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The structural origins of authoritarianism in Pakistan

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The enduring role of Pakistan's army in both foreign and domestic affairs has long drawn the attention of political scientists. Since its emergence from the partition of the British Indian Empire in 1947, Pakistan has suffered four military coups (in 1958, 1969, 1977 and 1999), long periods of political instability and a persistent inability to consolidate democratic institutions. At first glance, Pakistan's inability to sustain a transition to democracy is especially puzzling given that India, which also emerged from the collapse of British rule in South Asia, has experienced only a brief bout of authoritarian rule (1975–77) and has managed to consolidate democracy – even though the quality of its democratic institutions and their performance leaves much to be desired. Many scholars have proffered explanations for Pakistan's failure to make a successful transition to democracy. This essay will argue that all the extant accounts are partial and incomplete. It will contend that the roots of Pakistan's propensity towards authoritarianism must be sought in the ideology, organisation and mobilisation strategy of the movement for the creation of Pakistan. Whereas other recent writing on authoritarianism in Pakistan dwells upon the aggregation of power by the military, this essay focuses upon the failure of civilian democratic institutions to fully abandon authoritarianism even when the military is not in power.

Keywords: Pakistan; democracy; civil–military relations; politics

Introduction

The enduring role of Pakistan's army in both foreign and domestic affairs has long drawn the attention of political scientists. Since its emergence from the partition of the British Indian Empire in 1947, Pakistan has suffered four military coups (in 1958, 1969, 1977 and 1999), long periods of political instability and a persistent inability to consolidate democratic institutions. It also lost a

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significant portion of its territory (East Pakistan) in 1971, following an indigenous uprising, the violent and brutal suppression of that uprising and subsequent Indian intervention (Jackson, 1975; Zaheer, 1994). While the army is generally seen as a predatory institution that has steadily expanded its control over the apparatus of the state, it could not have achieved institutional hegemony without the significant complicity of civilian, political, bureaucratic, judicial and even civil society organisations (Fair, 2011a; Jalal, 1990; Siddiq, 2007).

At first glance, Pakistan's inability to sustain a transition to democracy is especially puzzling given that India, which also emerged from the collapse of British rule in South Asia, has experienced only a brief bout of authoritarian rule (1975–77) and has managed to consolidate democracy – even though the quality of its democratic institutions and their performance leaves much to be desired (Ganguly, 2005; Kohli, 2001; Manor, 1990).

However, comparing the successor state (India) to the seceding state (Pakistan) – much less explaining the differences between them – is not so straightforward. India retained the majority of the empire's vast administrative apparatus; dominated, by virtue of possession, the distribution of fixed and moveable assets; and benefited from a substantial bureaucratic and logistical infrastructure and a comparatively longer history of indigenisation than the parts of the empire that became Pakistan. Pakistan, in contrast, was made up of two wings (West and East Pakistan), divided by the expanse of India. The majority of the areas which became Pakistan were unaccustomed to governance from the new capital, Karachi (formerly the provincial capital of Sindh). Pakistan, more so than India, struggled to find suitable and competent personnel to staff the central and provincial assemblies. It also inherited a shambolic military with completely new units and a severe shortage of officers. Moreover, India retained the major military training institutions and ordinance factories as well as the preponderance of moveable assets (Jalal, 1990).

Equally importantly, the areas that became West Pakistan included some regions into which British colonial administrators had not fully and successfully penetrated. Instead they relied on a strategy of outsourcing responsibility for security to a network of tribal groups, reinforcing such agreements with brute force when necessary. Consequently, these regions, most notably along the northwest frontier, posed important challenges for governance (Embree, 1979). Finally, Pakistan, as the state that chose to break away from the British Indian Empire, also faced a more daunting refugee problem than did India.

While India benefited from the fact that the Congress party was a nationwide grassroots political organisation, Pakistan's Muslim League, with its roots in North India, had no standing in the areas that became Pakistan. Worse, Mohammed Ali Jinnah's Two Nation Theory, which motivated his arguments for an independent Pakistan, held little attraction for the Muslim-

majority provinces that became Pakistan (Jalal, 1990). Pakistan inherited a very substantial landowning population in the Punjab that was quite hostile towards democratic norms and institutions (Talbot & Singh, 2009).

A number of scholars have proffered explanations for Pakistan's failure to make a successful transition to democracy. This essay will argue that all the extant accounts are, at best, partial and incomplete. It will contend that the roots of Pakistan's propensity towards authoritarianism must be sought in the ideology, organisation and mobilisation strategy of the movement for the creation of Pakistan. Whereas other recent writing on authoritarianism in Pakistan dwells upon the aggregation of power by the military, this essay focuses upon the failure of civilian democratic institutions to fully abandon authoritarianism even when the military is not in power.

Alternative explanations

There is a small but important corpus of scholarship on the origins and evolution of the Pakistani state. Most of these studies seek to explain why democratic institutions and norms failed to take root in Pakistan. One of the earliest works on the subject, that of Bin Sayeed (1967, 1968), suggests that this failure must be traced to the extraordinary challenges of state construction in the aftermath of the partition of the subcontinent and the hostility of the elitist civil service towards the messiness of democratic procedures. McGrath's (1996) careful historical analysis similarly attributes the destruction of Pakistan's nascent democratic institutions to the predilections of a small group of extremely powerful bureaucrats who had little regard for democratic processes.

The historian Jalal (1990) has offered a markedly different explanation for the emergence and consolidation of military rule in Pakistan. Jalal's argument, briefly stated, holds that Pakistan turned towards authoritarianism largely because of India's refusal to share military and civilian resources; the existential threat Pakistan believed its more powerful neighbour posed in its early years; and the military's willingness to exploit this threat. Alavi has concluded that democracy failed to take root in Pakistan principally because of the emergence of an early and unfortunate nexus between the bureaucracy and the military establishment. As he writes,

In Pakistan two facts stand out in sharp relief in its 25 year history. One is the dominant position of the bureaucratic-military oligarchy in the state; it has been in effective command of state power not, as is commonly believed, after the coup d'état of October 1958 but, in fact, from the inception of the new state. . . . The second outstanding fact about Pakistan's political history is that the most powerful challenges to the dominant central authority of the bureaucratic-military oligarchy came primarily from political movements that drew their strength from people of underprivileged regions and voiced demands for

regional autonomy and for a fuller share for the regions in the distribution of material resources as well as in state power. It was not only from East Bengal but also from Sind and Baluchistan and the North West Frontier Province or NWFP . . . that such challenges were mounted. (Alavi, 1972, p. 65)

Cohen (2007) has argued that Pakistan's authoritarian propensity can be traced to a lack of interest in democracy on the part of its landowning classes, its military establishment, its religious authorities and its civil service. A final argument can be found in the work of a historian of colonial India, Clive Dewey. He argues that the roots of Pakistan's authoritarianism can be traced to the tendency of the Pakistani military (inherited from the British colonial era) to recruit from the dominant state of the Punjab (Dewey, 1991; Yong, 2005).

The limitations of extant explanations

None of these arguments and explanations is without analytic merit. For example, Jalal is correct in asserting that Indian authorities did make a niggardly division of the assets of the British Indian Empire. Similarly, there is little doubt that Cohen, McGrath and Sayeed are correct in their assessments of the elitism of the Pakistani civil service. Nevertheless, none of their explanations are entirely satisfactory. All of them yield valuable insights but fail to provide a complete explanation.

None of the authors, with the possible exception of Alavi, explain how certain social classes came to dominate Pakistan's political system.¹ Instead they simply assert the existence of such dominant classes and emphasise their importance. Nor do the authors adequately explain why the various entities that they have identified were so deeply opposed to democratic procedures and institutions. Finally, they also fail to explain why countervailing institutions within the Pakistani state proved so inadequate in exercising some oversight and control over the military establishment.

In fairness, McGrath goes some way towards explaining the puzzle of institutional weakness. As he writes:

Each (Muslim) League member was free to create his own image of what Pakistan would be. But the advantage that Jinnah's tactics served in the national movement was a disadvantage when the League faced the question of operating a national state. Pakistan came into existence lacking any social or economic policy which League members could agree to implement. (McGrath, 1996, p. 53)

Even this explanation, however, still begs the question. Why did the Muslim League fail to develop a programmatic agenda for the new state? After all, it was founded in 1906, more than 40 years prior to independence.

Surely over the course of four decades the League should have been able to fashion some ideas and principles for democratic self-government?²

Significantly, as Jalal recounts, after partition the Muslim League focused its efforts upon building a centralised state strong enough to control those provinces which had only recently objected to Pakistan's independence. In February 1948, the League Council adopted a new constitution that separated the party from the government. Jinnah and other former party officials, '[f]reed from the official duties in the party . . . now had less reason to attend to the organisation of the Muslim League' (Jalal, 1990, p. 61). The task of party building was left to Chaudhri Khaliqzaman, the new president of the League. Khaliqzaman, however, was a refugee from the United Provinces (later Uttar Pradesh) in India and proved something of a liability in independent Pakistan.

Finally, while Dewey's analysis of the dominance of a militarised Punjab in Pakistan's politics and the corresponding role of the military has considerable merit, it still fails to answer a critical question. Why was Pakistan's civilian leadership so utterly incapable of keeping the military at bay? India confronted the same issue, albeit to a considerably lesser degree, when it had to transform a colonial army that had loyally served the British into a nationalist entity answerable to elected civilian authority (Ganguly, 1991; Kukreja, 1991). Scholars such as Siddiq (2007) point out that Pakistan's civilians have not exhibited dedication to keeping the military in the barracks and that in fact Pakistan's political actors have long used the military to undermine their opponents. Indeed, Pakistan's political parties are themselves notable for their striking neglect of democratic practices (with the important exception of the Islamist party, *Jamaat-e-Islami*). Thus perhaps the most interesting question is why civilians in Pakistan have been not only unable but ultimately uninterested in exerting civilian control over the military.

Towards an alternative explanation

A more complete explanation must focus on the ideological underpinnings and political negotiations that produced the Pakistani state. To that end, one needs to examine the origins and evolution of Muslim separatism in British India and the limited nature of its appeal (Hardy, 1972; Robinson, 1974). The cultural, social and political impact of British colonialism on Indian religious and cultural mores was considerable (Raychaudhuri, 2005). However, few groups felt as dislocated as the elite Muslims of British India, particularly those in Muslim minority areas, such as the United Provinces.

It is easy to identify the reasons for this high sense of displacement: prior to the advent of the East India Company and the subsequent imposition of British colonial power, a Muslim elite had enjoyed extraordinary political power in the

Mughal Empire. The British conquest and domination of India dramatically reduced their standing and privileges within Indian society. The contrast between the past and the present was exploited to considerable effect to forge the vision of a unified, monolithic Muslim nation. As one scholar has cogently stated:

The real significance of this identity lay in the ostensibly special status of Muslims that was seen to rest above all on their pre-eminent claim to power. It flowed from the experience of Muslim dominance in India... (Shaikh, 2009, p. 15)

The successful (and brutal) suppression by the British of the first major anti-colonial uprising in 1857 was a turning point for Indian Muslims, but Muslim religious revivalism was already under way long before that date. A noted Muslim scholar, Shah Waliullah (1703–62), lamenting the steady decline of the Mughal Empire, sought to forge a pristine vision of Islam in an attempt to revive the stature of Muslims in the waning days of the empire (Prasad, 2001).

Elements of South Asia's Muslim communities were not the only segment of Indian society seeking reform during the late nineteenth century. Some segments of the Hindu community sought a revival of Hinduism, while others embraced elements of British liberal values, mores and customs.³ Most importantly, they began to appropriate ideas of representative government from the British and sought to forge similar institutions in India. Such efforts were, at best, fitful, incremental and confined to an Anglicised elite, but they did culminate in the founding of the Indian National Congress (Congress) in 1885. It should be emphasised that the initial founders of the Congress movement belonged to diverse religious communities, with two Christians and two Parsis among their number.⁴ Within two years of its founding, the Congress had elected a Muslim as its president, Badruddin Tyabji.

Despite the diverse social composition of the Congress, its quest to found representative institutions contributed to growing misgivings on the part of key Muslim intellectuals. They feared that in the absence of suitable institutional guarantees the principles of universal franchise would place the Muslims of India at an intrinsic disadvantage. Few individuals made this argument with as much force as the Muslim intellectual Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, founder of the noted Aligarh Muslim University (Malik, 1980). As he wrote:

Let us first of all [suppose] that we have universal suffrage as in America and that everybody, chamars and all have votes. And first suppose that all Mahomedan

electors vote for a Mahomedan electors suppose vote for one Mahomedan member and that all Hindu electors for a Hindu member . . . It is certain that the Hindu member will have four times as many because their population will have four times as many . . . and now count how many votes the Muslim member will have and how many the Hindu . . . and now how can the Mahomedan guard his interests? It will be like a game of dice in which one man had four dice and the other only one. (Hardy, 1972, p. 130)

In another tract he argued that:

The Muhammadans are not the aborigines of this country. They came in the train of former conquerors and gradually domesticated themselves in India. They were therefore all dependent on service, and on account of this increased difficulty in obtaining the same, they, far more than the Hindoos, were put to much inconvenience and misery. (Khan, 2000, p. 35)

Sir Sayyid's elitism and his idiosyncratic perspective on the origins and status of the Muslim community in India require little comment. While it is difficult to say to what degree his views were representative of those of a wider array of Muslim elites in pre-partition India, the class allegiances of the members and principal supporters of the Muslim League in the United Provinces were not likely to modify the anti-democratic ethos of the separatist movement. As Chandra (1984), a noted Indian historian, has commented:

The main communal argument against democracy was that it would lead to majority rule which would in effect mean the majority 'community's' domination over the minority. Muslim communalists put forward this argument on an all India scale in the name of preventing Hindus from exercising effective power and permanent domination over Muslims, who would remain a permanent minority, while Hindu communalists repeated it almost verbatim in the provinces where Muslims constituted the majority. (p. 91)

Obviously the possibility of being politically marginalised by the advent of democratic and representative institutions caused much anxiety for the Muslim leadership, particularly those who lived in Muslim minority areas. (This concern was less apparent in the areas that became Pakistan.)

Muslim elites were further galvanised by Lord Curzon's decision to partition the state of Bengal. The precise reasons for the original plan of partition are beyond the scope of this discussion. Suffice to say that partition was not purely a matter of administrative convenience, made necessary by the size of the state; nor was it solely a devious imperial plot to sow discord amongst Hindus and Muslims. A diverse set of motives animated British colonial authorities. Unfortunately, segments of the Muslim elite had embraced the argument in British propaganda that they would be beneficiaries of this partition. Thus

Lord Minto's about-face in 1911, following mass agitation by Bengali Hindus, caused a further rift with the Hindu population (Sarkar, 1985).

This growing concern over the status of the Muslims in India culminated in the creation of the Muslim League in 1906. It is important to stress, however, that the League did not initially endorse a separatist agenda. Its primary concern, as expressed at its founding, was to 'protect and advance the political rights and interests of the Musalmans of India' (Pirzada, 1969, p. 1). Shortly after the League's formation, the British, faced with growing political discontent, made a small concession towards the notion of self-government with the Minto-Morley Reforms of 1909. Simultaneously, however, they also conceded to the demand of elements within the Muslim community for the creation of separate electorates (Sarkar, 1985). This concession, invariably, had the effect of bolstering the notion, already prevalent in some quarters, that the Muslims of India constituted a monolithic, primordial nation. Such a conception of nationhood was hardly conducive to the development of liberal-democratic norms or institutions which could embrace non-Muslims as equal citizens of such a 'Muslim' state.⁵

Mobilisation strategy and the organisation of the Muslim League

Throughout the period of the struggle for independence the Muslim League remained a mostly elitist organisation, with its roots in the Muslim-minority areas of the United Province. The slow growth of representative institutions in India, first under the aegis of the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms of 1919 and then of the Government of India Act of 1935, did little to contribute to changes within the internal structure and organisation of the Muslim League. Even a sympathetic observer of the League, Zaidi (1970), found that

Its lack of success in becoming a dynamic organisation was mainly because its leadership in the past had been composed of 'careerists' – professional politicians who lacked mass political appeal and some of whom felt no particular dedication to their cause. Convenience, rather than conviction, governed their politics. (p. 246)

Indeed the League's performance in the 1937 elections showed its limited popularity even within significant segments of the Muslim community. In this election, which led to the creation of provincial legislatures, the League only managed to win a mere 109 of the 482 seats that had been allocated to Muslims in the eleven provinces of British India. Only in the Muslim minority provinces, where it managed to portray itself as the guarantor of the rights of Muslims, did it perform well. In contrast, the League had little appeal among those living in Muslim majority areas, in part because they tended not to share these same existential concerns.

The Congress, in stark contrast, had contested 1161 seats and had won 716. Overall, Congress secured a clear majority in six provinces and emerged as the largest single party in three others (Mehrotra, 1970, p. 189). Congress success in large part reflected its successful transformation into a mass-based political party during the early part of the twentieth century (Krishna, 1966).⁶ That said, the Congress' ability to win support from the Muslim community was still limited. It contested 58 out of a possible 482 Muslims seats and won only 26 (Talbot & Singh, 2009).

In 1939, Congress ministers resigned en masse when Britain committed India to the war effort without consulting the country's elected representatives. Furthermore, Congress demanded that Britain promise full independence at the conclusion of the war. The British authorities proved unwilling to meet this demand, and most Congress leaders were incarcerated. This presented an opportunity for the Muslim League, as it can be argued that:

Both for countering the Congress demand and dividing Indian opinion and response and for maintaining normal administration in as many provinces as possible, reliance was placed on the Muslim League whose politics and demands were counterposed to nationalist politics and demands. (Chandra, 1984, p. 259)

As the Congress leaders languished in prison during much of the war years, the League, under the charismatic leadership of Jinnah, was able to employ the populist refrain that the departure of the British would inevitably result in Hindu domination. But this formula was ineffective outside of the Hindu-majority provinces; for the League to have any meaningful say in determining India's future, it had to win followers in the Muslim-majority provinces as well.

As Jalal explains, Jinnah struggled to develop a programme that could appeal to the divergent interests of the Raj's varied Muslim voters. 'A socio-economic programme aimed at mobilizing the rank and file could hardly enthrone the landed oligarchs who dominated Muslim politics' (Jalal, 1990, p. 17). Lacking organisation in the Muslim provinces, Jinnah and the League were compelled to craft policies that would appeal to the landed notables who were controlled those areas.

During the war years, the notion of 'Pakistan' did possess considerable appeal in both Muslim-minority and -majority provinces. However, the League never clearly articulated what Pakistan would be. This lack of clarity was the calculated result of Jinnah's difficulties. On the one hand, he needed to increase support for the League and Pakistan on the national level. But this project was made difficult by the simple fact that the League had developed little presence in the Muslim provinces, much less control over politicians or their electorates. Constantly trying to negotiate between the provincial and

national levels, Jinnah omitted to build a party structure that linked the League's high command with the provincial and local levels (Jalal, 1990). In fact, the provincial Leagues in the Northwest Frontier Province, Sindh, Punjab and Bengal were riven with factional divisions which Jinnah struggled to manage. Jinnah deliberately kept the notion of 'Pakistan' vague as long as possible in hopes of securing some tentative coalition (Jalal, 1990, pp. 18–19).

In many ways Jinnah had an impossible task. To secure votes within the Muslim minority areas, where Muslim fears about Hindu domination were most acute, he had to couch the League's policies in starkly communal terms. But those same communitarian appeals were counterproductive in the Muslim majority areas, where, Jalal explains, 'Muslim domination over undivided territories depended upon keeping fences mended with members of other communities' (1990, p. 18).

Jinnah's manoeuvring at the all-India and provincial levels required him to strike an array of political bargains with Muslim political stakeholders in the Muslim areas. Given the varied interests he had to constantly juggle, he did not focus on developing democratic practices within the party – far from it. As Shaikh has noted, any Muslim leader who dared challenge Jinnah's role as the 'sole spokesman' of the Muslims met a harsh fate:

Those who challenged it were ruthlessly suppressed. They included Muslims who had thrown in their lot with Congress (so-called 'nationalist Muslims') and strongly resisted Jinnah's idea of equating the civilizational unity of Muslims with Indian Muslim nationhood. (2009, p. 39)

Despite this ramshackle organisation, the League managed to turn the tide against the Congress in the 1945–46 elections. It won 75 per cent of the total Muslim vote, compared to the 4.4 per cent it had attracted less than a decade earlier (Talbot, 1988). Obviously, its success can be attributed in part to Jinnah's extremely deft appeal to religious nationalism. However, this is not an entirely complete or satisfactory explanation for the League's dramatic change of fortunes. Nor can one assign credit for the landslide victory to a wide-scale embrace of a well-articulated notion of Pakistan. Jalal cautions that the elections cannot be seen as endorsing any specific programme – because the League articulated no such programme. In fact the election was not won by a well-organised party but by an unstable coalition of political elites in the Muslim provinces whom the local League leaders enticed with a number of inducements. Their support was thus as unstable as the various political accommodations by which it had been won (Jalal, 1990, pp. 18–19).

Jinnah's coalition was always tentative, particularly in the Punjab and Bengal, where elites supported a vision of Pakistan that did not include

partition. However, his communal rhetoric throughout the campaign and the use of local religious leaders to rouse Muslim voters along religious lines contributed to the very communal tensions from which he claimed Pakistan would protect Muslims. Arguably, the League's single-minded focus on the potential plight of Muslims in a predominantly Hindu polity fostered Muslim anxieties about living in a Hindu majority country. As Smith, a historian of Islam in modern India, has written:

If the Hindus, with the little power that they were given in provincial governments, could wreak such horror on the helpless Muslims, what they would inflict in an independent India might well be imagined. Helps to imagining it were profusely distributed by the League. It was suggested that in a united India the strong, ferocious, Hindu-dominated centre, in its policy of crushing or exterminating Islam, would impose upon the Muslims a foreign language, an alien and caste-ridden social system, an infidel and rather barbarous culture; and of course, would place 'foreigners' in charge of administering these evils and in all posts of authority. (1946, p. 263)

While this form of propaganda contributed to the dramatic improvement of the League's fortunes in the 1946 elections, it did little to forge any kind of consensus vision for Pakistan among the different constituencies (Hasan, 1997).

Even after the elections, Jinnah's coalitions in the Muslim provinces were not robust. Throughout the west there remained parties who chose to affiliate with Congress, such as the *Khudai Khidmatgars* (popularly known as the 'Red Shirts' in the North-West Frontier Province) or ally with the Congress to stave off Muslim League advances, such as the Unionist Party in the Punjab (Talbot, 1998). Indeed the League played a critical part in the collapse of the Unionist coalition ministry in the Punjab under Khizr Hyat Khan (Gil-martin, 1988; Panigrahi, 2004). In fact the election, and the League's fragile coalition, demonstrated that appeals to 'Islamic identity' were inadequate. As partition became a reality, Jinnah feared that should Pakistan fail to survive the partition it would have to return to the Indian Union. To prevent this possibility, Jinnah worked to form a strong central authority, one that often ran roughshod over the interests of the elites and masses in the provinces.

Jinnah's refusal to articulate a vision of the basic nature of the Pakistani state, as well as its more specific characteristics, posed significant and adverse consequences for independent Pakistan.⁷ When faced with a plethora of social, political and economic challenges, the League and its leadership, especially after Jinnah's early demise, proved to be singularly incapable of coping.

This inability to provide effective governance provided the opportunity for an elitist civil service and an undemocratic military to fashion an alliance of

convenience and squelch the anaemic democratic state. Only they themselves, key members of these two institutions concluded, were capable of dealing with the tasks of maintaining political order and preserving the state. The following quotation from Iskander Mirza, a Minister for the Interior, echoed the views of the senior echelons of the bureaucracy on the rough and tumble features of democratic politics:

They (illiterate peasants) elect crooks and scalawags who promise the moon. The scallywags make a mess of everything, and then I have to clean up the mess. Democracy required education, tradition, breeding, and pride in your ability to do something well. (Sayeed, 1967, p. 76)

The lack of a political vision for the new state was also closely linked to the internal organisation and support base of the League. Despite its success in mobilising significant numbers of Muslims to support its platform in the 1946 election, its internal structure remained largely unrepresentative of the extraordinary diversity of British India's Muslim population. The leaders of the League were drawn from the landed gentry of the United Provinces, and their allies in the Muslim provinces that would become Pakistan were largely landed elites who supported Jinnah with the expectation of reward. Jinnah's efforts to create a Pakistan based upon patronage and reciprocity, rather than democratic inclusion, may have constrained the fledgling state's democratic future.

In the aftermath of partition

The question of the partition of British India and its impact on the two nascent states of India and Pakistan is beyond the scope of this article. The vast literature on the subject encompasses important debates about its sources and consequences.⁸ Suffice to say that partition had dire results for both India and Pakistan. The haste and lack of organisation with which it was carried out caused the deaths of over a million individuals and the displacement of at least seven million in each direction (Kumar, 1997). This made the task of state construction considerably more difficult (Sayeed, 1968).

Unfortunately, there was little in the ideology, social background or internal organisation of the Muslim League that equipped it for the formidable challenges of state construction, before or after independence. Furthermore, after independence, the fledgling state was confronted with the task of building a new state – with a significant Hindu minority – in East Pakistan, deep sectarian divisions within the Muslim community and substantial linguistic diversity. Pakistan's leadership, especially after Jinnah's untimely demise in 1948, found itself hopelessly unequal to these compounded challenges. As one noted historian of Pakistan has written:

Opportunist converts could jump off the League bandwagon as quickly as they had scrambled on board it. Jinnah's untimely death compounded the problems brought by mounting factionalism within Punjab and the revival of traditional opponents in the Frontier and Sind. By 1956 the League was in rapid decline, whilst its organisational weaknesses had not prevented the birth of Pakistan, it was to severely jeopardize the task of nation-building. (Talbot, 1988, p. 113)

Finally, their prior lack of experience with democratic practices and norms seemed to make League politicians far more open towards continuing the institutional legacies of the British Raj. Their initial institutional choices, which reflected the preferences of the Pakistani leadership and further bolstered the drift towards an authoritarian political order, provide useful clues about how the state's future would unfold. Specifically, Pakistan chose to base its initial constitution on the Government of India Act of 1935. The central features of this act have been aptly characterised as follows:

The 1935 act provided for responsible government at the provincial level but reserved veto power for governors. It also contained the principle of diarchy for the central government, which was operating at the time of partition in the form of an 'interim government'. The 1947 Indian Independence Act not only established fully responsible government at the center but also conferred emergency powers on the governor general, which led to the emergence of what has been described as the 'viceregal system' in Pakistan. (Waseem, 1992, p. 622)

The powers vested in the governor-general provided the basis for a highly centralised state. This is precisely the arrangement that Jinnah struggled to achieve. (Oddly, he did not trust such a concentration of power in the hands of anyone but himself.)

While it is widely accepted that the perpetuation of the 'viceregal' system in Pakistan dampened the prospects for inclusive democracy in Pakistan, it is worth asking whether other options were available, given the harrowing circumstances that confronted the new state. After all, had Jinnah not focused his energies upon building such a centralised state, would the seceding state have survived the various pressures, particularly resistance to the Pakistan project at the provincial level? Jalal suggests that the Muslim League leadership had to choose between 'refashioning a national political party out of the ramshackle organisation of the pre-independence period, or ... build[ing] the mechanism of an effective state administration' (1990, pp. 60–61). While in principle these are not incompatible, given its massive human and other resource constraints, the League concluded that it could not do both and focused its energies upon the latter, not the former. Thus while the provinces remained the site of political activity, those who were engaged in state-building (after the separation of the government and party) were either politicians who

had no base of support in Pakistan or civil-servants steeped in the viceregal administrative traditions (Jalal, 1990, p. 60).

Consequently, the constitution of 1956, though supposedly democratic, laid the foundations for a mostly unitary state with little power devolved to the provinces. This constitutional arrangement, as is well known, lasted all of two years; the military dismissed the new regime in 1958. For all practical purposes the death knell for Pakistan's incipient democratic institutions had been rung as early as 1954, when Governor-General Ghulam Mohammed dissolved the Constituent Assembly and imposed a state of emergency (Aziz, 2008). A pliant Supreme Court gave its imprimatur, invoking 'the doctrine of state necessity'.

These early choices, culminating in military rule, helped forge a political culture that failed to dismantle the feudal features of parts of the Pakistani state, instead bolstering the role of the civil service, and above all, the military. Once embarked on a path of constitutional and political development that viewed mass political participation with both disdain and distaste, it became exceedingly difficult for the state to instil a democratic political ethos and to reinforce democratic and participatory institutions.⁹

Wild cards?

Despite these serious structural impediments to the eventual consolidation of democracy in Pakistan, three important wild cards have emerged since the turn of the century. First, in 2000, President Musharraf's government promulgated the 'Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA)'. This paved the way for the emergence of a vibrant print, television and radio media environment. These various media outlets have popularised political debates that used to be the exclusive domain of the elite chattering classes. However, the explosion of Pakistan's media does not necessarily mean that Pakistanis consumers have access to quality information. The authors of one recent assessment of Pakistan's media expressed concern that this sector's

unrelenting growth, stimulated by commercial and political interests, seems to have marginalised the need to guarantee professional news reporting. Moreover, in this media wasteland, obscure powers have found a vast array of naive and for-sale journalists ready to produce or reproduce stories according to the dictates of their customers. (Mezzer & Sial, 2010, p. 9)

Equally disconcerting is the intense monitoring and managing of this media by Pakistan's intelligence agencies, such as the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). The Media Management Wing of the ISI either cultivates journalists directly or indirectly, by providing privileged access (Haider, 2011; Mezzer & Sial, 2010; Yusuf, 2011). Despite the title of 'free press' that these media outlets often enjoy, journalists who cover sensitive issues do so at risk to

their own lives. Since 9/11, several journalists have been beaten, tortured and even killed for dredging up issues that the army would have preferred to keep submerged. The Committee to Protect Journalists declared Pakistan to be the most dangerous countries for journalists in 2011 (Mendez, 2011). Given the uneven quality of information and debate provided by the media and its direct manipulation by Pakistan's security establishment, it is far from clear that Pakistan's press will disturb the varied autocracies underpinning the state.

A second wild-card is the enervation of Pakistan's so-called civil society. In 2007, the 'Lawyers' Movement' burst onto the scene to protest President Musharraf's unconstitutional ousting of a popular but controversial Supreme Court justice, Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry. Chaudhry was reinstated in March 2009 after sustained action by the Lawyers' Movement, which enlisted the support of Nawaz Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz. However, this campaign failed to transform itself into a broader, sustained social movement. In January 2011 lawyers and justices associated with the Lawyer's Movement shocked many within and without Pakistan when they supported the killing of Salman Taseer, the governor of Punjab (Lieven, 2012).

There are few broad-based voluntary service organisations or civil society organisations that operate throughout Pakistan. Many such organisations are local or are seen as promoting agendas alien to Pakistani beliefs and sentiments. It is also important to remember that not all civil society organisations in Pakistan espouse liberal, progressive or even democratic ideals: many Islamist – including Islamist militant – organisations are among the universe of Pakistan's civil society organisations. As Monga has argued, this complex set of liberal and illiberal actors operate on multiple levels in Pakistan and elsewhere. While fighting 'for positioning and for power [they can] generate negative social capital, even when they are genuinely involved in great democratic ideals' (Monga, 2009, pp. 15–16).

A very good example of such an organisation is *Jamaat-ud-Dawa* (JuD), the successor organisation to the banned terrorist entity, the *Lashkar-e-Taiba*. JuD provides health care and mainstream as well as religious education, assists in disaster relief and mobilises the Pakistani public on issues of national security *while also* actively promoting its support for jihad in India and elsewhere (Fair, 2011b). A less controversial example is the Islamist political party, *Jamaat Islami* (JI). JI, like JuD, is a longstanding provider of public services. As a political party it participates in the electoral process and has been, at various times, a powerful pressure group opposing various governments' domestic and foreign policies. However, JI's ultimate goal is to win power through the ballot box with the intent of overturning democracy in favour of some form of Islamic governance. Importantly, some of these illiberal civil society organisations seem more adept than their liberal counterparts at mobilising Pakistan's emerging media including new social media (Ahmed, 2010). Thus is far from

obvious what effects, if any, Pakistan's civil society organisations – fractured and not always civil – will have on Pakistan's struggle for democracy.

A third wild card that has emerged in recent years is Pakistan's increasingly activist Supreme Court. Pakistan's judiciary has traditionally sided with Pakistan's military and its powerful bureaucracy, with many members of the judiciary giving their imprimatur to each military coup despite their pledge to respect Pakistan's constitution. In recent years, however, Pakistan's courts have become increasingly activist, using *suo moto* powers to intervene in an array of domestic and foreign policy issues. Chief Justice Chaudhry began flexing the Supreme Court's muscles during Musharraf's tenure, questioning several of Musharraf's policies such as the privatisation of state assets and his government's practice of 'disappearing' individuals using the pretence of the war of terror. The Court has continued to investigate the activities of the military and intelligence agencies, as well as alleged civilian malfeasance. While the Supreme Court has been praised as becoming 'increasingly independent', others are concerned about the threat of judicial overreach.

Reflecting on the marked changes that Pakistan's superior judiciary has undergone, a recent assessment by the International Commission of Jurists noted that:

Parliament and Government are weak, which leads to the Supreme Court filling the gap by intervening in matters germane to the administration. This occurs to the extent that the Supreme Court even challenges constitutional amendments and intervenes to strengthen its own and particularly the power of the Chief Justice as far as the appointment of judges is concerned. A concern in respect of the balance of powers thereby arises. (International Commission of Jurists, 2011, p. 20)

This suggests that the courts may well become yet another arena for illiberalism rather than a forum for promoting a democratic agenda.

Thus, at this juncture, while Pakistan's new and ostensibly free media, its reinvigorated civil society, and increasing judicial independence may offer tantalising prospects for democracy in Pakistan, they may just as easily come to present further obstacles.

Conclusion

One may well ask why, after 60 years of independence, the political culture of the late 1940s has not undergone a transformation. However, a look at the initial challenges of state building suggests a different question: how is that any form of democracy – howsoever flawed – has managed to take root in Pakistan? Is Pakistan a 'failed state', a 'failing state', or a state that never functioned to begin with?

This analysis suggests numerous reasons why genuine democratisation in Pakistan will be very difficult. The military has consolidated near-hegemony over key domestic and foreign policies, and few civilians dare to challenge its prerogatives. What's more, the political parties themselves have demonstrated little taste for actual democracy. While Pakistan's current political parties are not direct descendants of the original Pakistan Muslim League, all of them – with the exception of the *Jamaat-e-Islami* – are, as was the League, vertically integrated personality cults that aggregate elite interests rather than those of the polity (Cohen, 2007). Throughout the period of democracy in the 1990s, the political parties were willing to use the army to undermine their opponents, prorogue the parliament and bring about early elections. The army, for its part, has been willing to participate in these stratagems as it is contemptuous of civilians and this wrangling only contributes the popular belief that the army is ultimately the most responsible organisation in Pakistan (Siddiq, 2007).

Even in the aftermath of the embarrassing US raid to kill the *al-Qaeda* leader Osama Bin Laden in 2011, when the Pakistani people would have supported the dismissal of the army chief by the civilian leadership, the political parties ultimately supported the army. What is palpably absent is any sustained civilian effort to exert control over the military and what is deeply present is an array of civilian institutions that directly benefit from the army's tenure, be it turncoat politicians, Supreme Court justices who use the government's disarray to justify their rule, or even civil society organisations that welcome the role of the military.

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Notes

1. Alavi (1972) argues that they were the legatees of British colonialism.
2. The concept of Pakistani statehood had not been formally articulated until the Lahore session of the Muslim League in 1940. But even after this watershed there was little effort to determine, '[w]hether or not Pakistan was to be democratic, socialist, feudal, in the British Empire, riddled with native states, and so forth' (Smith, 1946, p. 259).

3. Other elements of the Hindu elite pursued various revivalist as well as reform movements (Beckerlegge, 2008).
4. The authors are grateful to Jonah Blank, an anthropologist of modern India, for bringing this to their attention.
5. One scholar, in fact, has argued that Islamic ideology, with its emphasis on communal consensus, is antithetical to liberal-democratic conceptions of political representation. Furthermore, she contends that the roots of Muslim separatism and the demand for Pakistan can be traced to the ideological basis of the movement (Shaikh, 1986, 1993).
6. In fairness, it must be noted that Congress failed to win a few reserved Muslim seats. In Bengal, Fazlul Haq's *Krishak Proja Party* ('Farmer People's Party'), which was opposed both to *zamindars* (rural landlords) and Hindus, won most of them.
7. It is possible to anticipate one likely objection to this argument. According to one prominent historian, Jalal (1994), Jinnah had not intended to create a separate state until towards the end of British rule. Consequently, it could be argued that he and his colleagues had had little opportunity to draw up appropriate blueprints for this nascent state.
8. A small sub-set of that literature consists of the following: Mehrotra (1978), Singh (1987), Hasan (1995), Pandey (2001), Sarila (2005), Wolpert (2006), von Tunzelmann (2008).
9. For the classic statement on path dependence see North (1990).

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