

**Thazha Varkey Paul, *The Warrior State: Pakistan In The Contemporary World*
(New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 257.**

Reviewed by Khusrow Akkas Abbasi

Professor T.V. Paul's short book on Pakistan is an attempt to understand Pakistan's identity as a state. The study examines how the nation that came into existence seeking to be a welfare state became a garrison state with the single point agenda of protecting national security. Prof. Paul contends that, like resource rich (oil-rich) countries are experiencing a "resources curse," Pakistan is facing a "geostrategic curse" which prevents it from establishing a strong democracy, and focus on economic development. The author opines that Pakistan's policies based on "hyper-realpolitik" view of the outside world, have backfired. The book's main argument revolves around the question how the Pakistani elites have sought economic and military benefits accruing from its geostrategic position. The author has compared Pakistan with some other countries that have overcome problems of economic development and security.

T.V. Paul is James McGill Professor of International Relations in the Department of Political Science at McGill University, where he has been teaching since 1991. He specializes in international relations, especially international security, and South Asia. He is the author/editor of 15 books and has published a large number of articles and book chapters.

The book's approach is a bit ambitious which seeks to apply social science theories on the state institutions in Pakistan. In his quest for understanding Pakistan the author has applied a wide range of theoretical approaches drawing from mercantilist

and traditional realist to liberal utopian theories. The author is curious to explore why Pakistan has failed to become a strong, stable state despite its focus on security. This question is perplexing to the author given the Charles Tilly's argument that in most of European countries, war made the state and the state made war. The author is of the view that the reason for Pakistan's failure to become a stable state can be identified from what he calls 'geostrategic curse'.

Pakistan's dependence on relatively stable and easy access to foreign aid has produced an insular ruling elite that has little interest and incentive to introduce reforms that could make the country more democratic and progressive. Pakistan, for most of its independent history, has occupied a key geopolitical and strategic space that made it eligible for external assistance largely from the US, but also from Saudi Arabia and China. This, in the author's opinion, became a hurdle in the development of state structure. This phenomenon also contributed to the dominance of the military in political affairs and towards Pakistan becoming what he calls 'The Warrior State'.

The author thinks that the "threat" from India has been used to further the Pakistani elite's vested political agenda. Their definition of Islam and support it generates from the public has shrunk the space for progressive political forces in the process. Pakistan's relationship with the US is discussed at several places in the book, emphasizing both the 'corrosive effect' of military aid on the region and duplicitous nature of the relations between the two. Other regional players like China and Saudi Arabia, are also discussed arguing that their support strengthened the power and position of the elite in Pakistan.

While discussing external factors that have impinged on Pakistan's internal development, the author's argument appears superficial. He has not factored in

diverse forces and actors involved in the politics of the country. At times it seems that the author has only the military elite in mind when trying to analyze complex nature of external and internal problems Pakistan had faced in its history of nearly seven decades.

The author has repeatedly referred to Pakistan as a “semi-feudal” state, without clarifying what he means by the term. It can be argued that Pakistan did not experience feudalism in the sense in which it had prevailed in Europe in the Middle Ages. Pakistan is often described as a semi-feudal society in the sense that large land holdings are possessed by rural elites but it is not the correct characterization of economy, which has been structured on capitalistic lines.

The author compares Pakistan to countries, like Turkey, Egypt, Indonesia, Taiwan, and South Korea, which have similar histories of military control and national security concerns. In doing so, the author has skipped few facts. For instance Turkey, Egypt and Indonesia never faced a threat, or fought wars of survival against a five times bigger enemy. He also does not take into account the fact that, unlike other countries mentioned by him Pakistan had to begin building the state structure and its security apparatus from scratch as—at the time of its independence—Pakistan did not inherit, unlike India, a fully functional state structure.

Since the 1950s Pakistan has been an arena for great power rivalry and geopolitical struggles. From beginning of Cold War to the collapse of USSR, and most recently in the post 9/11 war on terror, it was almost never possible for Pakistan to escape from great power politics.

Pakistan’s military expenditure is less than 3 percent of its total GDP. Spending this little on defence, should certainly not qualify Pakistan as a warrior state, as there are many other countries in the region that spend more than that. The author should

perhaps, have checked his facts more carefully. For instance, he asserts that Taliban had occupied 30 percent of the country which is obviously wrong.

T.V. Paul's book is based on partial facts and subjective analysis. The narrative he builds about Pakistan's matrix does not hold to basic scrutiny.