



Colloquium: The Pakistan Military in Politics: Predicament of a Garrison State

Speaker:
Prof Ishtiaq Ahmed

Date / Time:
February 21, 2013 - 3:45pm - 5:45pm

Venue:
10th Floor, Auditorium, Pixel A, APU

Abstract:

This lecture highlights how and why the Pakistan military (read the Pakistan Army), which was initially weak and poorly armed and uninvolved in politics, not only became a middle-range nuclear power but also the most powerful institution in Pakistan. It came to enjoy virtually de facto veto powers in Pakistani politics. Two factors have played a crucial role in the rise of the Pakistan military: a real or imagined fear of Indian aggression, and the failure of the politicians to agree to a constitutional formula that could help establish democracy. It is argued that Pakistan inherited a strong state and a weak society and therefore the bureaucratic-military oligarchy was more developed than society. The Pakistani power elite exploited the contradictions in the international political system to acquire foreign patrons and donors willing to arm it as part of the Cold War competition (the United States), regional balance-of-power concerns (China) and ideological contestants for leadership over the Muslim world (Saudi Arabia, to contain Iranian influence). A perennial concern with defining the Islamic identity of Pakistan exacerbated by the Afghan jihad, resulted in the convergence of internal and external factors to produce the 'fortress of Islam' self-description that became current in the early twenty-first century. Over time, Pakistan succumbed to extremism and terrorism within and was accused of being involved in similar activities within the South Asian region and beyond. Such developments have been ruinous to the development of Pakistan's democratic and economic institutions.

A Note on the Speaker:

Ishtiaq Ahmed is Professor Emeritus of Political Science, Stockholm University; and Honorary Senior Fellow, Institute of South Asian Studies, National University of Singapore. His recent publications include: *Pakistan: The Garrison State, Origins, Evolution, Consequences (1947-2011)*, Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2013 and *The Punjab Bloodied, Partitioned and Cleansed: Unravelling the 1947 Tragedy through Secret British Reports and First-Person Accounts* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2012; New Delhi: Rupa Books, 2011).

