

Power Elites in Pakistan: Creation, Contestations, Continuity

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Abstract: This study examines the creation of power elites in Pakistan and how they have come to acquire a prominent presence in this country's economy. The article deals with an interesting paradox: how have power elites, in constant contestation with each other, managed to collectively maintain their presence in this country's economy? The complex concept of power is reviewed here by deconstructing the state to understand where it lies and how it is deployed to attain different, even contradictory, objectives. This study highlights, in historical perspective, the way power has been employed, expressed, and legitimised. The exercise and maintenance of power is framed through an inter-disciplinary framework that encompasses political as well as socio-economic dimensions.

Keywords: Pakistan, political events, power contestations, power elites, state

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1. Introduction

Political science recognises the importance of characterising states through their behaviour and relations with other states (Chatterjee, 1993). Examples of this characterisation are Kelidar's (1997) work on Iraq's oscillation between integration and dismemberment and Ahmed's (1996) work on the quest for identity of Bengali Muslims. The concepts of nations, nationalism, state and state formation have been well-researched and defined by Gellner and Breuilly (2009), Giddens (1985), Smith (1991), and Weber and Fowkes (1980). Of importance here is that in all these studies, the nature of the state is not static. A state characterised in a particular way can evolve to acquire a different characterisation. This evolution can occur as a response to external circumstances or through a nation's internal dynamics.

Internal dynamics refer to the interplay of actions unleashed by specific stakeholders, seen as elites, given their ability to influence or potentially influence state

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policies and the way specific industries in an economy evolve. Examples of elites are political elites, bureaucratic elites, religious elites, military elites and corporate elites. Pakistan provides an interesting case study of significant contestations among these elites. Since its separation from India in 1947, it has been witness to major developments, both domestic and external as well as several regime changes, not all of which were peaceful. These tumultuous developments are the products of the rise and decline of, as well as contestations among, the country's elites. Major international events have also had a significant bearing on the development of Pakistan's economy and its political system. These events included the country's role in the proxy war in neighbouring Afghanistan and its turbulent aftermath, as well as its confrontations with India. Another international event was Pakistan's decision to build a military alliance with the United States under the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) and the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO), rather than with the Soviet Union in the early 1950s. This eventually resulted in Pakistan becoming an ally to the United States in its war on terror in 2001. Pakistan's geo-strategic importance has also attracted the attention of international stakeholders, both bilateral and multilateral. The interplay among domestic elites, and between domestic and international elites, makes for an absorbing study of elite contestations as well as alliances and their consequences on the economy and the political system.

The overarching objective of this study is to examine the role of Pakistan's elites, anchoring this narrative with two major episodes in Pakistan's history. The specific objectives are to: (1) identify the major elites and their strengths and weaknesses; (2) examine their interactions to explain how major events in post-colonial Pakistan unfolded; and (3) draw out the implications of the role of elites in Pakistani political economy.

This article is organised as follows. The next section is a brief literature review of the relevant theories and applied research especially with reference to Pakistan. The following section identifies and analyses the various major elites who have played important roles in the Pakistan state at various junctures in its history. Section 4 looks at the role of elites in the formation of Pakistan, one of two episodes chosen for analysis. Section 5 deals with the other episode, the separation of East Pakistan, now Bangladesh. The penultimate section draws implications from these episodes for the development of Pakistan's political economy going forward. Section 7 concludes.

2. Elites and Power Contestations

Classical theorists (Mosca, 1939; Pareto, 1935) have argued that rule by elites is an inevitable and desirable feature of social existence. However, power theorists such as Mills (1956) and Dahl (1961) have argued that elite rule that supports only the top echelons of society is a regrettable, but remedial, feature of social existence. Within this process, the masses do not receive any benefits from the socioeconomic structure which elites control. However, theories advanced by scholars from Pareto (1935) to Higley and Burton (1989) have been based on power systems of developed countries. They may not apply to emerging economies because developing countries have had different historical experiences, economic environments, class structures and ethnic

profiles. Religious and cultural patterns also differ. Modern elite theorists and their major themes include C. Wright Mills (political, economic and military elites); Floyd Hunter (real holders of power, official position holdings); G. William Domhoff (who wins, who governs, who benefits); James Burnham (scientific analysis of elites and politics); Robert D. Putnam (power shifts from entrepreneur to technical specialists); Thomas R. Dye (public policy and elite consensus); and George A. Gonzalez (US economic elites' shaping of environmental policies). Meanwhile, Foster and Holleman (2010) and Jones, Jones, Shaxson, and Walker (2012) drew attention to financial power elites, while Williams (2006), in the context of Britain, noted that the British power elite comprises political leaders, professional elites and financial/corporate elites.

Some recognition that political systems in place affect the analysis of power elites has been acknowledged. In the past two decades, socio-political analysts have reviewed political elite transformation to answer questions relating to the different types of political elites who craft different political cultures in countries which are similar in population size, economic development level, class structures, ethnic complexions and religious and other cultural patterns. Some scholars measured the relationship between economic and corporate development and political regime change and have developed complex theoretical models focusing on economic and corporate changes within authoritarian regimes (see O'Donnell & Schmitter, 1986; O'Donnell, Schmitter, & Whitehead, 1986a; 1986b; 1986c; 1986d). Other scholars argue that an economic crisis can be used to precipitate a transition towards democracy (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2005; Chilcote, 1990; Huntington, 1993; Shin, 1994).

In studies of elites, the most widely studied factors affecting elite formation and transformation are: 1) *socio-economic conditions*, including the level of per capita income, the extent of literacy and education, the degree of urbanisation and the quality and extent of communication media (Burkhart & Lewis-Beck, 1994; Deutsch, 1961; Lerner, 1958; Lipset, 1959); 2) *socio-structural conditions*, such as social homogeneity, the extent of inequality, distribution of power among societal groups and overarching loyalties or cross-cutting cleavages (Dahl, 1973; Lijphart, 1977; Muller, 1995; Vanhanen, 1990); 3) *political culture*, such as tolerance, trust, egalitarianism and willingness to compromise (Almond, 2000; Diamond, 1993); 4) *characteristics of political institutions* such as the extent of institutionalisation (Huntington, 1968), consociation arrangements (Lijphart, 1977), coherent (non-fragmented) party systems (Mainwaring, 1998) and parliamentary rather than presidential systems (Elgie, 2007; Linz, 1994); and 5) *international political and economic conditions* that may affect political regimes, including colonial legacies (Bernhard, Reenock, & Nordstrom, 2004; Collier, 1982), economic dependence (Bollen, 1983; Gasiorowski, 1995; Gonick & Rosh, 1988), relationships with superpowers (Gasiorowski, 1991; Muller, 1995), the 'demonstration effect' of democracy in neighbouring countries (Huntington, 1993) and other aspects of the international environment (Gonick & Rosh, 1988; Gourevitch, 2008; O'Donnell & Schmitter, 1986).

The above factors notwithstanding, much of the work on transformation of the state focuses narrowly on 'strategic behaviour' (Di Palma, 1990; Kitschelt, 1992; O'Donnell, Schmitter, & Whitehead, 1986c), with an equally extensive literature examining 'concrete historical situations' that affect such political transitions.

In the limited literature on power elites in Pakistan, studies by Husain (2000), Hussain (1979) and Talbot (2009) argued that Pakistan has characteristics and traits that allow it to be classified as an elitist state, given its colonial legacy where the bureaucracy ruled and the government was centralised. However, Pakistan had strong regional identities, an issue which led to ethnic-based discourses and the emergence of local elites. The ruling (national) elites always used the system of collaboration with the local elites to safeguard against any emerging threats of a no-confidence vote against the government.

3. Elites in Pakistan

The elites identified here are based on the study conducted by Hussain (1979) who based his review of elite groups on the time frame of 1947 to 1971. During this period, the elites could easily be classified under military, bureaucrats, landlord and political elites. But the story changed after the separation of East Pakistan from the country and the introduction of the nationalisation policy in 1972. These changes are dealt with later, in Section 5.

The relationship among these key elite players contributed to the shaping of a complex power structure in Pakistan. Numerous power centres, simultaneously active and at loggerheads, strove to protect their interests to secure better deals and occupy more economic and political space. Moreover, the solidarity or clash of interests among various power elites also resulted in the formation of new alliances, weakening or eradicating existing ones in due course. This shift in relationships between diverse power centres has led to different elites combining forces to shape the direction of major policy shifts. The power centres can be referred to as the ruling or 'power' elite; it is also referred to as the 'establishment' in Pakistan.

The political elite. This group consists of those who hold strategic positions in large political organisations which enable them to influence political decision-making in the country directly, substantially and regularly. In the early years of Pakistan, political elites could be differentiated depending on their location, in East and West Pakistan. In West Pakistan, political leaders were primarily big land-owners or aristocrats while those of East Pakistan were more often lawyers, teachers or members of middle class professions. A third group comprised those who had migrated from central India and who held the above-mentioned positions as well as a small contingent of industrial and commercial families. As seen below, the power of this elite has waxed and waned.

The military elite. In the Indian subcontinent, military elites emerged from colonial rule. In Pakistan, after independence and the early death of Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founding president, the country was not able to implement properly its concept of a secular and liberal state which was its founders' objective. Instead, the powerful, even authoritarian, forces were the only available groups that could run the country. In the system then prevailing in Pakistan, the two powerful sources were the landlords and the military. For the first forty years of the country's existence, there was a constant tussle for power between members from these two groups.

The source of the military's strength lay in the fact that since 1947, the threat of invasion from India had made the civilian government very dependent on the military.

The internal problems of ethnic and language conflicts, even border smuggling in Pakistan's early years, compelled the civilian government to use military forces to help maintain law and order. This reliance on the military strengthened its belief that it was Pakistan's sole saviour, and that its generals could govern the country better than democratically elected political leaders.

The military's strength also derives from regional and global power relations. The Afghan war against Soviet occupation as well as the United States' invasion of Iraq and intervention in Afghanistan provided the military with the justification to increase military spending even as it received military aid from the West.

The military was also active in business. Mani (2007) viewed this as harmful for the military's professionalism. On the other hand, these enterprises endured because of Pakistan's imperfect market conditions and the military's hegemony over other arms of government.

The corporate elite. Useem (1980) defined corporate elites as those who were in a position to exercise a major influence on the decisions and policies of large companies. In Pakistan, corporate elites played a critical role at the time of independence and have been an important power source since then. However, the corporate elites were characterised by contestations among them. Analysts consider these contestations among the corporate elites of East and West Pakistan as the major reason for the division of the country in 1970 and the creation of Bangladesh (see, for example, Rashid, 1978; Siddiqui, 2011; White, 1974).

Pakistani corporate elites faced numerous challenges. As emerging elites, they were under the social influence of bureaucrats and landlords. Being corporate people, their focus involved securing high profits; but they have been entangled in caste and class conflicts too. One view held that corporate elites had been involved in unproductive social competition with feudal lords who have long had a lavish life style inherited from their ancestors (Ali & Malik, 2009). Ethnic disputes among corporate elites also left them unable to gain the economic position they could have secured if they had worked together and with other elite groups.

The landlord elite. LaPorte (1975) referred to landlord elites as members of large landowning families who chose to be outside the military or civilian bureaucracies. Likewise, Maniruzzaman (1966) defined them as those who could easily get elected to political positions because of their control over the economic life of their tenants. Pakistan is an agricultural-based country and major tracts of lands for this sector are controlled by big landlords who, due to their control of major economic resources, indirectly control the lives of the tenants and farmers working on that land, making the landlord elite an influential force in Pakistan's political scene. In the 1951 provincial elections, 80 percent of the seats in Punjab and 90 percent of the seats in Sindh were won by big landlords (*Zamindars*). Even today, leading members of the national and provincial assemblies are either the big landlords or businessmen.

The military and bureaucratic elites also have their roots in this group of landed aristocracy. Normally, key military and civil servants were members of the big landlord families and their connections with those families helped them reach the peak of those elite groups also. Being an agrarian economy, the concentration of political and economic power in Pakistan was in the hands of landlord elites, the fundamental reason

for their ability to have ownership of large tracts of agricultural land. Even with the recent expansion in number of small and medium-sized farmers, the large landowners still hold sway over the agricultural economy.

The bureaucratic elite. Bureaucratic elites were early craftsmen of the power structure of Pakistan and their role was the subject of numerous studies (e.g., Ahmad, 1971; Burki, 1969; Cheema & Sayeed, 2006). Sayeed (1958) argued that by 1958, this bureaucracy had emerged as one elite source which had major influence over public decisions. Ali, I., Ali, J.F. and Raza (2011) concluded that the politicisation of decisions and lack of employees' voice in the decisions of top management had adverse consequences on the performance of public sector employees.

Bureaucratic elites had always been in confrontation with landlord elites, compared to other elite groups. Since the first ten years after independence was basically the era of bureaucratic elites, and since the landlords who were the major asset owners tended to be authoritarian in outlook, they considered bureaucrats their competitors. In addition, the battle for power was also a reason for this confrontation. But as the bureaucracy controlled public administration and landlords were active members in the political arena, this battle would not subside. Bureaucrats kept challenging the power of landlords over peasants by setting their own rules while landlords would use their political influence to get bureaucrats transferred. Later, following the first military coup in 1958, as the military elite became more powerful, bureaucratic elites dealt with them too by not confronting them.

The religious elite. Pakistan's religious elite of today cannot be characterised as being similar to those at the time of independence. Akhtar, Amirali, and Raza (2006) introduced the term 'political Islam', defining it as that body of modern political ideas and practices that evolved primarily as part of a larger struggle for power in the post-colonial context. However, the religious elite of that time played a vital role in the struggle to have a separate Muslim-majority homeland in the sub-continent. But, with this move for a separate homeland, a splitting of these elites into different sects occurred, contributing to serious disputes of an intra-religion nature. In today's Pakistan, disputes prevail between Shiah and Sunni, Brailvi and Deobandi, and Qadiyani and Ismaili, all affecting the course of Pakistan's socioeconomic development.

Massive Islamisation occurred during the third military regime of General Zia-ul-Haq, when the religious elites became prominent. Zia used Islam to strengthen his control of the country and to justify extending his rule after the military coup for almost ten years. Following this, religious political parties, particularly Jamiat Islam (JI), emerged as major players in politics, but they did not win many seats in elections. Despite this, other parties have sought liaisons with them because of their influence in shaping public opinion.

Haqqani (2005) wrote about the linkages of the military with religious groups. According to him, radical Islamic groups, which portrayed themselves as the guardians of Pakistan's ideology, had been granted special status by the military-civil bureaucracy that normally governed the country. The Islamists claimed that they were the protectors of Pakistan's nuclear deterrent capability as well as champions of the national cause for security of Kashmir. Secular politicians who sought greater autonomy for Pakistan's different regions – or demanded that religion be kept out of

the business of the state – had come under attack from the Islamists for deviating from Pakistan's ideology.

The international elite. Pakistan is one country where the presence of the world's leading superpowers is clearly evident. Institutions from these superpowers have a vested interest in Pakistan's economic and political decisions. At the time of the Cold War, the Soviet Union and the United States were the main players in Pakistan. However, with the break-up of the Soviet republic, the IMF and World Bank emerged as key actors in Pakistan's economy. The role of Pakistan's neighbours, China, India and Iran, being co-nuclear powers was also significant.

Financial aid given by foreign governments and institutions to Pakistan has been a heavily debated topic. One school of thought viewed this aid negatively, arguing against the conditionalities that invariably come with aid (Khan & Ahmad, 1997; Khan & Ahmed, 2007). However, several ruling regimes of Pakistan have not been convinced of this argument, having favoured the receipt of foreign aid.

Regardless of merits or demerits of aid, how it impacts local elite groups, either through empowering some groups or by engendering alliances and collusion, is also of importance for Pakistan's economic development. In this arena, international development agencies may play a role, positive or negative, that goes beyond their mandates.

4. Elites and the Formation of Pakistan

Few events have been more discussed in the history of contemporary South Asia than the partition of the subcontinent into India and Pakistan in 1947, based on what is referred to as the 'Two Nations Theory'. This theory posits that Muslims around the world are one nation and hence cannot live under one state with Hindus of United India. The anticipation of partition had cast a powerful shadow on the subcontinent's history decades before 1947, while the complications arising from partition have continued to leave their mark on sub-continental politics even today.

Despite its importance, scholars of British India, of Pakistan and of Indian nationalism have been unable to provide a convincing place for partition within their larger historical narratives (Gilmartin, 1998). For British Empire historians, the partition was the result of the failure of the British to manage the transition from colonial to post-colonial rule (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2013). For Indians, it was the unfortunate outcome of sectarian and separatist politics and a tragic accompaniment to the promise of a freedom fought for with courage and valour (Menon & Bhasin, 1998). On the part of Pakistani nationalists, it was a triumph of having a homeland based on Islamic ideology (Moore, 1983). However, the feature which underlies the narrative of Pakistan's history is the fact that the partition was not of the Subcontinent, but of the Indian Muslim community itself, making the creation of Pakistan a troublesome feature to fit into any simple narrative of the Muslim community (Hardy, 1972).

These explanations are inadequate to explain the fact that while there were rifts and issues among Muslims and Hindus in United India, which was escalated and magnified by the British prior to partition, there was ethnic factionalism which developed right from the beginning and exists till today and prevented the country from emerging as one nation (Jalal, 1985).

A more detailed examination of the events leading up to partition produced a narrative based on the role of elites. Jaffrelot (2002) argued that Muslim separatism developed primarily among the British provinces where Muslims were in the minority, while the Muslim majority provinces accepted the Pakistan movement in 1949. "The intellectual elite (of the former regions) evolved a nationalist ideology that was built around its socio-economic and political interest and helped shaped an ethnic variety of nationalism based on Islam" (Jaffrelot, 2002).

Further, Pakistan after independence saw three major elite groups controlling the state and making major decisions for the country. The first group consisted of the big landlords of western India who, after the creation of Pakistan, saved their land from subdivision and resisted any kind of reforms to that effect. This ability to block land reforms shows that partition gave them a greater say in the affairs of the new state.

Another elite group consisted of the modern educated urbanities who took charge of all state departments as bureaucrats. This marked the emergence of the bureaucratic elite. They benefited from partition because it afforded them much better access to government positions than they would have under united India. Being civil servants, they benefited from the legacy of colonial authority and control over the administrative structure. Other elite groups had not acquired such power at this stage. The major colluding groups in this first decade of the country's existence were the bureaucratic, landlord, religious and military elites. Since they were still in their development phase, they found it important to have alliances, as one group's actions provided space to another to carve out its position in society.

The third group comprised those commercial minorities who were working as traders in western India and were making little profit. However, after independence, when Hindu entrepreneurs migrated from western India, these commercial minorities had an opportunity to purchase land at a cheap rate to revitalise their businesses (Papanek, 1962). This marked the emergence of the corporate elite. The growing strength of this group emanated from Pakistan's growing industrial sector, thanks to strong government support and also the changing international scene after World War II which brought a lot of export options to Pakistan's investors. Government support was expanded under the first military regime (1958-1968) in the form of giving most import licences to the emerging corporate elite of West Pakistan and subsidising private industrial sectors (LaPorte, 1969; Lewis & Soligo, 1965; Naqvi, 1964; Papanek, 1967; Richard, 1965).

Thus, each elite group stood to benefit from partition, and by virtue of their access to state power, was able to use this power to pursue their vested interests. However, these benefits did not accrue to East Pakistan, given the dominance of Western Pakistan entrepreneurial class who saw to that (Papanek, 1962). As a result, disparities between the East and West grew.

A powerful elite group that was not explicitly in government was the military. After independence, the military was the only developed and trained institution in Pakistan. During this period, resources and decision-making were in the hands of the bureaucrats and the landlords who, in playing an active role in politics, sought to dictate to the military. The military was not comfortable with what it perceived to be less developed elite groups being in power. As the best organised group, it promoted itself

as the guardians of national security, depicting India as posing a major external threat. The success of its efforts was reflected in convincing even the elites in power that the military was protector of their vested interests. Thus, despite not being in government, the military in the early years of partition was the ultimate power broker. Its power could be seen in the government expenditure budgets of that time. While education, health and infrastructure should have been priorities for the country still at an early stage of development, 70 percent of the budget was spent on defence (Frederiksen & Looney, 1994). Little wonder then that Mani (2007) characterised Pakistan as a “weak state and a professional military domain”, arguing that Pakistan’s state institutions had failed to work effectively from the first decade due to inherent weaknesses but also to Pakistani elites’ fierce competition for control of the state.

Bureaucratic and military elites have been self-nominated guardians of the state since independence. Gradually, political parties were formed, transformed or abolished under the shadow of these two elite groups. Regardless of whether a civilian or military government was in power, these two elites groups have been the pillars of the state. The military has remained influential in directing the politicians and civilian bureaucrats “to ensure the funneling of public funds to its big businesses like Askari Bank and National Logistic Cell” (Siddiq, 2007).

5. Separation of East Pakistan

The other historical event seared into the memory of Pakistanis was the separation of the eastern wing of the country from the western. Most Pakistanis would blame this secession on India, but this is contradicted by the facts. These facts show that when the military began to have problems in East Pakistan, most of the Bengalis there tried to migrate to India as their borders were contiguous. But India was not willing to accept them. It was argued that what brought India to war with (West) Pakistan was the former’s desire to help the Bengalis establish a separate homeland. India could then repatriate the migrants who entered its borders to what is now called Bangladesh (La Porte, 1973).

Some scholars blame Pakistan’s political leaders for promoting the politics of ethnic division that resulted in rivalry between Punjabi and Bengali political leaders and the factionalism within the Muslim League that obstructed the development of party politics and led to the decay of the party system (Afzal, 1976; Ahmad, 1959). For its part, the Army watched closely the ever-growing frustration of Bengalis with the system and was looking for a suitable opportunity to inject itself more directly into the political process (Hassan, 2011).

The reason for the separation of Pakistan has to be found in the role of ruling elites of Pakistan. The argument has been advanced that East Pakistan’s economic and political welfare and rights were neglected by the bureaucratic and corporate elites in the government in West Pakistan who were intent on pursuing their self-interests (Hussain, 1976). Ali (2004, p. 137) noted:

Wealth appeared to be increasingly concentrated within a business oligarchy, the so-called twenty-two families belonging to West Pakistan, while the real wages

of workers stagnated. East Pakistan, later independent Bangladesh, became increasingly resentful over political under-representation and resource transfers from its agricultural exports for industrial investment in West Pakistan.

The number of Bengalis in top bureaucratic positions was far fewer than that of West Pakistan despite the fact that both West and East Pakistan's urban elites had campaigned at that time for a separate homeland out of their own interest. Further, while the economic boom of the 1960s was being enjoyed by West Pakistan's corporate elite, East Pakistan elites were not given their due share. This was because West Pakistan's corporate elite were awarded most of the export contracts through their personal ties with the bureaucratic elite, the members of which were mostly from West Pakistan, leaving East Pakistan's corporate elite high and dry. The result was confrontation between the elites.

Despite this inequality, the power elites from West Pakistan, with some associates from East Pakistan, tried to institute a centralised government under their control. It is therefore difficult to dispute Sayeed's (1972) contention that the breakdown of Pakistan's political system was attributable to power elites – the military and bureaucrats – of West Pakistan and their biased policies that were meant for their own benefit.

This discrimination only added to the distrust of Bengalis towards West Pakistan's elites on grounds of ethnic identity – East Pakistan's Bengalis vs. West Pakistan's Punjabis. Indeed, ethnic animosity between the residents of the two parts of Pakistan had surfaced from the very beginning of the Pakistani state in the form of language riots. It is possible that demands for equitable representation in the national assembly and a larger share of government expenditure have ethnic undertones (Oldenburg, 1985). It is on record that in the meeting of the Pakistan Chamber of Commerce, East Pakistan's representative complained that his constituency was treated as a colony even after separation from United India (Ali, 2004).

The military also had a hand in East Pakistan's separation. Made up largely of Punjabis from West Pakistan, it engaged in brutal repression of dissent in the East, determined to hold on to the territory at all cost and convinced that a military solution was possible. Instead, it stiffened East Pakistanis' resistance against what they saw as an occupation force from outside their territory. When India intervened militarily, the fate of West Pakistan's hold on the East was sealed.

The first military regime of General Ayub Khan (1958-1969) could be seen as reflecting a conscious effort to scrap the legal-constitutional systems inherited from the British and to bring in a Presidential system in which decision-making was in the hands of the President and his advisors (LaPorte, 1975). Ayub drew his support first and foremost from the military, but also from the civilian bureaucracy, the new industrial/entrepreneurial class, and part of the traditional rural elite (both from the large landowners in West Pakistan and the middle-class).

An unintended development after separation in 1971 was the rise of the religious elite. Political elites and religious leaders have always been in dispute about whether to give the Pakistan state a secular image. Although the country was officially named 'Islamic Republic of Pakistan' in 1956, the secular forces favoured the military and

civilian regimes over a pure Islamic state. In addition, the idea of a state dominated by Muslims living harmoniously together turned out to be unrealistic, as continuous tensions over twenty years after independence culminated in separation in 1971. The military itself was not particularly fond of an Islamic state. However, its reputation as guardian of the Pakistan state took a hit when East Pakistan successfully seceded. To ensure its continuing hold on power, the military leaders needed the support of minority ethnic-based political parties to counter the mainstream political parties. They found one source of alliance in the religious elite, which rose to prominence in the decade following separation, and was leveraged especially during General Zia ul-Haq's regime (1978-88).

6. Elite Collusions and Conflicts and the Making of Pakistan's Political Economy

The complexity of the power structure in Pakistan has been deeply shaped by changes in the relationships between key players of these elite groups. Numerous power centres, simultaneously active, strive to protect their interests to secure better deals and occupy more economic and political space. Moreover, the solidarity or clash of interests among various power elite groups has led to the formation of new alliances, weakening or eradicating the previous or existing ones in due course. This shift in relationships between diverse power centres have led to different elite groups combining forces to shape the direction of major potential policy shifts.

The political system of Pakistan is characterised by an intermittent breakdown of the constitution and political order, weak and non-viable political institutions and processes, rapid expansion of the role of the military and bureaucratic elites, military rule and military dominated civilian governments, and authoritarian and narrow-based power management (Rizvi, 2000). In the absence of a stable politico-economic structure, the nexus between various power elites kept evolving as internal and external events occurred and as strategic actors changed. The changes in relationships among diverse power centres have resulted in variation of politico-economic space occupied by these power players during different periods.

Tracing back to the time of independence, as noted, the mainstream groups were the bureaucracy, military, landlords and nascent bourgeoisie. The significance of military bureaucracy became more evident in the 1950s and 1960s. Military coups in Pakistan began in 1958 with various successful and unsuccessful attempts. Since its independence in 1947, Pakistan has spent several decades under military rule (1958-1971, 1977-1988 and 1999-2007). This country which came into existence in the name of free speech and liberal ideas has actually been under military rule for half of its life.

The rapid reconfigurations of power during the regime shifts have contributed to major changes among the leading corporate figures in Pakistan. Numerous studies blame Pakistan's capitalist structure for this conflict between classes, particularly between landlords and the industrialists (Rashid, 1978). What is evident is that by 1968, 22 families owned 66 percent of the total industrial assets, 70 percent of insurance and 80 percent of banking (Haq, 1968). The study by White (1974) reported that 43 families or groups controlled 98 percent of 197 non-financial companies, accounting for 53 percent of the total assets. In the 1980s, Hussain and Hussain (1993) reported

that 43 families represented 76.8 percent of all manufacturing assets. A recent study by Burki and Qureshi (2012) similarly maintains that family firms are a major form of business in Pakistan.

The use of political connections by business groups is a common practice in Pakistan and politicians tend to have significant influence in the corporate world (Khawaja, Mian, & Qamar, 2008; Saeed, Belghitar, & Clark, 2014). Meanwhile, the under-development of capital markets, inadequate institutional support, and over-arching governmental control and intervention created impediments for business. Consequently, establishing a close relationship with politicians in Pakistan or having direct political participation is taken as an effective strategy for businesses to overcome market failure (see Shoukat, 2016). Crucially too, Pakistan has also been deeply affected by the strategic decisions of the superpowers, especially those taken at the time of the Cold War and in the post-September 11 period; their impact on the country's economy is evident. The presence of international actors in the Pakistani economy has contributed to its development and growth.

As for landlord elites, Maniruzzaman (1966) argues that in the initial days of Pakistan, only 0.1 percent of the total number of landlords owned land to the extent of five hundred acres or more. Burki (1976) called them 'landed aristocracy'. Pakistan's census of agriculture of 1960 reported 19.4 percent of the farm area was accounted for by large farms, which numbered 2.8 percent of all farms. So, as per magnitude, about 5 percent or so of all the rural households in West Pakistan (including in that term also 'absentee' landowners) possessed about 70 percent of the land. Thus, Alavi (1976) would go on to argue that the rural elite owned a huge segment of the country's land. In the 1951 provincial elections, 80 percent of the seats in Punjab and 90 percent of the seats in Sindh were won by big landlords. The big landlords, now in important political positions, have been there even before the partition. Even in the present period, leading members of the national and provincial assemblies are either the big landlords or businessmen. Military and bureaucratic elites also have their roots in this group of landed aristocracy. Normally, key military and civil servants were members of the big landlord families and their connections with those families helped them reach the peak of those elite groups also.

Bureaucratic elites have always been in confrontation with landlord elites, compared to other elite groups. Since the first ten years after independence was basically the era of bureaucratic elites, and since the landlords who were the major economic resource-holders had in them the tinges of dictatorship, they considered bureaucrats as their competitors. In addition, the war for power was also a reason for this confrontation. But as the bureaucracy had control over public administration and these landlords were active members in the political arena, this war kept escalating. Bureaucrats kept challenging the peasant-controlling power of landlords by considering it as their administrative duty while landlords kept using their political influence to transfer the bureaucrats from one district to another (Rashid & Shaheed, 1993). Later, following the first military coup in 1958, the military elite became more powerful. Bureaucratic elites dealt with them, too, quite efficiently by not raising confrontation with them, apparently counteracting the division of power and control quite tactfully without making it an issue of prestige and pride for each other.

Nevertheless, Hussain (1979) argues that bureaucratic elites could have been much more productive if they had undergone two radical changes, i.e. decolonisation and Islamisation. According to Hussain (1979), the old colonial ruling system which was being carried out by the bureaucracy needed to be changed and such structural change had to be accompanied with Islamisation, which focuses on collectivism rather than individualism, which was actually the essence of the colonial bureaucratic system of Pakistan.

Among religious elites, Islamic groups have portrayed themselves as the guardians of Pakistan's ideology. They were granted special status by the military-civil bureaucracy that have governed the country. The Islamists claimed that they were the protectors of Pakistan's nuclear deterrent capability as well as champions of the national cause of security of Kashmir.

Religious elites have been wilful accomplices of the state in reinforcing an instrumentalist use of Islam, whether in reference to India (a Hindu majority country) or communist Soviet Union. They have also acted to defend the political survival of a ruling block against perceived threats over an extended period of time (Akhtar et al., 2006). What is evident in the nexus between religious and political elites is the clearly strong influence of religion on political decisions and policy implementation.

7. Conclusion

Pakistan makes for an interesting case study because of major events that punctuated and shaped the making of this nation that was once part of united India. This political economy of Pakistan, its making and its development, has been deeply influenced by many power elite groups that remain active in its political system and the economy. These events included its founding through the partition and the loss of East Pakistan in 1971. From a theoretical perspective within the literature of power elites, what is unique about Pakistan is that, instead of the usual political, business and military groups found in most countries, it has also landlord, religious and international elites who make for a much more complex dynamic of collusions and contests.

By explaining major episodes of Pakistan's history through the role of power elites – who among stakeholders have the ability to exercise political power – this article has shown how contestations between and collusions among influential groups can shape a country's development. It also provides a more holistic view of the dynamic processes at work that together brought about an ultimate outcome, the making of a new nation.

In the specific case of Pakistan, both the partition and separation of East Pakistan were brought about by collusion as well as contestations among elite groups pursuing their own self-interests. In the case of the partition, these self-interests favoured a common solution, the creation of a separate state. Following the partition, a group of elites (West Pakistan) colluded to monopolise benefits at the expense of other elites (East Pakistan) which in turn contributed to a second partition and the creation of Bangladesh.

The rise of power elites has stemmed from particular circumstances or from the activities of other groups. Partition brought about the rise of the bureaucratic and

corporate elites, while the perception of external threats ensured the rise as well as the source of power of the military elite. Continued tense relations between India and Pakistan also allowed the Pakistani military elite to endure in a way no other Pakistani elite group could. In its turn, the military bolstered the religious elite to ensure its continued hold on power.

The entrenchment of a power elite – the military – can transform the nature of a state (see Shoukat, 2016). Pakistan may have arguably begun life as an ideological state based on Islam, but the strength of the military had transformed the country into a security state. It also permits the group to wield power indirectly by creating a governance system where other elites are dependent on it.

A final question is whether the presence of these power elites was helpful to nation-building. Since elites act in their own self-interest, as shown by the landlords' obstruction of reform and by West Pakistan's corporate elites' monopolisation of export contracts, the answer is likely negative. Behuria (2009), sharing the opinions of scholars like Alavi (1976) and Jalal (1995), cited reasons such as the consequence of the persisting disjunction between "the processes of state construction and political processes which resulted from its skewed relationship between a relatively stable bureaucratic apparatus, inherited from its colonial past, and an unstable political system." The power elite presiding over the operation of the state machinery had been accused of seeking to perpetuate the class structures in the society that was hardly egalitarian by playing on intra-societal divides as a method to retain its hold over power (Rizvi, 2000). This is a view shared by other perceptive observers like Khaled Ahmed, Irfan Hussain, Rasul Bakhsh Rais, Zahid Hussain, and Ardeshir Cowsjee.

What is evident is that among power elites, over the last six decades, the military has always been the hegemonic force, reigning supreme over Pakistan's political economy, even when not in control of the government. However, since 2007 and the consolidation of democracy, this quest by the military to retain its hegemonic presence has been hampered by the rise of other power elite groups. Institutions such as the judiciary and to some extent the media can be considered as key actors in Pakistan, particularly during power struggles (Zaidi, 2014). Power plays within Pakistan's political economy will continue to evolve as this process of consolidating democracy occurs, deeply influenced also by issues such as the growth of urbanisation, of a middle class, and of a hugely buoyant informal sector, that will continue to reshape the elitist structure of the state.

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