

## **General**

The well-being of any country is predicated on the harmony between internal and external security. The internal fabric of Pakistan is getting vitiated by the day. The spate of suicide bombings is indicative of the levels of intolerance that has consumed Pakistani society. Externally, the country remains most vulnerable in strategic and diplomatic terms as evidenced by the Raymond Davis affair.

The internal ferment and external pulls that Pakistan is being subjected to, has raised doubts, as never before, about the survivability of the country as such.

Appropriately, CLAWS has commissioned a study by Dr Suba Chandran, Director IPCS, on the very question that continues to generate debate, wherein the opposite viewpoints are based on equally robust arguments.

Dr Suba Chandran presented his research and study on the issue at the CLAWS campus under the title 'Will Pakistan survive?' The presentation was made in the presence of a very distinguished panel and audience. Mr Mohan Guruswamy, chaired the Round Table, The other panelists were Mr Rana Banerjee, former Special Secretary – R&AW, and Air Vice Marshal Kapil Kak, Additional Director at the Centre for Air Power Studies.

## **Dr Suba Chandran**

Dr Suba Chandran in his presentation was categorical in ruling out any vivisection of Pakistan. His faith was based on the institutional strength of the Army. The other positive glues that he stressed on were: a resurgent and assertive judiciary, the growing middle-class and increasing democratisation of the Pakistani dispensation and the society. He discussed about the problems in Balochistan, Sindh and FATA. He was certain that despite the regional fissures, Pakistan as a state will remain united. The Pakistan state, he felt had shown enough resilience in dealing with insurgency problems in FATA and Balochistan. He further dwelt on the Mohajir-Sindhi fissures in Karachi, the growing Pastunisation of the city, the Talibanisation of the Punjab province, and issues related to water security. Dr Suba Chandran did concede that these were pressing problems, but not so serious as to cause the collapse of Pakistan as a state.

## **Discussion**

There was also mention on China's critical interests in preventing the collapse of Pakistan. Mr Mohan Guruswamy, however, found the idea impractical, as he felt that China not have the economic capability to save Pakistan. The panel commented on the inadequacy in study of the economic problems that bedevil Pakistan.

Mr Rana Banerjee suggested that the study must seriously consider as to what happens to Pakistan after 2013 following the exit of Gen Ashraf Pervez Kayani, the Chief Justice Iftikar Chaudhary, especially in view of the elections slated in 2013.

Ambassador KC Singh, who was in the audience, opined that a political leader, having a pan-Pakistan appeal could to an extent salvage the country from its present woes. This was contested by another member in the audience, who said that there has never been a leader in Pakistan, who has been able to override ethnic, religious and regional divides. Even in the wake of the assassination of Benazir Bhutto, the country could not bridge the divides and the testimony to this is the election results.

The issue about the professionalism and Islamisation of Pakistan Army was also discussed. While Dr Suba Chandran maintained that the Army continues to a united and professional institution, there were also opinions that the professionalism of the Pakistani Army was being eroded due to onslaught of fundamentalism. The general opinion that emerged was that while it would be very difficult to gauge the level of Islamisation in Pakistan Army, it cannot be denied that the prevailing societal ferment does permeate the armed forces.

On the issue of the strength and reach of religious parties in Pakistan, Dr Chandran quoted the declining vote percentages in the elections to the National Assembly. Nevertheless, a member of the audience was of the view that these percentages could not be correct indicators as people generally decide their vote on the basis of whether the candidate is winnable. Regarding the spread of fundamentalism Dr Chandran said that the growing middle class in Pakistan was a robust 'moderate' constituency and would act as antidote to the fundamentalists. There were many in the audience who disagreed with this contention. They were of the opinion that the majority can be intimidated into submission by a minority, which is armed and believes in terrorising the society.

There were also suggestions that the presence of NATO in Afghanistan is a determining feature as far as the future of Pakistan is concerned, in both strategic and geopolitical context. The NATO factor, it was felt could be an enduring feature, which will continue to circumscribe the strategic manoeuvre space of Pakistan. A very emphatic argument was made that under no circumstances would the US allow Chinese access to Gwadar port, as it would imperil the security of the Persian Gulf, which is already bristling with activity, military and otherwise.

The panel was of the view that the present churning in the Arab World will have major impact on the internal and external discourse of Pakistan and should be factored as such in the study.

Brig Gurmeet Kanwal, Director – CLAWS in his closing address emphasised that no study of prospective nature can foretell events and consequences in any definite manner. Dr Chandran's deductions, he said, was based on his own painstaking study and reflections, and should remain as such. Nevertheless, he added that the author must try and incorporate some very worthwhile observations and suggestions put across by the panelists and the audience in his monograph.