

Anita M. Weiss and S. Zulfiqar Gilani (eds.). *Power and Civil Society in Pakistan*. Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2001. 312 pages. Rs 395.00.

In recent times, there has been an increase in the perception that it is fair to attain power by any means, by hook or crook. The quest for power is an unending struggle that appears to entail no rules. This is a major problem which has also engulfed Pakistani society, and has resulted in political and social chaos.

The book under review, comprising eleven cohesive chapters grouped in four parts, contains contributions from prominent scholars. The volume addresses various issues regarding power, politics, and civil society. The book has a dual task in view. It sheds light on the historic relationship between power and authority and then goes on to study the causes of disintegration in moral consensus. Civil society is studied in general with respect to Pakistan and the social foundations of power. Special importance is given to all forms of political, economic, social, and legal power structures. The book moves into an interesting dimension by identifying the new contenders of power and explores upcoming issues in power negotiations. The underlying motive of the book is to contribute towards the establishment of a closely-knit society, thus eradicating the root causes of social and political disintegration.

In Part One the editors assert in their "Introduction" that the Pakistani society faces a multiplicity of crises that have resulted in turmoil. They delve into the interesting issue of non-acceptance of real authority and thus focus on institutional inefficiency, corruption, and social breakdowns. The introductory chapter seeks to identify the major contenders for power and links the micro and macro aspects of the society in relation to power and power struggles. Moreover, the editors highlight the fact that Pakistan's HDI ranking places it among countries with far lower GDP per capita rates. This is in keeping with Pakistan's poor social indicators. The succeeding chapter is in fact the last in Part One. The writer of the chapter, Mustafa Kamal Pasha, asserts that although there seems to be an emergent modern civil society, yet such a modern civil society is marked by savage capitalism. The chapter has four major portions. The first deals with the contemporary conditions of the civil society. The second highlights the relationship between capitalism and inequality. The third section focuses on the emergence of a modern civil society. The last section analyses the emergent civil societies generally.

Part Two of the book touches on the sphere of social foundations in Pakistan. The major focus is on family as a social institution. Mention has been made of first-cousin marriages and the insider/outsider view. The impact of social values and perceptions regarding the functioning of the society is also studied.

Syed Zulfiqar Gilani, the co-editor, contributes the third chapter. The author asserts: "There are traditional and institutional arrangements of power relationships in Pakistan". Dr Gilani's discussion of personal and social power is based on this

very argument. The chapter discusses power and the individual, child rearing and powerlessness, male birth and its consequences, power and relationships, and the dynamics of power relations. All of these issues further the discussion of personal and social power.

The next chapter is by Anita Weiss. She argues that Pakistani society is going through social dilemmas and challenges that will have a strong impact on the role and lives of women. She highlights the conflicting perception regarding power and women and how it goes on to create an imbalance and lack of societal cohesion. The focus of the chapter is on the practical exercise of power with respect to gender and gender roles. She suggests that with time, men and women are actively renegotiating power relations and access to power in various arenas. She believes that the greatest potential for positive and favourable outcomes lies in this very process.

Part Three of the book sheds light on political, legal, and economic power structures. It is an investigation into the origins and manifestations of power in various institutions. The underlying theme of this section is to study the condition, the workings, and the environment of the economy in relation to the division of power, power relations, and the civil society. The first chapter of Part Three is written by Imran Anwar Ali and studies the role of business in relation to power. The writer discusses the role and status of business in the society and suggests that if economic benefit through unequal resource disposals was to be one of the indicators of power, then the business community along with the state-owned institutions is a major beneficiary of this resource transfer.

Shahid Javed Burki studies the politics of power and its economic imperatives in Pakistan from 1947, the year of independence, to 1999, the year of the last military coup. Burki starts on a sorry note stating that Pakistan's 52-year history has been marked by exceptional turbulence. In this particular chapter, the author tries to find the answer to the question why it has taken Pakistan so long to find a suitable political structure, whereas India, born a day after Pakistan's birth and with similar institutions and traditions, has settled politically. The author ends by saying that it was high time to diagnose Pakistan's economic and political malaise and to find its cure.

"The environment within which economic policy is embedded is disturbed by a dysfunctional social structure". This is what Omar Noman says in Chapter Seven about the working of the society in Pakistan. The author discusses the presence of an uncivil society and discusses the role of shadow privatisation, conflict, and ideology in the governance of Pakistani society. He believes that three elements of the political economy are shaping the society, namely, persistent conflict, shadow privatisation, and ideological distortions. The chapter has three parts. The first two provide an overview of Pakistan's economy in a changing international environment, and these are supplemented by a summary of recent economic performance. The third part provides suggestions aimed at improving the working of the civil society.

The eighth chapter of the book is by Hasan Askari Rizvi. The author studies the role of the military in the civil society. Indeed, the military is the group that actually wields power. The chapter discusses that long years of direct and indirect military rule have helped the military to spread its power in all spheres of the society. It is stated that the military draws its power and influence from its organisational strength. Rizvi puts forward an analysis of the ethnic character and social composition of the military. Special mention of Islam is also made in this connection.

The last part of the book mentions the ways in which new social institutions are negotiating power. The new contenders of power are identified and issues in power negotiation are discussed.

Farzana Bari and Saba Gul contribute Chapter 9, which focuses on women's movements in relation to power configurations in public and private arenas. The chapter begins by defining the term "Women Movement" [sic]. The authors go on to discuss women's movement in relation to the civil society, as a response to power configurations. A special portion of the chapter focuses on women as a part of the family, women movement *vis-à-vis* the community, and women's movements and the state. Another portion of the book deals with NGOs and women.

In Chapter Ten, Lynn Renken discusses the role of micro finance in empowering people and how financial empowerment has helped and is helping women. The author also discusses the shortcomings of the micro finance framework and how it is being used to perpetuate power by those who wield power. Research suggests that even though an increasing number of credit-lending facilities extend loans to women, yet certain difficulties persist in securing small loans.

Omar Asghar Khan contributes the last chapter of the book which focuses on the relationship between the NGOs and the state with respect to power negotiations. Various approaches being adopted by these organisations for such negotiations are discussed. The mobilisation and advocacy work of the NGOs is also mentioned.

The volume is a remarkable effort on a critical topic and opens the doors for further research and study, and this reader's delight. It is cogent, cohesive, and thorough in content. The authors have surely contributed towards analysing elements of a social consensus. Now it is over to the practitioners to put the theory to practice. The only suggestion that I have is that a chapter at the end should have been devoted to providing a suitable conclusion to the discussion and presenting concrete solutions and suggestions for the problems highlighted.

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