

Varying Written Perspectives on Politics of Pakistan

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Abstract

Every discipline has its own specific perspective. The very difference of varying perspectives draws a line primarily between scientific and non-scientific knowledge. Then, amongst sciences it differentiates the rational from the empirical sciences. Apart from the natural sciences social sciences also utilize both rational and empirical approaches to science. Even, with in both of these perspectives there are also some other perspectives of social sciences. The present paper attempts to explore these perspectives as per the varying approaches of the respective writers contributing to the domain of the politics of Pakistan. A number of scholars have explored the politics of Pakistan. A brief review of them shows that they have studied the phenomenon of politics in Pakistan as per their respective approaches. The varying perspectives of these researchers can broadly be categorised into four main approaches i.e. 'Elitist Approach', 'Marxian Approach', 'Ideological Approach', and 'Praetorian Approach'. Every researcher of social science should necessarily understand the difference of these perspectives before initiating his investigation in to the politics of Pakistan. This paper aims to engulf the writings of all the potential writers in this field.

Key Words: Politics, Elitist, Marxist, Ideological, Praetorian, Approaches, Perspectives, Pakistan.

Introduction

A number of scholars have explored in to the politics of Pakistan. A brief review of them all shows that they have studied the phenomenon of politics in Pakistan in different perspectives as per the difference of their respective approaches. The varying perspectives of these researchers can broadly be categorised into four main approaches i.e. 'Elitist Approach', 'Marxian Approach', 'Ideological Approach', and 'Praetorian Approach'.

Elitist Approach

The scholars studying the political history of Pakistan in the elitist approach are of the view that Pakistan inherited a very strong military and bureaucracy. Both of these institutions had been playing a significant role in the policy making. As

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part of the colonial legacy they were having a superior and supervisory position in the newly born state of Pakistan. They always favoured the status quo in their own better interest and never let the political institutions like that of political parties get flourish. Consequently they destroyed the political culture, political institutions and the whole political system, indeed. Following authors used this approach in their writings:

- i. Robert La Porte
- ii. Myron Weiner
- iii. Stanley Wolpert
- iv. Ilhan Niaz

Robert LaPort, Jr, (1975), was the first one to use elitist approach in his *Power and Privilege: Influence and Decision-Making in Pakistan*. Referring to the la Michels' "Iron Law of Oligarchy", he opines that regardless of the democratic nature of the organisation an elite class emerges to guide the masses. Elite groups in Pakistan, however, are categorised by him into three main categories i.e. political elite, economic elite, and social elite. The epitome of political elite in Pakistan is the top-level military and the civilian bureaucrats, whose social base is traditional wealth and power. He again attaches wealth and power with land in Punjab and Sindh and tribal leadership (and land) in Balochistan and Northwest Frontier. Through the course of his study covering the period from 1947 up to 1975 LaPort, Jr, (1975) opines that pre-Ayub period actually paved the way for military rule along with the cohesion of civil bureaucracy. Military and bureaucracy was the hub of political activity then and also in the times to come. He concludes that the decision making processes in Pakistan tend to be highly centralised and personalised in the chief executive. He assumes the Z. A. Bhutto regime initially permitted a greater level of political expression along with a commitment to reshape the power of certain elite groups. This change, however, was not accepted by the civil and military bureaucracy who supported the status quo and they ultimately maintained it.

The second researcher to use the elitist approach was Mynor Weiner (1962; 1986). He concisely pointed out the major problem in the developing countries is that of scarcity of resources. The nature of political system in any country is determined by the fact that who controls, allocates and distributes these resources. The societies where political institutions were established with the empowerment of the political elites could overcome the military establishment and civil bureaucracies. Putting resources in the hands of political institutions led such societies at the way to political development. In the case of Pakistan he declared that in the first period from 1947 to 1951 all the resources were transferred from colonial masters to the native elites including civil and military bureaucracy. This was the period of transition. During the second period from 1951 to 1958 the civil and military bureaucracy established its hegemony

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on the political system of Pakistan. This hegemony could not be broken by the political parties. That is why the political institutions could not establish properly in Pakistan.

Using the same elitist approach, Wolpert (1998) studied the situation from a different angle and accentuated that Muhammad Ali Jinnah had used the vehicle of the All India Muslim League (AIML) to establish a country. The AIML was established in 1906 primarily with the object to protect the interest of the Muslims of India and to develop cordial relations between the British government and the Muslim community. During the period from 1937 to 1947, Jinnah had successfully transformed the party into a national movement. Though the party had penetrated down to the root level of the society but Jinnah could neither pay much attention to the formal structure of the party nor could he prepare second row of the party leadership who could replace him. Eventually both the party as well as the newly born country fallen a victim to the leadership crises. He further revealed four factors: i) 'Regional Diversity'; ii) 'Relatively Small Bureaucracy'; iii) 'Fear of India and a Rapid Growth of Pakistan Military'; and iv) 'Adoption of 1935 Act and the Vice-regal System', which lead to establish a dominance of civil and military bureaucracy over the political system of Pakistan.

Finally, Niaz (2010) argues that South Asia's indigenous orientation towards the exercise of power has reasserted itself and produced a regression in the Behaviour of the ruling elite. This has meant that the sixty years of independence from British rule the Behaviour of the state apparatus and political class has become more arbitrary and delusional. The resulting deterioration in the intellectual and moral quality of the state apparatus is a moral threat to Pakistan.

Marxist Approach

Some other writers have studied the politics of Pakistan through the Marxist perspective, who are as follows:

- i. Tariq Ali
- ii. Mubashir Hassan
- iii. Hamza Alvi
- iv. Mubarak Ali

Tariq Ali (1970) opines that the elite class has joined hands with the international power brokers, especially with that of the USA and UK. US had a considerable influence on the ruling class of Pakistan through out its containment policy. During the decade of fifties ruling class in Pakistan was following the same police on the recommendations of America. A significant influence of the British was also visible. Feudal class and the political leaders were being steered by the

British. On the other side civil and military bureaucracy were following the instructions of the American Lobby. In such a state of affairs objectives were met by weakening the party democracy and the democratic were finally wrapped up by the Martial Law regime. Thus only the internal strife was not responsible for political decay rather external forces played more significant role in derailing the democratic and representative institutions in Pakistan. Following the same approach Dr. Mubashir Hassan, Hamza Alvi, and Dr. Mubarak Ali has declared the imperialistic character of the political institutions and the political leadership responsible for decay of the political and representative institutions of the country. Ruling class actually was divided in to three main groups i.e. the feudal, the capitalist and the elite class. Proponents of this school of thought consider that all these three classes were established by the imperialist powers to meet their own targets during the colonial era. These very three classes were at the helm of affairs in the post colonial period. They however joined hands with the two axes of power named the civil and military bureaucracy in the post independence period. Such a close collaboration of all the ruling classes with the ruling forces did not let the democratic and representative institutions flourish. Natural outcome of this political experience was a class conflict which also bears negative implications of the political development of the society.

Ideological Approach

Apart from both these perspectives there are certain scholars who have seen the politics of Pakistan through the ideological prism, they include:

- i. Leonard Binder
- ii. Asif Hussain
- iii. Syed M. H. Shah

Both the proponents of the ideological approach, Leonard Binder (1961) and Asif Hussain (1979) have pointed out some ideological controversies as principle problems in the way to political development in the society. These principle problems include: i) state of religion in the newly established ideological state of Pakistan; ii) role of religious groups in the political system; iii) place of religious clergy in the structure of the state; and iv) the influence of the religious leadership on the political development of the country. While reviewing the pre-military hegemonic period from 1947 to 1958, Binder (Ibid) declares three main groups of the modern secularists, the traditionalists, and the fundamentalists as the trend setting forces in the political culture of Pakistan. Difference of opinion between these varying groups posed severe challenges to the political development of the society of pluralistic footings.

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Hussain (Ibid) has declared that the landlord elites, political elites, religious elites, industrial elites, the professional elites and the military elites were the main contenders of power in the political system of Pakistan. Declaring Pakistan an ideological state he argues that religious clergy had a deep rooted support in the traditional society of Pakistan. He also affirms that the political development in the country should be on the religious grounds not the feudal footings. To him the initial problem of Pakistan was more of administrative nature than that of political. In that phase religious leadership could have played a very important role. But they were not given due space in the political structure of the state. Even then they contributed significantly especially in the formulation of the constitution of the religious footings. He concludes that when the popular forces of the society were not given their due representation in the political system, the civil and military bureaucracy and the feudal classes got a chance to establish their hegemony on the state structure. This in turn caused a big damage to the political development in the society.

Praetorian Approach

Maximum number of scholars have seen the phenomenon in praetorian perspective. They all are mentioned as under:

- i. Simon P. Huntington
- ii. K. B. Saeed
- iii. Keith Callard
- iv. Rafiq Afzal
- v. Lawrence Ziring
- vi. Hasan Askari Rizvi
- vii. Raunaq Jahan
- viii. Aysha Jalal
- ix. Muhammad Waseem
- x. Ian Talbot

Huntington (1968) asserts that political development is not an inevitable path of progress, however political decay is always a possibility. He further argues that political organizations and procedures must have acquired *value* in the perspective of the society, and a certain level of *stability* to endure momentous progress.

Khalid B. Saeed (1967) has studied the political system of Pakistan, right from its origin up to 1965. Studying politics of Pakistan from 1947 to 1958, he has declared it the politics of conflict. He traces the reasons of these conflicts in the constitutional autocracy, military and bureaucracy alliance, the *raison d'être* of Pakistan i.e. Islam, politics of regionalism and the political parties. Apparently these conflicts were between the civil and military bureaucracy and the political

leaders but their causes were embedded deep in the political culture of Pakistan. All the political parties and the political leaders of East Pakistan had no clarity and uniformity on the point of provincial autonomy. Similarly, the politicians of West Pakistan had no consensus on different political problems and were segmented into different groups, protecting their own vested interests. Politicians of Punjab and Sindh had the feudal conflicts also, which culminated in turn into the political feuds. Such a state of affairs had its impacts on the society which left the political system unable to maintain and strengthen its institutions and to face the challenges from military and civil bureaucracy.

Keith Callard (1968) opines that Pakistani idealized democracy but did not know how to materialise it. He declares the initial period of Pakistan as the period of change and uncertainty. There had been certain fixed ideas and few institutions whose validity had never been open to question. Political parties have waxed waned and suffered eclipse in Pakistan. Religious leaders have laid their claim to complete authority and superiority and have achieved almost none. The state on the other side, has largely been run by the Civil Service, backed by the Military. Military and bureaucracy mainly from Punjab have carried much in the state of Pakistan as they did before its creation. Political leaders and political parties were, however, unable to set the system right.

Lawrence Ziring (2003) also labels the responsibility of the weaknesses of party politics in Pakistan on the political leaders, factional politics and the structural weaknesses of the political parties. The creation of a civil society, to him, continued to elude the nation and the socio-political balance was still maintained by a steel frame of civil-military administration. The parties on the other side were not yet the disciplined expressions of societal aspirations. The Punjabis dominated the political life, the administrative structure, the military establishment, the economy and the general decision making process in the country. This basically was an extension of the colonialism legacy. Then the externalities of the political experience in Pakistan are another negative factor in the development of political equation. The vast majority of Pakistanis are a gullible congeries of factions, clans and tribes. Manipulation of these all by the traditional, as well as, contemporary power brokers remains the central focus of the political experience in Pakistan and gives space for the interference of civil and military bureaucracy.

Rounaq Jahan (1972) has studied Pakistan's failure in national integration. The study mainly focuses the Ayub period that is 1958-1969. While addressing the problem of national integration in Pakistan she argues that that East West imbalance and the problem of sub-regionalism in West Pakistan hampered the process of national integration in Pakistan. Then the political leaders could neither evolve nor strengthen the existing political institutions in the formative phase of 1947 to 1958. In the absence of the political institutions and organised political parties the civil-military bureaucracy assumed de facto

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political power and dismissed the politicians as superfluous and as impediments to modernisation. She has referred the view of C. B. Marshall (1959:253), that West Pakistan is “governmental”, whereas East Pakistan is “political”. West Pakistan especially Punjab has contributed more to the civil-military administration. Such assimilation, however, was opposed by the Bengalis. Vernacular elite especially Bengalis already deprived of their due representation were further restricted from military and bureaucracy nonetheless the decision making. Nationalist politicians of West Pakistan and bureaucracy empowered the nationalist elements which in turn damaged the process of national integration of Pakistan.

Rafiq Afzal (1976) opines that a long experience of Muslim leadership with the British parliamentary institutions principally determined the possible political framework of Pakistan. The period from 1947 up to 1958 represents the first experiment with the parliamentary form of democracy. The main causes for the military intervention were the immature and baloney politics of the political leaders and unorganised structure of the political parties in action. Punjabi-Bengali political tussle gave birth to factions and the politics of forward block in Pakistan weakened the party politics and the political culture of Pakistan.

Hasan Askari Rizvi analyses the early period of Pakistan and assumes that Pakistan was lacking in the organised political parties and their leadership. Regional, factional and prejudiced political forces were engaged in political bargaining. Such violations of political norms undermined the political culture. Resultantly political institutions could not be established. This whole state of affairs left the political parties unable to compete with the Punjab based civil and military bureaucracy. Political elites on the other side could not take up the situation properly rather they themselves became stooges in the hands of apolitical forces.

Waseem (1989) studied the politics of Pakistan with the view that the authority structure of the state as inherited from the British India provided a focal point for the country’s politics. Though apparently the political community seemed to dominate the political scene through ideological movements, ethnic violence, election campaigns and legislative activity etc. but it was the structure of the state which was primarily responsible for shaping the political events throughout the post independence period. In this way primarily the Punjabi legal and constitutional authority occupied the central stage while the political actors had a propensity either to seek support from it or otherwise to restrict its legitimizing potential.

Jalal (1969) had conducted a comparative and historical study of the interplay between politics and authoritarian states in the post-colonial South Asia. She elucidated how a common British colonial legacy led to the essentially contrasting patterns of political development – military authoritarianism in Pakistan and Bangladesh and democracy in India. The study unfolded that how in

spite of having differences in forms, central political authority in each state came to confront broadly comparable threats from linguistic and regional dissidence, religious and communal strife, along with the caste as well as class conflicts. After comparing and contrasting the political processes and state structures the researcher had evaluated and redefined citizenship, nation-state, sovereignty and democracy. Finally she has recommended a more decentralized governmental structure better able to arbitrate between ethnic and regional separatist movements. Another work by Jalal (1990) contains much detail on Punjabi politics during the first decade of Pakistan's independence. She links domestic and regional factors with international 'imperatives' in the cold war era to explain Pakistan's defense influenced state construction. She puts responsibility on the feudal domination of Punjabi society on the political structure of Pakistan's economy.

Talbot (1999) has developed a sense of the Pakistan's history by examining the interplay between colonial inheritances and contemporary socio-economic and strategic environments. The same importance he has given to the analyses of politics at regional as well as national levels. Reaction of the state towards demands for augmented political participation and devolution of power has also been of vital importance. Similarly the sensitivity of minorities about the 'Punjabisation' of Pakistan is also not ignorable. Finally, Talbot focuses the long-standing problems of weak institutionalization and viceregalism which are rooted in the colonial legacy of the state.

Conclusion

The authenticity of the present research rests on the scientific method, it follows. The researcher has observed competing approaches to social science research based on different philosophical assumptions about the purpose of science and the nature of social reality. Each approach is associated with different traditions in the political theory and diverse research techniques. This linkage among the broad approaches to social science, social theory, and research techniques is basically not stringent. These approaches are indeed similar to a research programme or the scientific paradigm for the basic orientation to theory and research. Every researcher needs to sketch the theoretical foundation of his paradigm, its fundamental assumptions, the principle questions to be addressed, and the research techniques to be used through the course of one's query.

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