

**International Conference on Sindh**  
of the  
**WORLD SINDHI CONGRESS**  
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*'Pakistan, an object of Western appreciation'*  
speech by  
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The topic of this Conference is very appropriate since the nation of Pakistan is becoming interesting as a major news topic in the West nowadays along with Israel and Palestine and the situation in Iraq and Afghanistan. Pakistan is being viewed as a major player in the search for Ousama Ben Laden, but also as an important nation in the creation of pipelines furnishing petrol and gaz to south Asia. The issue of Kashmir has been in the news for years now, and Pakistan is seen as an important actor in the future of Kashmir. Moreover, Pakistan has atomic weapons.

A few years ago Pakistan was in the news because it was one of the few countries that supported the Taliban government in Afghanistan. The USA and some Western powers were also supporting Taliban at the very beginning as a means to defeat the Soviets. The military in Pakistan were considered as important allies of the West in the fight to liberate Afghanistan from the Soviets. But the general impression in the West was, as time passed on, that the Pakistan military was too implicated with the Taliban. This impression persists up to today, but it is shared by only the well-informed and not by the general public. Pakistan is considered more today as a bulwark for democracy and against terrorism than as a friend of the Taliban.

Yet the support for the Taliban and their ideology penetrates some important sectors of Pakistan society, in particular among some Pashtuns and military personnel, as well as some fanatic Sunnis. This fact is not widely appreciated in the West. Moreover, unfortunately in the West, very few journalists and observers are criticising the basic flaw in Pakistan 'democracy' - namely that the military has an unjustifiably large role within the social, political and economic life of the country.

Of course, this is quite obvious to everyone attending this conference today. The tradition of Sindh is not military, and Sindhis suffer from military dominance in Sindh. Unfortunately the West does not seem to be concerned about the impact of the military on the population of Pakistan. Unfortunately, as has happened many times in the past, some Western governments, and the USA in particular, tend to favour military-oriented governments because they make strong allies. Of course, this is in absolute contradiction to the Western ideologies, namely that civilians should have the final word in democracies.

Hence a very strange phenomenon occurs, civilian governments in the West favouring military governments in South Asia in order to 'promote democracy'. The only movement going counter to this seems to be some human rights groups or brave journalists presenting

the real situation of many parts of the Pakistan society where large sectors of society are suffering from the influence of the military.

Those who have grown up as part of the military caste in Pakistan, and who have become opponents of its power and influence, such as our friend Shaukat Baluch who now lives with us in Switzerland as a refugee, are hoping for a reduction of the role of the military in Pakistan. The military has extraordinary privileges, gains more and more of the land in the countryside as well as achieving control over more and more of the administrative posts in the villages and determining to an even greater extent the kind of education given in the schools, (whether fanatic Muslim education or tolerant Muslim education). If the military has such influence over the civilian life in Punjab (from where Shaukat Baluch comes) then the danger is that this type of military control will spread out all over the country as presently it is doing in Sindh.

Elsewhere in Pakistan where the military is considered as more or less a foreign element, as in Baluchistan and Karachi for example, or in the north in Gilgit and Balawaristan, the military together with the secret police (the ISI) have the means of subjecting the populations to its control through force.

Thus, what the West most rejects, namely military states, is flourishing in Pakistan which is considered by the West (on a diplomatic level at least) as a 'democratic' country. No matter what the journalists and human rights groups try to do in informing the public, Western policy continues to ignore the ethnic, social and religious realities of present-day Pakistan and to regard that country as a bulwark against an undefined terrorist threat.

We must continue to point out the human rights violations in Pakistan, to lay them at the doorstep of those who practice them, namely the often racist military personnel and their supporters whose influence in Pakistan is all out of proportion to their ability to lead a country. And these anti-democratic persons must be seen for what they are by the Western leaders and diplomats. Perhaps through our publications, conferences and efforts, more and more persons in the West will come to appreciate the present extraordinary influence which the military sector holds in Pakistan.