for its formal recognition by Pakistan in advance of the 1973 Lahore meeting of the Organization of the Islamic Conference. (The subject has arisen again recently – history never really disappears.) Nonetheless, the impact of the war's aftermath on the Pakistan army – indeed, on Pakistan as a whole – was devastating. Gary Bass's superb study of the 1971 conflict, *The Blood Telegram: Nixon, Kissinger and a Forgotten Genocide*, not only excoriates United States policy toward Pakistan but also supplements Shah's discussion, dissecting with great understanding Pakistan's refusal to investigate the army's crimes. Indeed, the Report was suppressed, and government attitudes and policies toward this period have colored governance ever since. Fair, like Shah's detailed reading of the army's internal publications, highlights the military's attention to the nexus of domestic and external threats that it believed it learned from this experience. From 1989 onward (when Pakistan began a new campaign in Kashmir designed to destabilize India), the disruptions of 1971 were revived as lessons about India's malign intrusions in Pakistan's political disarray. (As Bass notes, United States introspection about its own role was limited, whether about the political and humanitarian travails of East Pakistan or about the consequences for West Pakistan of U.S. military assistance to a tone-deaf military government.) What is missing, unfortunately, is a window into the military's doctrinal disputes: the army's Green Books—cited by both Shah and Fair—reflect policy at a given moment, but do not to reveal arguments or explain changes in attitude, posture or policy, no matter how carefully analysts attempt to decode them.

The past decade's counter-insurgency and anti-terrorism efforts—again with support from the United States—have meant waging another war that targets Pakistan's own citizens. Armed battle, intelligence and surveillance, displacement and death—all are the province of a civil-military decision structure that rarely holds the army to explicit, civilian-initiated standards. Decades of hostilities in

border regions—in aid of policy toward Afghanistan and/or India at times, and more generally in pursuit of an enforced peace that minimizes local dissatisfaction and thwarts insurgency—has accomplished two unintended goals at once. It has created a disputed border more dangerous and permeable than can be sustained militarily or politically, and it has turned citizens into enemies, perceived or real, of the state.

This is why the current decade's military adventures in Waziristan and Balochistan are so dangerous to the state as well as its marginalized peoples. Cabeiri Robinson's detailed anthropology of refugee and *jihadi* populations in Kashmir demonstrates eloquently that political violence creates victims—the displaced, among others—who can also become perpetrators of violence. In *Body of Victim, Body of Warrior: Refugee Families and the Making of Kashmiri Jihadists*, the sliding scales of morality and politics among Kashmiris, in response to war, call into question the efficacy of Pakistan's policies and intentions. Long years of conflict fomented by Pakistan and India in Kashmir have fundamentally altered the character of politics and the aspirations of the Kashmiris themselves. In effect, the army and its targeted "enemies" have become two discrete but intersecting domains. This process has been replicated militarily in Pakistan's Pushto and Baloch-speaking regions, again with support from the United States—creating a frustrating, unpredictable, and potentially self-defeating environment that threatens Pakistan's politics from within. One million internally displaced persons, in a region full of refugees and dissatisfied local insurgents, may look like a pacification opportunity for the army. For participatory government, it looks like war.

Shah is therefore correct to raise the prospect of regulating the military's role—including military intelligence in war and peace, at home and abroad—to pierce the veil of secrecy that surrounds activities that can be essentially anti-democratic.¹¹ The question remains: Can this be made to happen? And can it change foreign policy?

Fair seems to suggest not. Regionally, military priorities can be close to sacrosanct: to the Army, there is little nuance in Pakistan's relations with India, a contest that drives foreign and economic policy with equal vigor, and influences the way the military handles the Al Qaeda, Taliban, Afghanistan and the United States. *Fighting to the End* demonstrates just how stubbornly the military has pursued its singular focus on India and in the process, has created an environment in which its own fears and designs have become entrenched in the state's foreign, and increasingly, domestic policy.

The fact that these perpetual contests—hot and lukewarm alike—have not helped Pakistan become stronger, richer, or more powerful is a perpetual condition of what Fair calls its "stable instability." Unstable, yes; stable, perhaps not. A close reading of Bass's book—whose meticulously sourced study offers a scathing indictment of both U.S. foreign policy and Pakistan's domestic politics—suggests (as have others who have studied the 1960s) that many moments on the way to war could have been handled very differently, particularly if Pakistan had not by

then experienced more than a decade of military rule. The same might be said for Pakistan since 1999, when the military has ruled, and then led without ruling. In each instance, ruling has either replaced or seriously limited the kind of governing that could be done.

Shah suggests cautiously and with modest optimism that the military might “formally insinuate(s) nondemocratic privileges into the functioning of democracy” to move Pakistan toward real democracy. This proposal is unlikely to bear fruit unless clear standards can regulate civilian *and* military behavior with institutional mandates that accord with the demands of rights and justice. While it is necessary to understand how and why the army thinks and behaves as it does – and Shah’s interviews valuably augment our knowledge of this, just as Fair’s offers context to military strategy—the broader polity is or should be responsible for setting the rules and boundaries for military action.

Although Pakistan’s parliament rarely confronts this essential element of democracy, civilian control over military engagement *as a question of protecting rights* within Pakistan’s borders is a critical topic for Pakistan’s domestic agenda. Identifying the meanings of justice and the responsibility for protecting rights is not simply a matter of replacing army rule with civilian institutions. Pakistan has become a place where the demands of justice often conflict, and disputes about priorities among rights (and among communities demanding their rights) are rarely settled. Minorities have found their basic rights not just diminished but literally destroyed: in the last year alone, Hazara Shias, Christians and Ahmadis have been killed, persecuted, and legally accosted by their neighbors *and* by police, military and intelligence.¹² That they also fall afoul of conservative and extremist groups adds insult to tremendous injury.

These communities, however, are not Khan’s and Qadri’s constituents—neither politician has expressed much concern for Pakistan’s peripheral populations, or for politicians who have been attacked for their explicitly secular views—but access to justice for those without social and economic privilege certainly figures among their ultimatums. Indeed, it has become a demand heard across the country, including by the Pakistani Taliban. When, for example, the Taliban first seized power in Swat in 2007, its leaders claimed they could adjudicate the claims for justice that courts, police and politicians seemed unable to resolve. Taliban tribunals were not what Swatis demanded—they sought fair and accessible state institutions rather than rule by those who themselves regularly and brutally abused rights—but the vocabulary of justice permeated the environment and underscored calls to reform the law and the state.

Osama Siddique’s dense and discerning discussion of justice lies at the heart of his new volume, *Pakistan’s Experience with Formal Law: An Alien Justice*. His analysis of the legacies of colonial and post-colonial legal systems is acute, but the prominence he gives to justice as an institution, and justice reform as a development issue, is especially important. Until now, much of the writing on Pakistan’s law has

been case interpretation, diagnoses of overly-regulated and under-serving courts, and studies of legal precedent—just as studies of civil-military have relied on timelines of *coups d'etat*.¹³ But chronology tells us little about causes. Using data from legal reform programs, Siddique maps the relationships among citizen demands, government responses, and international assistance to examine how Pakistan's system of justice supports its entrenched class system and affects its broader constitutional structure.

Perhaps most important, Siddique accentuates the fundamental problem of seeing Pakistan structurally, through an institutional lens—a long practiced habit in all sectors of society, but particularly toward the army and the courts. Seeking and achieving justice, after all, is a matter of enforcing rights through constitutionally appropriate practice—a dynamic process that is itself the space needed to claim rights and redress grievances. “Reforming” a court or justice “sector” is often, however, an institution building project (with substantial underwriting from foreign aid donors)—a structural act rather than the outcome of a political process, and therefore something of a *non sequitur* for those seeking to make politics more effective. Rethinking customs, rules, power, and authority are all enormous problems that lie at the heart of politics and policy and thus, the political definition of the state. Although Siddique concentrates on the domestic justice system, his observations about the complex conditions for reform speak as well to civil-military relations and class relations. This is politics at its most fundamental.

Thinking Politically

Pakistan's essentially plural society has long struggled with the diverse meanings of a plural state. While its constitutional aspirations can be (but are not always) admirable, conventional wisdom about politics assumes that contradiction is the norm, rather than dynamic variety, equal opportunity or collective striving. The many demands of class, ethnicity, tribe, locale, belief, culture and history, of economic needs and resources, and of regional and global relationships are used to claim goods from a state that struggles daily to devise a political calculus to forward a shared concept of the common good. But it is only in the devising—the processes of civic argument, governing, and engaging in politics—that democracy stands a chance of developing.

Building and protecting the state as an edifice of security often overtakes the acts of inclusion and participation that can ensure that politics, and therefore the state, belongs to all Pakistanis. It is the intersections of polity and society – how government copes with diversity, how citizens handle the demands of faulty governing or incomplete policy—that tell us what the country is and can become, and the ways of thinking that can move politics from structure to process.

Laurent Gayer's imaginative new exploration of contemporary Pakistani politics does not start from the vantage point of the central state's structure. Instead, he dissects the byways of Pakistan's largest, most complex and most violent urban

environment to understand what it means to live, literally, at the cutting edges of Pakistan's politics. *Karachi: Ordered Disorder and the Struggle for the City* delves deeply into an environment that is deeply connected to Pakistan's sectarian struggles and cross-border wars. Karachi's inventive corruptions and utilitarian criminality, vast migrations and global transport connections, breakneck urbanization, enormous capital and almost unfathomable poverty and insecurities are the stuff of urban legend. They are also among Pakistan's greatest challenges.

As the country's most durable link to Kabul—and thus to war financing, localized violence and the vicious sectarianism that grew out of successive Afghan wars—Karachi has become a case study of political volatility and, Gayer argues, controlled fragmentation. In his rendering, Karachi personifies the worst and the best of Pakistan: divisiveness and inventiveness, state-led violence and local peace-making, entrepreneurial savvy and unremitting poverty, inward-looking sectarian strife and stubborn cosmopolitanism. As a result, Karachi's seemingly perpetual strife seems, oddly enough, restrained: every political and religious faction has its thugs, criminals, strategists, advocates and bankers, and each knows when to do business and when to stop fighting. This encapsulated environment limits the scope of violence (to a degree), but keeps politics close enough to the center of life to allow bargaining at almost every turn.

At first glance, this might seem a preposterous way to run a city. Karachi is routinely listed among the world's most dangerous places (as is Pakistan). The Taliban has attacked its naval base and airport, local vendettas lead to ruthless murders, and its close to 20 million residents are repeatedly held hostage to strikes and internecine clashes. Its sectarian violence is frightening, its political parties frequently splinter, and its political allegiances are almost impossible to map and sometimes mimic the victim-becomes-perpetrator process that Robinson describes in Kashmir.¹³ Karachi has borne the brunt of Pakistan's perpetual and unfinished experiments with local government that inevitably lessen governance and augment patronage. And as it has elsewhere, the army has been called to aid civil authorities—although always after argument, and often because locating an authority with acknowledged power can be hard to find.

Some of these trends exist elsewhere in Pakistan, but the intimate social and economic connections that create Karachi's "ordered disorder" are critical to the city's ties to the state: disequilibrium and interdependence among financial and political actors (including insurgents from each of Pakistan's subnational conflicts, ethnic parties and sectarian fighters), each with tentacles outside the city and province; habits of coalition politics even when actual coalitions are obscure to voters; and a push-me/pull-you relationship with central authority that keeps everyone off kilter. At the same time, Karachi runs on a form of lawlessness that is almost authoritarian in concept and practice, and rights abusing in a multitude of ways. Police systematically ignore the law and thrive in its absence, political parties take law into their own hands, and the Taliban has established a small parallel court system similar to those in Swat. In this context, stubborn community efforts

to repair the damage of lawlessness can at best tackle its symptoms: Karachi's residents can easily feel powerless in the face of these assaults on civic life.

Clearly, this does not sound like a model for Pakistan's politics. But Gayer makes a convincing case for understanding the country, in part, through the city—for recognizing latent, potentially self-regulating elements of politics that do not rely on the army for patrol, sanction or punishment. Equally significant, he locates the reasons for Karachi's long-term, idiosyncratic balances of power in the connections between public and private protection, a flexible political market that leaves room for new actors, and the oddly and unintentionally democratizing effects that arise from disregarding intrusive public policy and inventing the rest. This unconventional political analysis is a breath of fresh air for Pakistan watchers. Of course, it is not at all clear that this ad hoc, collectively ensured balance—rarely rights respecting and boldly anti-constitutional—can be sustained, or that it is an arrangement adequate to maintain a megacity living at a geographical precipice. But because Karachi interprets its geography *politically* (and not predominantly strategically), and navigates that space with less attention to the brittle state and army than does most of the country, it offers a counterpoint—often dangerous, but a counterpoint nonetheless—to traditional ideas of state building and democratic development.

Thinking Politically About the State

The way a state governs tells us a great deal about the way it thinks about itself, and the lessons of the 2014 political season are therefore forceful and cautionary. Pakistan, confronted with more problems than it finds possible to fix, has disappointed many of its people. This has been apparent for decades, but government after government has found ways to buy time and buy off protests. Were the government's shortfalls solely economic, or even solely within the ambit of foreign policy and security, they would be easier for Pakistanis and Pakistan's closest interlocutors to countenance, if not fix—at least for a while. But each event points to moral ambiguities that color politics, and structural deficits that determine the way the state acts—sometimes before it thinks. Disregarding large segments of the population, whether in humanitarian crisis or political disagreement, has become a way of life for weak government. Discriminating against minorities may be a habit drawn from some of the compromises about provincial autonomy and Islamic law that were made when the Constitution was first drafted, but wholesale and unpunished attacks on religious and ethnic groups undercuts the tolerance and compassion that, it was hoped, would ground the country. Similarly, the ties that bind the security establishment to particular sectarian militants—and set the army at odds with ethnic and provincial insurgents—have deeply compromised national security and political processes. Abusing free speech as a tool of governance has torn the fabric of social amity, possibly irrevocably, and eroded the elasticity essential for political growth and harmony.

As this collection of books illustrates, these patterns of behavior, accompanied by Pakistan's intricate relationships across its region and beyond, have subsumed the raucous indeterminacy of constitutionally mandated politics under the umbrella of an increasingly rigid state. The state, however, is only one piece of the puzzle. If Pakistan is to climb out of its current quagmires to become—in ambition and reality—a vigorous, engaged country, it will need to think less about the structure of its state, and far more deeply about the essence of its politics.

NOTES

1. Parween Rahman, quoted in Laurent Gayer, *Karachi: Ordered Disorder and the Struggle for the City* (London: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 282.

2. Mirza Khurram Shahzad, "Kayani feared religious right's backlash against him: Athar Abbas," *Dawn*, July 2, 2014; Tom Hussain, "Pakistan won't target militants who fight in Afghanistan," *McClatchy DC*, February 26, 2014, <http://www.mcclatchydc.com/2014/02/26/219473/pakistan-wont-target-militants.html>; and "Kayani delayed the operation: Athar Abbas," *Express Tribune*, July 1, 2014, which suggests that Kayani did not want his decisions to appear to respond to pressure from the United States. According to McClatchy, the price of \$900 million in new Coalition Support Funds was using one third of those funds for this offensive.

3. Asad Kharal, "Model Town Tragedy: Dissenting note in JIT report pins blame on Shahbaz," *Express Tribune*, August 25, 2014, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/753398/model-town-tragedy-dissenting-note-in-jit-report-pins-blame-on-shahbaz/>

4. Next Generation Task Force: *Next Generation: Insecure Lives, Untold Stories* (2014), <http://www.nextgeneration.com.pk/next-generation-untold-stories/>. See also Hassan Javid, "The problem with 'honour,'" *The Nation*, June 2, 2014, <http://www.nation.com.pk/columns/01-Jun-2014/the-problem-with-honour/>; and Raza Rumi, "Farzana Parveen and the death of the state," *The Express Tribune*, May 30, 2014, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/715415/farzana-parveen-and-the-death-of-the-state/>

5. I. A. Rehman, "Anarchy or Parliament," *The News on Sunday*, August 24, 2014, [, August 15, 2014, <http://www.thefridaytimes.com/tft/miltablishments-end-game/>](http://tns.thenews.com.pk/category/special-report; Najam Sethi,)

6. See Rashed Rahman "Crisis: resolution, denouement," Daily Times editorial: <http://rashed-rahman.blogspot.com>; and Umair Javed, "A household quarrel," *Dawn*, 18 August 2014: <http://www.dawn.com/news/1125937>

7. The major opposition party objected energetically to bypassing parliament and the courts by invoking Article 245. See Mateen Haider, "PPP lashes out at govt for invoking Article 245," *Dawn*, July 26, 2014, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1121560>

8. See Paul Staniland, *Networks of Rebellion: Explaining Insurgent Cohesion and Collapse* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2014), p. 223.

9. http://www.na.gov.pk/uploads/documents/1333523681_951/pdf; see also Staniland, pp. 35–58.

10. http://boltapakistan.files.wordpress.com/2007/08/hamood_ur_rehman_commission.pdf

11. Shah notes that a bill to regulate the ISI was introduced in 2012 but quickly withdrawn.

12. Burning Joseph Colony, *Express Tribune*, September 13, 2013, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/603853/burning-joseph-colony/>; Rabia Mehmood, "Ahmadis, seared to the wall," *Dawn*, June 29, 2014, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1122333>; Asad Hashim, "Hazara Shia hounded in Pakistan," *Al Jazeera*, March 8, 2013, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2013/03/201337112254932820.html>; Mirza Iqbal, "Ahmadis on the run: fearing death in People's Colony," *Dawn*, August 21, 2014, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1123873>; Zahra Abid, Church attacks I: When time stopped at All Saints Church," *Express Tribune*, June 2, 2014, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/715576/church-attacks-i-when-time-stopped-at-all-saints-church/>

13. See also Paul Staniland, "Cities on Fire: Social Mobilization, State Policy, and Urban Insurgency," *Comparative Political Studies* 43 (2010): 1623, <http://cps.sagepub.com/content/43/12/162>