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# Pakistan's Modernity between the Military and Militancy

AYESHA SIDDIQA

In Pakistan economic progress does not automatically translate into liberal progressive modernity mainly due to the nature of the state. Pakistan's modernity is structured along two axes: neo-liberal nationalism and right-wing radical nationalism. While the neo-liberal nationalism axis depicts an authoritarian and top-down model of economic and political development marked with the expansion of a national security-obsessed middle class and ruling elite, the right-wing radical nationalism axis denotes the growth of religious radicalism and militancy as symbols of geopolitical modernity that are anti-imperialist in nature. This analysis argues that liberalism is one of the many consequences of modernity, but not the only one. The meeting point of both trajectories has resulted in turning Pakistan into a hybrid-theocratic state which encapsulates a mix of economic neo-liberalism, pockets of social liberalism, formal theocracy and larger spaces experiencing informal theocracy.

There is a new kind of literature on Pakistan in the market which claims to present an alternative view of the country, a view that is more positive and talks of the huge potential of the Pakistani state to become a success story on par with the emerging economies of the world. Instead of focusing on religious radicalism, the war on terror, the problematic politics or the excessively powerful military, the new works highlight the progressive, liberal and democratic tendencies of the state and society. One of the key arguments presented in the new literature is that given some structural changes in politics, especially by replacing the traditional elite with the growing middle class, the country can be turned into a success story. The emphasis, thus, is on empowerment of the middle class, greater urbanisation, political order and economic development. This is the formula for socio-political and socio-economic modernity.

This essay examines the above notion and argues instead that this peculiar formula for modernity is deeply flawed. The empowerment of the middle class or economic progress does not automatically translate into liberal progressive modernity mainly due to the nature of the state. Pakistan's modernity, I argue, is structured along two axes: neo-liberal nationalism and right-wing radical nationalism. While the neo-liberal nationalism axis depicts an authoritarian and top-down model of economic and political development marked with the expansion of a national security-obsessed middle class and ruling elite, the right-wing radical nationalism axis denotes the growth of religious radicalism and militancy as symbols of geopolitical modernity and anti-imperialism. The terms – military and militancy – are both used here in symbolic terms. While military denotes all forms of authoritarian behaviour, militancy refers to all the shades ranging from latent radicalism to extremism and religious fascism which will also be referred to here as jihadism. I also argue that liberalism is one of the many consequences of modernity, but not the only one. The meeting point of both trajectories has resulted in turning Pakistan into a hybrid-theocratic state which encapsulates a mix of economic neo-liberalism, pockets of social liberalism, formal theocracy and larger spaces experiencing informal theocracy.

## 1 Modernity: The Neo-liberal Nationalism Axis

The new or alternative view literature is represented by three works: (a) Maleeha Lodhi's *Pakistan: Beyond 'The Crisis State'* (2011), (b) Anatol Lieven's *Pakistan: A Hard Country* (2011), and (c) Javed Jabbar's *Pakistan – Unique Origins; Unique Destiny?* (2011). What is common in these books is a propensity to consider modernity as a "rational or social operation that is culture-neutral"

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(Taylor 1995: 25) which means looking at modernity purely in material terms and as a goal that can be fulfilled through good neo-liberal policies. These three works and some others that will also be mentioned in the course of this article seem to be duly advertised by powerful segments of the Pakistani state as a response to many other works that either categorise the country as failed or failing, or unfavourably view certain powerful institutions such as the military as causing this failure.

Although the effort of repainting Pakistan in brighter colours was started almost a decade ago under Pervez Musharraf, the initiative was speeded up in the ensuing years. The military-dominated state encouraged new scholarship to redefine Pakistan to the general public, both nationally and internationally. There are two angles of such scholarship: (a) take the emphasis away for any weakness or failure of the state from the civil and military bureaucracy to the political elite that is also considered the traditional elite, and (b) present an alternative formula for the country's progress through improving governance and transferring power to the middle class. This indicates a fair amount of heating up of the inner conflict between the traditional elite and those that aspire to and are taking place of the old elite.

### Significance of Armed Forces

According to this type of literature, an alternative but successful Pakistan can be created by fulfilling certain sociopolitical conditions and honouring the right agents of change such as the urban middle class largely represented by the state bureaucracy, especially the military. All the three works highlight the significance of the armed forces as an organisation with an unquestioned reputation, especially in comparison with other players such as the politicians. This is not simple propagandist literature, but the type which is arguing for a structural sociopolitical shift – movement of power from the traditional elite to the emerging middle class. This literature considers the armed forces as primarily representing the middle class and thus the keepers of middle class morality (Lieven 2011: 163). Therefore, they paint another Pakistan, which is not in trouble but whose future will be determined by the following factors:

- A vibrant entrepreneurial class
- A growing middle class
- A free and assertive media
- A ferociously independent judiciary
- A large segment of youth.

Although modernity has several dimensions, the concept of modernity envisioned by this set of authors has a strong neo-liberal flavour that espouses economic progress as a key indicator of modernity, which, in turn, requires political order and building-up of a strong and centralised national-identity that seems to be missing at the moment. These authors envision a modern Pakistan as economically progressive, ideologically secular-liberal, increasingly urbanised with a fairly strong industrial and technical base. This is, in fact, not a new argument as other authors such as Pakistan's political-economist Akbar Zaidi have also presented urbanisation and reduced economic dependence on agriculture as an indicator of progress.<sup>1</sup> The authors under discussion take Zaidi's argument even further and present modernity as a material and

technical issue. Thus, the greatness of the state is not evaluated through political and social progress or lack of it but from mundane material aspects such as the size of the country being the sixth largest country in the world. This is a bureaucratic approach since the state machinery also likes to highlight other facts such as Pakistan being the second largest producer of milk, or having the most extensive electricity supply network in the south Asian region as an indicator of its potential. Emphasising these material indicators, instead of discussing the sociopolitical imbalances that the society and state suffer from is considered the way forward. In any case, the modernity argument tends to follow the reasoning forwarded by people like the editor of *The Wall Street Journal*, Robert Bartley, that economic development results in political development (Bhutto 2008: 253-54).

The latest prescription for progress also calls for strengthening of the nation state and deepening a sense of nationalism. Therefore, it is necessary to downplay all such elements such as ethnicity and sectarianism that might weaken the nation state project. It is not as if the formula is not being adhered to by the state machinery which likes to minimise the emphasis on ethnic politics and downplay sectarian differences. The state bureaucracy, especially the military, even uses brutal force to curb ethnic differences as is obvious from the case of Baluchistan.

The demand of the people for the Pakistani state to respect ethnic diversity and honour the rights of the Baluch such as greater share in the control of their resources is presented as a plan of miscreant tribal leaders instigated by neighbouring India. The ethnic differences are not viewed as positive diversity but as part of the traditional-elitist political framework which must be replaced with another that proposes top-down nationalism to attain progress. In this respect, the formula is Pakistan's version of neoconservatism where top-down nationalism or national cohesion is considered almost a prerequisite for modernity. Nationalism as a precursor for gaining western modernity is obvious in other cases as well (Suhrrke 2007: 1239-96). This is due to the nature of the nation state project that calls for homogeneous identity as a source of strength for the state. A strong state is viewed vital for harnessing the great potential of the society including its size.

The fact that Pakistan is the sixth largest country in the world has begun to figure in the statist literature (Nishtar 2011: 9; Hamid 2011: 35). But a centralised national identity is even more important, hence, the emphasis on defining and streamlining what the former information minister Javed Jabbar calls *Pakistaniat* which is a set of positive attributes of a committed Pakistani citizen (ibid: 108-47). But most important, *Pakistaniat* is about a sense of homogeneous nationalism. These characteristics such as resilience in the face of adversity, feeling concern in the face of national humiliation, sense of pride in being a Pakistani are some of the 57 characteristics that in the eyes of the former information minister, Javed Jabbar, constitute positive characteristics of "Pakistaniat" and will guarantee the country's development. Intriguingly, the author also includes respect for religious and ethnic minorities as one of the prominent characteristics of Pakistani nationalism which is a misrepresentation of facts or figment of his imagination. Given the attacks on religious, sectarian

and ethnic minorities that have increased in the past couple of decades, Jabbar's assertion is more of propaganda and pretense rather than a fact. The recent past does not bear witness to this. In fact, one of the issues that this new literature does not fully address is the conflictual relation between the powerful and less powerful ethnic, sectarian and political groups in the country. The mysterious disappearance and killing of Baluch people at the hands of security and intelligence agencies not only indicates a contradiction in Jabbar's prescription, but also denotes the mindset of the state in dealing with dissent and creating a top-down nationalism.<sup>2</sup> The Pakistani establishment seems to want to use coercion and some amount of political manoeuvring to attain the state of Pakistaniat or a unison in national thinking.

While the state tends to use coercion, it has also tried other means such as generating a new national narrative and build institutional mechanisms to rope in dissidents towards this narrative. The opening up of cadet colleges in Baluchistan and recruiting people into the military from Sindh is some of the ways used to co-opt the peripheral people into the state project. Both provinces mentioned earlier are known for dissent towards the central state resulting in oppression and violence in Sindh during the 1980s and the early 1990s and a constant friction between the state and people in Baluchistan throughout the nation's 64 years history. Oppression and force is also one of the methods to create order which is considered necessary for socio-economic development. Those that refuse to conform to a regimented state narrative are dealt with harshly and through violence, as is the case in Baluchistan where the military's intelligence agencies and paramilitary forces abduct people and torture and kill them.

These three elements become both the end and means to attain progress. However, these factors have to be matched with two essential drivers for change: the nationalist-urbanised middle class and the military.

## 2 Progressive Nationalist Middle Class

The alternative view literature completely discards the traditional-elite as the engine of progress. Progress, it is believed, can only be brought about by the burgeoning middle class (Lodhi 2011: 72-78), which according to one report is estimated at 20 million (Warrach 2011). Another more detailed research estimates the size to be about 35% of the population which means 61 million (Durr-e-Nayab 2011: 17-20). The paper does not engage in defining the middle class but uses pre-existing definitions. The middle class in Pakistan has grown during the three phases of upbeat economic growth under the three military regimes of generals Ayub Khan (1958-69), Zia-ul-Haq (1977-88) and Pervez Musharraf (1999-2008). There was a fairly free flow of financial resources from the west to Pakistan as part of the United States-Pakistan security alignment during these periods that resulted in temporarily enhancing growth (Hussain 2004). During the last phase of economic expansion under Musharraf, there were reports on the increase in the economic capacity of ordinary folk which resulted in greater number of vehicles, mobile phones and modern technology. Some consider this as denoting empowerment of the middle class (Lodhi 2011: 74). But there is a dearth of research on the middle class which is certainly not a lump but can be divided into rural and urban middle

class as well as at three levels: the lower-middle class, middle class and upper-middle class. According to Nayyab's research, the size of the rural middle class is smaller and most of it is in Punjab (ibid: 20). The bulk of the rural middle class represents medium-sized (less than 100 acres) farmers and the burgeoning trader-merchant class that live in towns small cities that have cropped up from villages and depend on the agrarian economy. The urban middle class, on the other hand, comprises trader-merchants, small business and professional class belonging to various vocational groups in intermediate cities and large cities. For instance, in Punjab alone there are five large cities (population around 10 million), 15 intermediate cities (population around five million), 74 small cities (population around one million), and 114 towns (population less than 50,000).<sup>3</sup> The middle class also includes the bulk of the state bureaucracy such as civil servants and military.

The urban upper-middle class, on the other hand, represents the intermediate class that will eventually become the upper class and it comprises the echelons of the burgeoning media, the elite of the civil and military bureaucracies, the top leadership of the judiciary and the legal community, the non-governmental organisation (NGO) sector and professional expatriate Pakistanis that are keen to build their influence in their home country by remaining central to its politics. The case of Ghulam Nabi Fai, an expatriate Kashmiri leader based in the us and some of his friends that were allegedly part of the Inter-Services Intelligence's (ISI) operations in Washington DC is a case in point (Barker et al 2011). The underlying assumption is that the empowerment of this socio-economic class is bound to bring liberalism and progress to the country. Better economic progress is bound to tackle the problem of militancy, which is adding to Pakistan's poor image and is a consequence of poor governance, poverty and rampant feudalism. The key to success is, what is assumed as, a liberal (to be interpreted as secular) and progressive middle class denoted by a vibrant entrepreneurial class, free media, an independent judiciary and well-trained civil and military bureaucracies. However, what tops the list is the military which is considered as an upholder of middle class values and political order in the country.

However, there are four issues with such formulation. First, it suffers from serious lack of clarity in defining the socio-economic origins of the ruling elite. We get an impression as if the ruling elite comprises mainly of landowners or entrepreneurs. The reality is that the bulk of the ruling elite no longer comprises traditional feudal-landowners but is instead of middle class and even lower middle class background. The 2008 parliament, for instance, has about 25 members out of a house of 342 with over 100 acres of landholdings. Not to forget the leadership of parties like the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) (PML-N) group, Pakistan Muslim League (Quaid-e-Azam) (PML-Q) and Jamaat-e-Islami that have a middle class background. Even the current Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) leadership, a party usually associated with feudal-landowners, is a mix of rural and urban middle class. Thus, it is not inheritance but kinship that cuts across class, sect and cast that determines power of an individual or a group.

Second, these authors tend to borrow a Marxian political formulation without understanding its historical linkages. The

entire debate of middle class and progress is essentially borrowed from western history that is not necessarily applicable to most developing countries where the bulk of the middle class is not liberal or politically progressive. Third, there is a problematic suggestion that middle class is liberal, secular and progressive that can guarantee Pakistan's internal political and economic integrity. The seemingly free and vibrant media and judiciary are viewed as forces that would even keep a powerful military at bay in terms of its political ambitions. More important, these representatives of middle class values are viewed as a major bulwark against a corrupt feudal-minded leadership. Such notion does not take into account the fact that in a pre-capitalist culture like Pakistan's, the middle class is intellectually an extension of the ruling elite.

Fourth, it artificially links political development with economic progress. In fact, democratic norms and politics can be ignored for ensuring a top-down economic progress that is best attained through military bureaucratic dictatorial regimes. In this respect, the formula is akin to Singapore which indeed is a favourite model of many civil-military authoritarian leaders in Pakistan. In any case, a strong perception is that the current form of western-sponsored democratic process does not suit Pakistan due to the fact that the majority of people are illiterate and bound to the traditional feudal-landowning class. The fact that 56% Pakistanis do not vote does not speak highly of the political system that electoral democracy represents. Finally, political development is not directly linked with economic development and the focus of the middle class is the latter not the former. Moreover, this class has always supported and benefited from authoritarianism.<sup>4</sup>

The middle class needs attention due to its ideological leanings which are conservative, pro-authoritarian and increasingly latent-radical. The bulk of the emerging rural or even urban middle class is not socially or politically liberal. The same can be said of the middle class in major cities. In any case, the expanding middle class is accompanied with another trend that is migration from rural areas to urban spaces. The estimated growth rate of urbanisation for 2005 is calculated at 35%.<sup>5</sup> According to Arif Hasan, 8% of the total population (1998 Census) comprises migrants out of which 63.7% have migrated from rural to urban areas (Hasan and Raza 2011: 33). This means that there is a significant amount of carryover of rural attitudes into urban spaces. But the more important fact is that the urban middle class has been a beneficiary of military governments which shape their perception in favour of authoritarian politics rather than tolerate the rigours of the political system. The urban middle and upper middle class both have an inclination towards authoritarianism and even latent religious radicalism. Some of the groups partnered with the military establishment under the Musharraf government.<sup>6</sup> This was nothing new since, according to Akbar Zaidi, the regimes of Ayub Khan and Zia-ul-Haq had built and provided fillip to the middle class in terms of enhancing its economic potential.<sup>7</sup> Not surprisingly, this group of people is inclined towards authoritarian rule, especially by the military, rather than support the democratic process. Most recently, new political movements denoted by urban-based political parties, such as the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf – PTI (the justice party) run by the former cricketer Imran Khan, espouse wrangling political control through the army's help. This, in

Pakistan, is referred to as the "Bangladesh model", a form of a middle class coup meant to eliminate traditional power centres. The military in Pakistan, which is also seen as representing middle class interests, is inclined to insert a "clean" party in the political process. In any case, the armed forces, which form a sizeable chunk of the middle class, are inclined towards their organisational control of politics of the state, indirectly if not directly.

The other two pillars of the middle class, that is, the media and the legal community (including the judiciary) have equally questionable attitudes. The media and judiciary both have authoritarian, centre-right nationalist and even latent radical perspectives. A review of the various judgments including that of the Salman Taseer and Mukhtaran Mai cases indicates a judiciary that has willingly conceded space to the religious right.

### 3 The Military

The country's six lakh strong military and its extended families, which include retired personnel and their kith and kin, are critical to the presentation of a progressive-modern Pakistan narrative. There are several reasons for this. First, the military is considered as an institutional representation of middle class ethos. The narrative regarding military as a modernising force having the capacity to develop Pakistan politically, economically and socially is found in several recent publications. Lieven, in fact, confesses to his own bias for the military top brass in comparison to the traditional elite (Lieven 2011: 366). The assertion is that the military is neither authoritarian nor a detriment to political development. It only intervenes to protect the state from internal and external threat. Moreover, unlike the traditional elite, which establishes a patronage system of politics and is essentially authoritarian, the military, being a representative of middle class values, encourages the establishment of sustainable democracy. The basis of the armed forces being middle class is highlighted by a study jointly done by a military-friendly journalist and author Shuja Nawaz and American political scientist C Christine Fair. According to Fair and Shuja's new work the military is increasingly getting urbanised and middle class. Although they do not explicitly draw a linear connection between urbanisation and political maturity, their line of argument implicitly suggests the same. Thus, the argument that the political situation will change as the ranks of the officer cadre is increasingly being filled with urban middle class men who, we are supposed to presume, inherently progressive (Fair and Nawaz 2011). This line of argument again is not new as it was initially broached by authors like Samuel P Huntington, Morris Janowitz, Alfred Stepan and many others in explaining modernity in a third world context. There is an array of literature which considers militaries of developing countries as representing secular-liberal modernity.

The socio-economic category of Pakistan's civil and military bureaucrats began to change as soon as the process of indigenisation of the officer cadre started after 1951. Gradually, the officers were no longer from the Muslim elite or Ashrafia, for whom both the civil and military bureaucracies during the colonial times were coveted positions. The British distributed *jaggirs* (land) in specific areas to create a community of loyal officers. There is enough literature available that shows how the British used land colonisation for the said purpose. The same policies were practised

for the 1,50,000 strong Pakistan armed forces which included officer cadre of 2,500 men (Cheema 1990: 80). Soon after Independence in 1947, there was the first India-Pakistan war of 1947-48 which made it imperative for Pakistan to expand the armed forces. An investment of about 70% of the central government expenditure (CGE) in the first year after Independence (Siddiqi 1996: 70) meant the expansion of the defence sector that, in turn, meant that induction could not be limited to the ruling elite. Recruitment could certainly not remain limited to the elite that had migrated from the Muslim minority provinces in India popularly known as the mohajirs (migrant). The mohajirs, in any case, had become part of the elite by dominating the officer cadre of the military in a newly established bureaucratic-polity. In 1968, for instance, the mohajirs held 11 out of 48 senior positions (23%) in the military (Kennedy 1991: 943). This began to change as other ethnicities and social classes started to join the armed forces. Now, the military is predominantly middle class and lower-middle class which is one of the reasons why some Pakistani intellectuals consider Pervez Musharraf as representing middle class values that are juxtaposed to the norms of the traditional feudal elite.<sup>8</sup>

Since the military has brute force, which is so critical to Pakistan's praetorian politics, the middle class views the armed forces as critical for change. The upper middle class, which is the emerging elite, benefit from a nationalist discourse to strengthen their position against the traditional elite that are disliked by the military as well. The middle class is inclined to build a partnership with the military to use authoritarian methods for replacing the redundant old elite. This means approving of the political role of the armed forces (though subtly) and also developing a narrative which presents the military as being above board. Thus, it is necessary to reject any negative notions of the military and debunk all scholarly work that sheds a negative light on the armed forces and its activities such as its links with the militant Islamists (Haqqani 2005) or its predatory corporate interests (Siddiqi 2007).

Third, due to the character of the military being middle class it is seen as a source of political and economic modernity in the country. In fact, there is an entire discourse developed by technocrats with experience of working in the World Bank and other multilateral aid donor agencies who present the military as a driver of economic progress. These experts do not even factor in the reality of military governments being lucky to get major economic boost from the US due to some geostrategic crisis. Besides, the three books mentioned earlier, there are others such as Carey Schofield's book *Inside the Pakistan Army* which was commissioned with the purpose of neutralising any negative sentiment about the military (Schofield 2010). Schofield, in fact, rubbishes all criticism of the military as the work of the "chattering classes" of the country that are out of sync with reality (ibid: 2). As far as the military is concerned, these books fall in the same genre of literature sponsored by the military during the 1980s to build its image as an "alternative" national institution that is most capable of governing Pakistan. The emphasis is on the military's "progressive" middle class ethos. The fact that Musharraf was from the middle class or that his successor Ashfaq Pervez Kayani comes from the lower middle class as he is the son of a junior military official are deemed as an evidence of modernity.

According to the new narrative, not only is the current army chief Kayani progressive, he is also liberal with great concern for strengthening democracy. The general's main aim is to professionalise the armed forces by taking the military back to the proverbial barracks. Since taking control of the politically powerful army in 2007, Kayani has gradually distanced himself and his military from politics. Apparently, he barred his officers from meeting politicians and announced his intention to withdraw military officers from civilian departments. The military's willingness to disclose its affairs and have it discussed in the Parliament at least thrice is deemed as an example of increased maturity on the part of the army's top brass. According to an expert of Pakistan's civil-military relations, Saeed Shafqat, the accommodating behaviour of the army top brass has encouraged the civilian leadership to respond positively and give an extension to the army chief, which Shafqat presents, as an example of elite accommodation (Shafqat 2011: 103-12). Possibly, Shafqat's benchmark is civil-military relations during the 1990s when civilian governments seen as overstepping into military's domain were dismissed resulting in a constant tension between the civil and the military. The tension also expanded into constitutional issues such as the question of retaining the purity of a parliamentary-democratic system by keeping the prime minister powerful or empowering the president as a means for checks and balance.

### The Military and the Presidency

The debate about Article 58(2)(b) of the 1973 Constitution, which was introduced under General Zia-ul-Haq to keep civilian governments in check through a strong president, has been a matter of contention. The military prefers a strong president, especially when the army chief himself is the president or when the office-bearer is a favourite of the armed forces. However, it is the second time in the country's history that the president is not of the army's choosing and the service was unable to remove President Asif Ali Zardari due to his ability to compromise and negotiate space for himself. Asif Zardari gave up his power to control the nuclear weapons or to appoint the service chiefs to stave off pressure from the army which could have translated at some point into his removal or that of his government. Moreover, the PPP government has made sure that it regularly pats the army on the back and is seen as allowing the military to take the decisions on foreign and security policies. The eulogising by the government of the military intelligence agency ISI's initiative to take the parliament into confidence after the Osama bin Laden operation is a case in point. Some analysts believe that this balancing act will result in prolongation of the civilian government, which, in turn, will result in strengthening of the democratic system.

There are three problems with Shafqat's formula. First, he wrongly assumes that such accommodation is unprecedented. In fact, a glance at Marxian literature in Pakistan, especially the works of authors like Hamza Alavi indicate a partnership between the ruling elite and the civil-military bureaucracy in the country that dates back to the early days of the state. In fact, the echelons of the armed forces are part of the ruling elite and partner with other elite groups (Siddiqi 2007: 76-111). However, there is also the underlying contestation with civilian groups to establish the

military's dominant position. Throughout the country's history, the military has not allowed civilian politicians the luxury of imagining that they could make the armed forces subservient which has often led to severe contestation between the two and turmoil. The army has historically used crisis to replace unfriendly political leaders with others considered loyal. Thus, the elite accommodation existed even under the seemingly liberal dispensation of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto during the 1960s and the 1970s (Toor 2011: 117-25; Siddiq 2007: 65-82). However, in a bid to prove that they are above board both the military and the politicians do not talk of accommodation of each other's interests.

Second, he does not ask the basic question if a major shift in civil-military balance could happen without a major transformation of the rules of the games regarding civil-military balance. What may actually appear as accommodation is based on some tactical adjustment of the military taking charge of some areas while leaving the less important issues for the civilian government. Strategically, the partnership between civil and military is always needed to hide the military's actual control of the state. Therefore, the armed forces did not withdraw from de facto control of the state and its politics. Even some of the tactical measures were more of pretence such as withdrawing military personnel from civilian offices. Contrary to his commitment to the people, Kayani did not withdraw all military personnel from civilian departments. In any case, military men performing civilian duties are just the tip of the iceberg in a political system that is dominated by the armed forces. Third, what Shafiqat calls elite negotiation is essentially an adjustment between the two power poles in the country – military and civil – to protect overall elite interests. Such an adjustment does not in any way indicate a fundamental shift in the political system and structure or a movement away from authoritarian rule. Hence, it is not surprising that the emerging political leaders such as Imran Khan or civil society groups, which allegedly represent middle class values such as the Pakistan Ex-Servicemen Association (PESA), are also inclined towards using military to change the political scenario to their advantage. More important, the military, though the echelons belong to the ruling elite, currently sees the middle class as a more acceptable and modern replacement of the traditional elite with which it has always had problems due to contestation of power.

Over the past 64 years the Pakistani military has tried creating a new group of rulers every decade or so. The organisation has immense capacity at both political and social engineering since it can bolster an individual or group's social class and make leaders out of them. The case of Nawaz Sharif is exemplary as the Zia regime boosted the politician's family from its middle class existence to upper middle and then to upper class. Moreover, it made Sharif into a politician as it did with the latest crop of young and educated politicians selected by Musharraf, or even Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto who owes his flight to prominence to the Ayub regime. However, at this stage, in a desire to create an image of national modernity, the military is keen to present the image of the middle class' ascendancy to power. Supporting the middle class narrative helps the military in remaining relevant to the country's politics and establishing its own image as being above board. Not that corruption is not a fact of Pakistan's politics, but the reality also is

that the military is not above board either. However, it uses the corruption of the politicians and its own image as a representative of the middle class to influence national psychology. This is part of the exercise of establishing intellectual control of the people.

#### 4 Modernity: The Right-Wing Radical Nationalism Axis

The alternative view literature is also known for its pretension of mainstreaming of the liberal discourse. The Pakistani society, as encapsulated in these books, is fairly liberal and has the capacity of countering the increasing jihadism and Talibaanisation of the society. Mainly because this literature tends to address the perception, or what is considered as a misperception of Pakistan in foreign lands, there is an overemphasis on presenting liberal trends without exploring the depth of such trends in the society. This kind of literature does not bring to the fore the issue of the gradual mainstreaming of jihadism and Islamism and the related narrative at several levels.

There is an increasing non-liberal trend in the country which follows two inter-related trajectories: (a) latent militant radicalism that is found mainly amongst the poor and the lower middle classes (but does not preclude the middle class), and (b) latent radicalism found amongst the middle class, the upper middle class and (to a certain extent) the upper class as well. These emerging trends are not documented or analysed in the course of the debate on Pakistan's modernity. Although representing a class divide, the two aforementioned trends feed on each other and on the modernity debate as well.

Latent militant radicalism can be defined as a tendency towards adopting violence as means to suppress people of opposing religious ideology. The expansion of jihadi outfits throughout the country and their visibility in the society in various forms including their relief work bear witness to the fact that latent militant-radicalism is fast acquiring a structure. This does not necessarily mean that there is a large majority of people who are willing to take up arms, but the fact is that there is a greater propensity towards using violence or even visualising violence as a means of strategic change in the society or at the national or international level. A major fillip to this kind of radicalism is provided by another tendency called latent radicalism, which is defined as the inability to imagine the "other" that is defined on the basis of religious dogmatic differences. The two behavioural norms are interconnected as one feeds on the other. In some instances, the two types are directly connected due to the fact that latent radicalism includes population, which may not directly take part in militancy but are part of creating the tools for it and even finance militant outfits, operations and madrasas that are a fundamental part of the "jihad complex".

The above trend is, in fact, a facet of Pakistan's modernity.

First, the state presents these trends not as a regressive behaviour, but as an indicator of growing anti-imperialism and anti-neo-colonialism in the society. If militancy and radicalism is a response to, what the London-based Pakistani intellectual Tariq Ali considers as a response to foreign presence in Afghanistan,<sup>9</sup> then it indicates political progress and a desire to empower the native. From the state's perspective, latent radicalism is a response to American presence in Afghanistan. Such an argument is even

made by elements who once represented the liberal left. Today, some believe that the Taliban must be tolerated as they are the only bulwark against American hegemony. The political right, which is a bulk of the parties today including the mainstream political parties, has an element that is sympathetic to the militant and latent militant radical elements in the society and view the war on terror as a foreign conspiracy. Such belief has created a certain amount of psychological confusion and infested the society with conspiracy theories in which Pakistan emerges as a victim of American expansionist designs.<sup>10</sup>

There are quite a few urban and educated people who stand up to defend Afia Siddiqui, an Al Qaida member, or support Mumtaz Qadri, a religious bigot and the killer of the Punjab governor Salman Taseer. The lawyers seem to represent a large support base for Qadri and the likes. The support for Qadri or for a certain perspective on blasphemy law is not just limited to lawyers that belong to the middle class and are products of an inferior intellectual background, but also of lawyers from the upper middle class who have been exposed to a more liberal background. This is not a result of any confusion but an extension of the victimhood discourse that then allows people to target the native “other” who is viewed as an agent of the imperialist force. The religious minorities must then suffer as they are considered agents of a particular neo-imperialist power or even others that do not fall in this category but are viewed as suspects by the national security apparatus of the state (some journalists have even, between the lines, justified the genocide of Shiite population in Baluchistan due to the fact that they take money from the Iranian government, an activity disliked by the military) (Haider 2011).

There is a close connection between the suspicion of the “external” and the “internal” other that could be observed in another study done by the author. A study by the author regarding sociopolitical attitudes of youth in elite universities in three major cities of Pakistan – Lahore, Islamabad and Karachi – indicated a propensity of the sample, which belonged to the upper-middle class and even the upper class, towards greater political conservatism that was not merely restricted to an aversion of the us or other western countries. The sample showed lesser tolerance towards religious minorities and difference of opinion regarding faith. For instance, 62% of the survey sample agreed with the government’s policy to declare Ahmedis as non-Muslims and 18% considered Shiite as non-Muslims. More interestingly, 56% respondents did not want Pakistan to become a secular state and 60% believed the concept of Muslim ummah being a concrete reality than an abstract idea (Siddiqi 2010: 21-68). This does not necessarily mean that this segment of the youth will automatically turn violent, but their world view – both external and internal – is much more radicalised. This will result in creating a situation that may produce cases like Omar Saeed Sheikh (the young educated Pakistani-British man involved in the killing of American journalist Daniel Pearl) and Faisal Shehzad (Pakistani-American man who planned to blow up Time Square in New York in 2010), and create greater space for latent radicalism that feeds latent militant radicalism.

Second, there is an increasing societal ownership of the radical discourse, especially at the level of the middle and upper-middle classes. For instance, one of the emerging icons is a rabid

televangelist Zaid Hamid, who preaches hatred of the us and India, rejects democracy and propagates the establishment of an Islamic caliphate (Constable 2011: 142, 144). Another popular character is the former cricketer-turned-politician Imran Khan who approves of the tribal system for adjudication and is known for his links with the religious right parties. Such support indicates an increasing acceptance of right-wing politics as an alternative to the existing political parties that are viewed as lackeys of imperial power, the us. It is a fact that Pakistan’s nationalism today has a deeper shade of ideological right, which is now being legitimised, through a new scholarly discourse that presents radical and religious forces as part of the native culture. In doing so, the new narrative even provides justification for jihadi outfits and jihadism.

### New Face of Pakistani Modernity?

The growing number of Pakistani postmodernist scholars such as Humaira Iqtidar, Kamran Asdar Ali, Saba Mehmood, Amina Jillani and many others in western and elite Pakistani universities are now proposing the religious right-wing forces as the new face of Muslim and Pakistani modernity. Iqtidar, a UK-based Pakistani anthropologist has argued in her book *Secularising Islamists* that forces such as Jamaat-e-Islami and Jamaat-ud-Dawwa have a secularising influence over the society (Iqtidar 2011). Others such as Mehmood and Jillani present Islamists as the new face of feminism in Pakistan and the Muslim world in general (Mehmood 2005). They are similar and different from the modernists of the early days who advocated inclusion of religion in politics from the perspective of keeping the state away from turning into a theocracy. The traditional modernists (1960s and 1970s) believed that religion should remain fundamental to the state but should be kept in a most liberal form (Sayeed 1967: 160-61). The post-modernists, on the other hand, are of the view that radical elements should be allowed to pursue their agenda that would eventually result in the religious right toning down its rhetoric and become more inclusive (ibid). There is a definite effort to legitimise both the political and religious right which makes the mix of Lieven-Lodhi-Jabbar and postmodernist scholars’ narrative a dangerous brew. While the former present nationalist right-wing military authoritarianism as representing the face of progressive-nation-statist-modernity, the latter highlights the same for the religious radical forces.

Third, the growing radicalism is part of the evolving politics and psychology of the middle class. A general perception created about militants and radical forces in Pakistan is that they belong to the poor and the disgruntled strata of society. Studies such as the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI)-World Food Programme’s (WFP) analysis of food insecurity in the country have even suggested that militancy is a result of food insecurity.<sup>11</sup> Such analysis fails to grasp the dynamics of both militancy and the middle class. If poverty indeed were the key driver, the volume of violence would have been much greater especially in areas that were identified in the WFP-SDPI report as highly food insecure areas. In fact, the recruitment for jihad is from areas which are relatively food secure such as south and central Punjab. This is not to suggest that poverty and poor governance do not play a role in increasing militancy. But the fact of the matter is that poverty



becomes a driver only when combined with other factors such as weakening of the traditional power structure, weakness or absence of the state in occupying the space, and the relative strengthening of the militant structure. In Pakistan's case, the rise in militancy is directly linked with state support, be it from the military or provincial governments.

As far as militancy is concerned, it is concentrated amongst the poor, but also the lower middle and middle classes. The various militant outfits recruit their foot soldiers from amongst the poorest segments of the population, especially those that are used for suicide attacks. These are people who are desperate for money and easily motivated by the clergy. But these are not the only ones recruited for jihad. Over the years, jihadi outfits have exhibited a propensity to recruit capable youth who are literate or semi-literate. This segment in Punjab, in particular, belongs to the rural lower middle class, and even the middle class. In any case, the leadership of the jihadi organisations represents both the lower middle and the middle class. The background of the leaders of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), Jasih-e-Mohammad (JEM) and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) bears witness to the above-stated fact. In the case of the LeT, it attracts members from amongst the Punjabi and mohajir middle class in central and south Punjab.<sup>12</sup> The leadership of the Deobandi groups is generally lower-middle class that has now elevated to middle class or even upper-middle class. Again, it is mainly the middle class that is eager to give donations to the militant outfits and madrassas.

The expansion of jihadism in Pakistan, in certain respects, represents the breakdown of the feudal system which many would consider as a socially modernising development. The middle class in Punjab and Sindh are increasingly supporting militant outfits and latent-radicalism, as it is the only available alternative to the traditional but gradually weakening feudal structure.<sup>13</sup> The absence of an alternative force and discourse has favoured radical forces more than anything else. Also, since the feudal culture has made re-negotiation of power through legal means almost impossible, the jihadi forces have gained credibility and stepped into challenge the older power centres. For instance, in many places the jihadi organisations hold *jirgas* (local courts) and adjudicate and arbitrate amongst members of the society. They play a role which the state should have or that was earlier played by the feudal lords. What makes these jihadi forces potent in terms of power is the support provided to them by state institutions which make these outfits almost above board. For example, a general understanding is that the jihadis have become powerful due to their linkage with the military's intelligence agencies (Siddiq 2009). Since jihadi organisations are proxies of the state and cannot really be touched, other state institutions and political forces have also begun to be accommodative. According to the journalist Mujahid Hussain, members of the jihadi outfits have now become part of the junior and mid-ranking leadership of main political parties in Punjab (Hussain 2010).

### Impact of Urbanisation

Another influence pertains to the growing urbanisation in the country. The fact that Pakistan is moving very rapidly towards urbanisation as a result of which almost 50% of population is

projected to be urban by 2030.<sup>14</sup> The concentration of people is not just in the large cities but small towns as well that border on the rural areas and large cities. The new emerging small towns also indicate migration patterns. According to the 1998 Census, 49.7% people lived in about six cities with a million plus population and 27.7% in 418 cities of 50,000 or less (Hasan and Raza 2011: 75). The concentration of population and this kind of urbanisation has an impact on the political, social and cultural dynamics. It not only influences the mode of production, but also alters cultural norms. For instance, the social and economic structures have an impact on psychological, intellectual and even spiritual needs. Pakistan's foremost social scientist Hamza Alavi believed that Barelvi and Sufi Islam, which denote "peasant's religion", would become less relevant with growing urbanisation, particularly sophistication in modes of production. Increasing mechanisation of agriculture (and now the gradual industrialisation) will make Barelvisim redundant or less forceful.<sup>15</sup> These socio-economic changes have an impact especially in increasing the common man's need for more potent cultural-religious-social structures.

Deobandi and Wahabi Islam, as opposed to Sufi and Barelvi Islam, have textual basis and offer a form of modernity. Allama Mohammad Iqbal, the poet-philosopher of Pakistan, also recognised this factor. He found orthodox religion as having greater capacity to respond to the needs of establishing a modern state. Referring to present times the increasing popularity of Deobandi and Wahabi Islam in what used to be centres of Sufi Islam bears witness to the society's urge for modernity. While Sufi shrines will continue to attract people, they will fail to fulfil the spiritual and intellectuals needs of those marching towards some form of material progress. The rural middle class and those of the small towns view the piri-mureedi culture as an extension of the extortionist feudal culture. Sufism as an institution has over the years transformed into piri-mureedi, which represents crude institutionalisation of Sufism with deep shades of feudalism. The piri-mureedi culture, as we find from Sarah Ansari's work (Ansari 2003) is not a new phenomenon. However, the transformation has compounded with the problem of a new power alternative emerging in the society that has some licence from the state in the shape of militant-radical force. The Talibans and jihadists are seen as challenging the traditional power centres known for their feudal-tribal culture (Constable 2011: 88). A close analysis of Punjab's politics will show that the Sufi institution, which was an essential part of traditional power politics, no longer holds the power it used to. In fact, the various militant groups and their leaders are emerging as the new power centres that will influence electoral politics and sociopolitical development in general (Siddiq 2011).

The changing social and economic patterns have a bearing on cultural-religious norms in general. The militants benefit from the rise in Deobandism-Wahabism since it enhances the ideological pool from which they can recruit fighters at will. But the most noticeable development pertains to the impact of Deobandism-Wahabism on Barelvi religious norms that face the pressure of competing for political and ideological space. The Barelvi ulama and organisations seem under pressure to generate a popular

discourse that matches the Deobandi ideology. This behaviour is most obvious from the Barelvi reaction to the blasphemy issue. The Barelvi ulema are suddenly caught in a competition with the Deobandis in flagging the issue of blasphemy and support for Mumtaz Qadri, the killer of Punjab's governor Salman Taseer. Intriguingly, the Deobandis and Wahabis have also highlighted the issue despite that they do not share the Barelvi's passion for the prophet or the important historical personalities of Islam. This is mainly because the Deobandis and Wahabis do not want to miss an opportunity to popularise themselves in a largely Barelvi country. However, this raises problems for the Barelvi ulema who then have to up the ante in terms of rhetoric to remain relevant to their own followers who are tuned to the more militant and radical narrative of the Deobandis and the Wahabis around them.

The Deobandi-Wahabi discourse has gained influence also because of the military-strategic and political significance of militant organisations and the relevant ideological network for the security apparatus of the state. The fact of the matter is that the Sufi-Barelvi ideology has gradually lost ground, as it could not play the role in creating an ideology needed by the state to fight its foreign battles. Currently, the militant outfits are not just a handful of organisations, but a dense ideological network. So, even organisations like Tableeghi Jamaat, which is meant for propagating Deobandi ideology, are integrated into the jihadi-ideological network. Furthermore, the evolution of the military-militant nexus has transformed the military as well which now has an increased dependence on these outfits to undertake the state's military-strategic objectives. The linkage becomes critical at a time when the strategic community, particularly the security establishment, has become ambitious regarding its desire to expand its influence in the region or adjoining regions.

## 5 Conclusions

Are these ideological forces relatively benign and will eventually get tamed by forces of capitalism, as suggested by Syed Vali Nasr? In his latest book on forces of fundamentalism in some of the Muslim countries Nasr has proposed that ultimately the fundamentalist forces will be tamed mainly because people do not want violence. However, such an analysis is based on a certain amount of naivety and simplicity in understanding various societies particularly Pakistan, which has already turned into a hybrid theocracy. This means that the country comprises small pockets of liberalism, small spaces where sharia law is formally enforced and larger spaces where it is informally implemented. This is not simply an issue of implementation of the sharia, but the use of force in various forms to restructure the power base and the ideological structure of the state. At a micro level, the use of force translates into cases like the torture of the Christian woman Aasiya Bibi who is jailed for blasphemy. Notwithstanding the veracity of the claim against her, the fact is that the state is unable to provide her some form of protection while she is incarcerated.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, the state is increasingly less capable of providing protection to its citizens as the more violent forces dictate their ideology such as the case of the school in Rawalpindi where masked men entered and threatened the young girls who had not

worn the hijab.<sup>17</sup> The militants are, in fact, the neo-feudals who are gradually gaining the same kind of power that the traditional feudal-landowners used to have. This is not to suggest that all militants are above the law, but the fact is that the state has established a principle according to which some favoured militants are propelled to being above the law. Since the militant forces have both the power and authority of religion, it has become difficult to contest their power. Geopolitically, the militant forces and their ideological network have gathered influence due to their efficacy for the military-strategic objectives of the state. The militants have established a partnership with the security apparatus of the state, which also considers the partnership beneficiary in pursuance of its military-strategic goals. The Pakistani state has often been viewed by its military establishment as a fortress of Islam. Religion is also seen as a source for propelling the state's influence in adjoining regions such as central Asia for which a partnership with militant forces is necessary.

The military's new partnership is different from its older linkage with the traditional elite. The powerful establishment of the Pakistani state is in a process of reinventing itself because of which it seeks newer partnership and narrative. The emphasis on the power of the middle class that is audible in some of the recently written books that are sponsored by the establishment is meant to produce a new set of political stakeholders that can challenge the traditional and the old elite. Although the establishment, which is dominated by the military, has been central in creating the traditional elite as well, it is now eager to produce a new crop which has a more exciting narrative. The middle class is presented as an epitome of liberal-progressive Pakistan. However, it is an erroneous assumption to consider the middle class as liberal since the bulk of it seems to be ridden with latent radical tendencies are on the verge of it. Such an attitude will affect Pakistan internally before it has an impact on its external relations. In Pakistan the growth of the middle class accompanied with increasing urbanisation is an evolving socio-economic and sociopolitical phenomenon. While the liberal political forces have been receding in terms of providing a forceful narrative, the radical forces have been gaining momentum. Religion, which was made the logic for the creation of the state, has become an even more powerful tool that could be used to determine internal and external relations. The newer political stakeholders view the Taliban and other militants as forces that challenge neo-imperialism by the US and other western forces. Even some of the new scholarly discourse tends to legitimise the jihadis. The liberal-western elite, which dominated the state at the time of partition and even later, has gradually lost its legitimacy. Such developments are taking place in an environment where there is very little space for a liberal discourse. The liberal elements in the country that can liberalise the religious-political discourse and rescue it from the clutches of latent radicalism are few and far between. More important, it will take decades before a movement towards counter-radicalisation picks up speed. Meanwhile, any change that will happen will be through connivance with the security apparatus of the state which will remain relevant for any change in the political system for many years to come.

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- 12 Assessment based on fieldwork in Punjab and Sindh.
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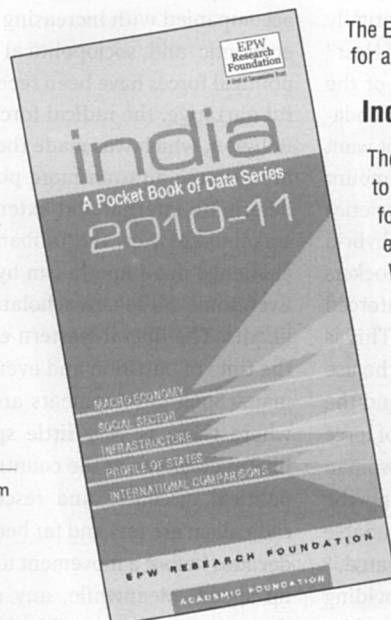
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(For Forum for Policy Dialogue on Water Conflicts in India)

### **Killing the Talks and Faking an Encounter**

A 22-member team of four constituents of the Coordination of the Democratic Rights Organisation (CDRO) undertook a fact-finding into the alleged encounter killing of Mallojula Koteswara Rao (Kishenji) on 1 December 2011. The team visited Sorakatta hamlet of Burisole and Gosaibandh village of Paschim Medinipur. The team spoke to the residents of the two villages, the sub-inspector (SI) and assistant sub-inspector of Jamboni police station, and visited the spot where the alleged encounter took place on 24 November.

The place where Kishenji's body was found is about 300 metres from the Sorakatta hamlet of Burisole village. It is barely 50 metres from the village football ground and surrounded by a thin cover of sal trees. Right next to where his body lay on the ground is a termite hill, which remains undamaged by all the alleged exchange of fire. At the spot where the body lay on the ground there was a pool of blood where his head and torso lay but there were no blood spot marks where his legs lay. The trees which ostensibly carry the bullet marks show no burn marks caused by bullets. Indeed the contrast between the badly damaged body of the deceased and the undisturbed spot where his body lay gives rise to much doubt. If there was heavy exchange of fire there would be telltale signs around.

At Sorakatta hamlet we were told that two days before the incident security forces movement became evident and it

picked up by 24 November when in the morning, between 10 am and 11 am, police personnel asked the villagers to stay inside their house and not to step out. According to the villagers during these three days of heavy security force movement no announcements of any kind were heard, let alone of police asking Kishenji to surrender. Between 4 pm and 5 pm on 24 November they heard a loud noise followed by sounds of bullet fire for about 15-30 minutes. Significantly, two villagers, a local quack Budhev Mahato and Tarachand Tudu a 20-year-old student, were picked up and implicated in the same case no 46/11 dated 25/11/2011 and charged under Section 307 and other sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC).

At Gosaibandh, which is about 5 km from Burisole, one Dharmendra, a third-year student of geography at a local college, was picked up for allegedly sheltering Kishenji and the police claimed to have seized a laptop. The family said that the bag belonged to Dharmendra and there was no laptop in it. Instead, Rs 20,000 was stolen and the family's ration card, certificates and OBC card were seized too.

At Jamboni police station, the team members spoke to SI Sabyasachi Bodhak. According to them they received the information from additional superintendent of police (SP) of Jangalmahal Alok Nath Rajori at night at around 10.30 pm. And it was the additional SP who wrote the FIR. It is important to note that the investigation has been entrusted to the deputy superintendent of police crime branch-criminal investigation department (CB-CID) whereas the complainant is a superior officer. This violates the basic principle of natural justice that an officer superior to the complainant officer investigates the crime.

We wish to recall the nature of injuries on the body of Kishenji as witnessed by some CDRO activists earlier. There were bullet, sharp cut and burn injuries. It is strange that there were no injury marks on his shirt and trousers corresponding to his body parts. We were unable to get the inquest report prepared by the executive magistrate nor could we get the post-mortem report although team members have read and taken notes from it. Surprisingly, none of the many injuries were recorded except the bullet entry and exit injuries.

Considering the extent of the damage caused to the body against the rather undisturbed surrounding of the spot where the body lay, we are suspicious about the official versions. The reported official versions themselves suffer from inconsistencies. For example, whereas Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee claimed that for three days Kishenji and his companions were encircled and they were asked to surrender, the villagers deny having heard any public announcement over loudspeaker of any kind. Vijay Kumar DG of Central Reserve Police Force went on record on 25 November that Kishenji and three others were killed in an encounter whereas only a single body was found.

The killing of Kishenji took place against the background of fledgling efforts to initiate talks between the Government of West Bengal and the CPI(Maoist). With his death these efforts have been dealt a fatal blow. We cannot but wonder if this is a repeat of what transpired last year on 1-2 July when Cherukuri Rajkumar (Azad) was killed in an encounter.

We wish to point out that in the context of a crime committed in the area affected by armed conflict, investigation by one branch of the administration into the conduct of another branch, in this case CB-CID investigating the role of joint forces cannot be considered impartial and unbiased. We believe that only an independent investigation, for example, by a special investigation team can help unravel the truth.

Our findings tend to confirm our suspicion that this appears to be a case of custodial killing. Therefore, we demand (1) an independent judicial inquiry headed by a sitting or retired Supreme Court or high court judge into the circumstances surrounding Kishenji's death and (2) that a criminal case under Section 302 IPC be registered.

**Debaprasad Roychoudhury** (APDR)  
**C H Chandrashekhara** (APCLC)  
**Bhanu Sarkar** (BMS)  
**Gautam Navlakha** (PUDR)

### **Corrigendum**

The correct title of the special article by Ayesha Siddiqi in this issue is "Pakistan's Modernity: Between the Military and Militancy" and not as printed on p 61.

The error is regretted.