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## REVIEWS

K.M. Arif. *Khaki Shadows: Pakistan 1947-1997*. Karachi: Oxford University Press 2001. XVIII, 425 pp.

The 9/11 massacres and the war on terror catapulted Pakistan – and its premier secret service, the Directorate-General of Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) – from the margins of world politics into its most turbulent epicenter. No one experienced the shock more brutally than ISI chief Lieutenant-General Mahmud Ahmed: Preparing on that very Black Tuesday to board a flight home after a routine and rather friendly Washington, D.C., visit, he was summoned from the airport for a thorough tongue-lashing and a virtual ultimatum from Secretary of State Collin Powell on his country's and his service's links with the Taliban. Mahmud would spend the next two months in hasty and futile maneuvers to prevent the upcoming war, only to be summarily sacked on the first day of the US attack on Afghanistan. His humiliation symbolized the collapse of the ISI's long-running double game of simultaneous co-operation with the Americans and with their Islamist enemies; and since then it has been constantly under the international community's cold, suspicious gaze, most acutely when its involvement in Kashmiri terrorism provoked India into massive military sabre-rattling with hints of nuclear brinkmanship. In short: the ISI is no longer a regional South Asian issue, it is a global one.

A comprehensive history of the ISI has yet to be written; Khalid Muhammad Arif's book provides some of the raw material for it, tantalizingly illuminating glimpses into its modus operandi. It is mainly a memoir of a career in the Pakistani Army which brought him the highest rank, a full four-star generalship. As vice chief of Army Staff during the military dictatorship of Zia ul-Haq, who doubled as president and chief of Army Staff, Arif was the effective day-to-day commander of the Army and one of the small coterie of officers who ruled Pakistan from Zia's coup in 1977 until his own (somewhat forced) retirement in 1987 (Zia himself died in 1988 in an airline crash widely

believed to have been an assassination). A staff officer with no specific intelligence training or experience, he was nevertheless closely involved in intelligence matters at the highest level, not least thanks to his close working relationship with Zia's powerful and long-serving ISI chief, General Akhtar Abd-ur-Rahman. Arif vividly describes, for instance, how in 1980 they quickly nipped in the bud an attempted coup d'état by a disgraced former major general and Islamist extremist, Tajammal Hussain Malik: Arif was woken up at night by a major from the Military Intelligence College in Murree who wished to unburden himself from the story of the conspiracy, and a series of urgent midnight phone calls to Akhtar ensured the arrest of the conspirators (in the regiment on presidential guard duty!) without even disturbing Zia's sleep. This, of course, is also revealing of the atmosphere of choking fear during the Zia years; and here Arif is less than forthright, uncomfortably moving between subdued criticism of his former master and, more often, transparent apologetics in the manner of a loyal retainer. He credits Zia and ISI chief Akhtar with the management of the guerrilla war against the Soviets in Afghanistan, especially the care taken to prevent direct CIA control of the Mujahidin commanders: Akhtar ordered all their meetings with CIA representatives to be held only in the presence of their ISI handlers, and Arif criticizes prime minister Benazir Bhutto for having weakened this policy later. But Arif keeps studiously mum on the question of the diversion of large sums from the CIA's war fund into private pockets, not least into those of Zia's and Akhtar's sons (who are now, inexplicably, multimillionaires). On another great mystery of Pakistani history, the disappearance of Zia's papers originally held by his widow, he gives such a vague and improbable account of his own role as to rouse the reader's suspicion that he is hiding something in order to protect Zia's reputation. This notwithstanding the rather undignified way in which Zia engineered Arif's retirement in 1987, leaking to the press "from an intelligence agency" that he had lost confidence in him, and even subjecting him to surveillance: Arif indignantly describes how a fellow general alerted him to the capture of an agent monitoring him, inside military headquarters, obviously on orders of ISI chief Akhtar, but he could not bring himself to anything more than a sullen refusal to talk to Akhtar ever after. Such was life in Zia's court.

Arif also provides here the most detailed insider account of an episode worthy of further intensive study, the Brass Tacks crisis of January 1987. A massive Indian Army exercise involving 200,000 troops on the India-Pakistan border led to a short war scare reminiscent of the recent showdown of 2001/ 2002. Pakistan suspected Indian "coercive diplomacy" and feared a surprise attack; Arif claims that ISI provided an accurate, detailed warning based on excellent information but also tended to a worst-case analysis of Indian intentions. He describes in detail the Pakistani decision-making process during the crisis,

including being asked point blank by Prime Minister Junejo in one tense moment on the Cabinet Defence Committee: "Is war imminent?" Arif gives himself part of the credit for the cool Pakistani response which resolved the crisis, and this has the ring of truth; but it does not sufficiently take account of the internal developments in India, especially Indian chief-of-staff Sundarji's failure of nerve after the Pakistani counter-deployment. Arif's account should stimulate further research of the Brass Tacks episode; it seems the huge literature on surprise and intelligence failure could profit from a case study of a successful warning, if indeed it was one.

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