

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

NUST Journal of International
Peace & Stability
2017, Vol. I (1) Pages 86-90
njips.nust.edu.pk

(Oxford University Press, 2014)

Faryal Khan¹

Carol Christine Fair, PhD., one of the leading experts on South Asia, has made Pakistan army the subject of her book: *Fighting to the End: The Pakistan Army's Way of War*. The overarching theme, resonating in all eleven chapters in the book, depicts the Pakistan Army as central to all the misfortunes befalling the country. Fair accentuates the overbearing presence and consequent ruinous decisiveness of the Pakistan army in military, economic, political and diplomatic arenas. Furthermore, the writer contends, that the contestation between India and Pakistan has been predominantly orchestrated by the Pakistani Army. In a nutshell, Fair delineates that most countries have armies; however, the Pakistan army retains a country to carry out its injunctions.

The book highlights some striking conclusions drawn from the Pakistan Army Green Books containing the works of Pakistani military personnel, reflecting the official thinking of the country's army. Based on these resources, Fair argues that Pakistan will persistently be subjected to multiple defeats in its efforts to oppose India, *but it would not acquiesce to India*. Through this argument the writer reiterates the *revisionist* orientation of Pakistan. For her, *Pakistan's apprehensions about India are more ideological than security driven*, essentially, the Pakistan Army is the defender of its ideological frontier i.e. the *Islamic* identity of Pakistan versus the *Hindu* India. Furthermore, the writer suggests that the Pakistan Army is convinced of being a victim

¹ Faryal Khan is MS Scholar at the Centre for International Peace and Stability (CIPS), National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST), Islamabad, Pakistan.

E-mail: faryal4812.pcs@cips.nust.edu.pk

as it re-interprets history to portray itself as a sufferer of injustices perpetrated by outside forces. Fair supports her *revisionist* stance about the *strategic culture* of Pakistan by dwelling into themes like the founding of the state, the concomitant role of Islam with Pakistan and the country's relations with its immediate neighbors and United States. The writer also highlights the security dynamics of the region by shedding light on Pakistan's use of its nuclear status.

Commenting on the genesis and evolution of the state, Fair contends that Pakistan *felt cheated by the partition of 1947*. Therefore, since its inception, Pakistan has indulged in various ways to engage its neighbors and become a persistent fighting force in the region. The writer argues that it's the recalling of the injustices at the time of partition that have hindered the Pakistan army from denouncing the efforts to relinquish Kashmir and normalize relations with India. While articulating Pakistan army's incessant obsession with India, she asserts that Pakistan has been the principal instigator of all military conflicts with India. According to Fair, the confrontation between India and Pakistan has mutated into a *civilizational* crisis, essentially highlighting that Pakistan would vehemently oppose any restraint to strike India. The book suggests that Pakistan army interprets and gauges its success by its continued efforts to be able to resist India.

The book reviewed Pakistan's use of *militant proxies* in Afghanistan and India in rigorous detail, emphasizing Pakistan's indispensable dependency on these actors. According to the writer, Pakistan has used the tactics of militant proxies and asymmetrical warfare from the beginning, so it's highly unlikely that it would abandon them in the future. Pakistan employed these proxies to help invade Kashmir in 1947 to accelerate its accession to Pakistan and continues to practice irregular means of warfare to gain ascendancy in Kashmir. Fair further reiterates this argument by insisting that Pakistan frequented the art of using insurgents to generate rebellion and perfected such means by its relationship with United States in the 1980s.

One of the key chapters in the book; *Born an Insecure State* traces the origin of the Pakistan Army and emphasizes on the significance of its structural growth. The writer argues that the areas allotted to Pakistan were the agitated and rebellious areas under the British rule in subcontinent. As a consequence, the British governed by authoritarianism, hence giving considerably less leeway to democracy to flourish in this area. Therefore, Fair asserts that authoritarian military regimes have burgeoned in the region of Pakistan. Another intriguing

argument made by the writer revolves around on the *changing composition* of the Pakistan Army. Conventionally, Pakistan Army had been dominated by few districts in the provinces of Punjab and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa. However, Fair's research in the book contends that by mid of 2000, participation in the army was pouring from all over Pakistan, making it a robust national institution.

Considerable part of the book is dedicated to the analysis of the Pakistani military throughout. Fair outlines the concept of *strategic depth* and Pakistan's relation with Afghanistan. The writer asserts that Pakistan's policies towards Afghanistan were patterned on colonial considerations, essentially about using Afghanistan as a buffer state. Moreover, Pakistan's support for the development of Afghan mujahedeen pre-dated the 1979 Soviet invasion, as she points out that training camps were established by Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto to train Afghan mujahedeen as early as 1973.

Fair is of the opinion that Pakistan's perceptions of interminable insecurity have led to military alliances with United States, Saudi Arab and China. These military alliances have given Pakistan the leeway to sustain a massive armed force and carry out its incessant persecution of India. The writer explicitly discusses the military alliances of Pakistan in light of its relation with United States, contending that US pursued these alliances over various geo-strategic concerns, whereas, Pakistan has persistently urged the US to support it against India. The author reprimands Pakistan's criticism for the lack of US aid it received during the wars with India under military alliances like Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) and Southeast Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO). Fair countered Pakistan's criticism of the lack of US aid by comparing the refusal of Pakistani assistance during the US war with Vietnam. The writer has sighted that anti-US rhetoric and grievances in Pakistan are due to the dissatisfaction of the Pakistan army with US.

Fair is also critical of the jihad Pakistan has carried out under the nuclear umbrella employed to deter its adversaries. The writer asserts that through its overt Nuclearization in 1998; Pakistan has carried out terrorist activities across the border in India and undermined strategic interests of US in the region. She believes that the ambiguous nuclear doctrine of Pakistan gives it effective deterrence against India and also internationalizes the issues faced by Pakistan, bringing international actors to mediate and de-escalate conflicts in the region. Furthermore, the writer also deliberates that the possession of nuclear power by Pakistan, hinders the US to abandon it completely.

The book unabashedly lambasts the Pakistan Army; the author characterizes Pakistan as a *purely greedy state*, aggravating problems in the region. Fair is pessimistic about democracy strengthening in Pakistan; she also argues that even in case of a democratic transition, the masses of Pakistan would oppose abandoning the anti-India rhetoric. The writer is unchallengeably convinced of Pakistan's nefarious propaganda always in play against India. For instance, under the dictatorship of Musharraf, India and Pakistan purportedly came close to finding a final settlement on Kashmir issue, however, the book depicts that as Pakistan's way of waging war through peace, denying Pakistan's capacity to bargain rationally. Furthermore, Fair admits herself that Pakistan purposed a joint defense agreement with India which India immediately rejected, but this argument goes against the exhaustively discussed aggressive military mind-set within Pakistan army. Regarding the recruitment of army officers from all over the country, she dismisses the moderating effect brought on by this change towards the security needs of Pakistan. She believes that the strategic culture of army is so deeply enriched within Pakistani society that all Pakistani soldiers will eventually subscribe to anti-Indian stance. This rigid stance of Fair is contestable as the Pakistan army is not only incontrovertibly engrossed in countering foreign threats from all dimensions, but checking the internal stability of Pakistan.

Fair condemns Pakistan for its criticism of US about abandoning it to deal with drugs, guns and jihad culture after 1980s, but she does not give a more convincing argument about the departure of US from Afghanistan than the lack of US interests in the region after 1980s. Furthermore, she also completely denies any role of US in proliferating radicalization in the region which is entirely fallacious. The book recommends that it is only through *containment* that the threats from Pakistan to the international community can be controlled and managed. The writer is prejudiced while discussing the strategic culture of Pakistan and channels the hegemonic stance of US towards Pakistan, while unrecognizing the western imperialistic tendencies towards the region and jeopardizing Pakistan's sovereignty.

Furthermore, the writer maintains a menacing silence over Indian aggression with its neighbors like Nepal, China and Sri Lanka while promulgating Indian *inevitable ascendancy* in the region and beyond. Pakistan's insecurities concocted or otherwise, as suggested by Fair, are insufferable to her sensibilities that she has divulged in producing a volume about them. In this view, the contrast in the treatment of both the states, trying to secure their national interests by

any means necessary, evidence unabashed partiality in favor of India while rendering Pakistan a threat to the region and international security.

The tunnel vision of the writer concerning the role of army in Pakistan diminishes the robust appropriacy exhibited by the Pakistan Army in securing the sovereignty and integrity of the country. The themes of the book need to be appraised by a contradistinction lens; the formidable role of army in securing Pakistan since its inception while also focusing on the recurring and expanding interests of US in South Asia.