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Excerpt

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Introduction

Pakistan is an early and rather curious product of the post-war decolonisation process. Painfully carved out of the Indian sub-continent – ostensibly to provide a homeland for the Indian Muslims – Pakistan has been remarkable more for the tensions between its dominant and subordinate regions than for the purported unities of a common religion. Of the forty-two years since its creation, Pakistan has seen military or quasi-military rule for twenty-five; it has been governed under six different constitutions and has been at war with India on three separate occasions. In 1971 Pakistan lost a majority of its Muslim population with the breakaway of its eastern wing and the establishment of a new country, Bangladesh – the only successful secessionist movement in a newly independent state. A civil war in which Muslim slaughtered Muslim might seem to have exploded the notion that religion alone was sufficient cement to hold Pakistan together. There have been continuing tensions in its remaining provinces in the west. During the 1980s a government sponsored ‘Islamic revival’ led to a fierce debate about the form of government Pakistan should adopt, Islamic or secular.

The ideological debate was symptomatic of the difficulties Pakistan has continued to face in reconciling its self-professed Islamic identity with the imperatives of a modern state structure. The problem is all the more complex since state construction and consolidation in Pakistan has largely been on a collision course with the social dynamics underlying political processes. Pakistan had no well-developed political party organisations when it came into existence and it is still struggling to establish a party-based system of parliamentary democracy. It has not been able effectively to integrate its provinces or distribute resources equitably between the dominant Punjab and the subordinate provinces of Sind, the North West Frontier Province and Baluchistan as well as between the diverse linguistic groups within them. As in other post-colonial states where the unfolding of political processes has been hampered, Pakistan has relied on its civil service and, ultimately, on the army, to maintain the continuities of government. The institutional dominance of a predominantly Punjabi army and civil bureaucracy

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within the state structure has exacerbated regional grievances, especially since representative government, which might have provided a better balance between the provinces and linguistic groups within them, has been kept in abeyance for long periods of time.

Pakistan's precarious internal political balance has been accentuated by an adverse regional environment. Relations with India and Afghanistan have been cold, if not overtly hostile. After the Iranian revolution and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Pakistan came to assume greater significance in Western security calculations. But, as has been the case throughout its history, the recent Western efforts to bolster Pakistan's strategic defences have only served to heighten its internal socio-economic and political dilemmas. The support lent by the military regime of general Zia-ul-Huq to the Afghan resistance movement, and the presence of some three million Afghan refugees on Pakistani soil, has spawned a parallel arms and drugs economy with devastating effects for the fragile weave of Pakistan's social fabric. Running battles between the security forces and disaffected youth in rural Sind, violent conflict between Sindhis and Urdu-speaking Muhajirs in Hyderabad and Karachi – that cauldron of a city ruled by armed narcotics kings and their moles in army intelligence and the metropolitan police – are simply the most startling manifestations of the seething hate that has in recent years pitted Sindhi against Punjabi, Muhajir against Punjabi, and Muhajir against Pathan. With drug money making Kalashnikovs accessible to increasingly larger segments of a politically repressed and psychologically battered and divided society, many had come to wonder whether Pakistan could survive, indeed whether it ought to survive.

In August 1988, Zia-ul-Huq's death along with senior military aides paved the way for national elections and the restoration of a party-based parliamentary government. The victory of the Pakistan People's party led by Benazir Bhutto in the general elections in November certainly boosted morale and raised hope. But the new prime minister has been left facing a menacing set of challenges on the domestic, regional and international fronts. A state structure dominated by the non-elected institutions – namely the military and the bureaucracy – is not easily amenable to a transformation that readily acknowledges the ascendancy of the elected institutions – parliament in particular. The apparent move away from the state of martial rule has simply given a new twist to the long-standing contradiction between the state structure and political processes. The next step in the resolution of this contradiction, if it is to be in favour of a party-based parliamentary system, will have to overcome a formidable wall of structural obstacles rooted in the very nature of the Pakistani state.

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No understanding of contemporary Pakistan is possible without an historical analysis of the first decade after independence, a period of relative flux in the institutional balance of power between elected and non-elected institutions but during which the state structure was cast into an enduring, even rigid, mould. This work focuses on the dialectic between state construction and political processes while weaving in the related economic, strategic and ideological dimensions. Beginning its independent career without the semblance of a central government apparatus, Pakistan is a fascinating laboratory for studying the construction of a state. Alternating between detailed and more general levels of analysis the argument unravels the interplay of domestic, regional and international factors and how it weakened the position of parties and politicians within the evolving structure of the Pakistani state by tipping the institutional balance in favour of the civil bureaucracy and the military. The focus on institutional imbalances places the question of 'ethnicity' and provincialism in an altogether different light. In strategically situated countries like Pakistan, tensions between the centre and the provinces are not merely a reflection of the difficulties involved in integrating linguistically and culturally diverse constituent units. The problem is at the same time more basic and more complex – basic, because demands of provinces and linguistic groups within them are most often demands for a larger share of the state's financial resources; and more complex, because finances are generally limited, especially when the state's strategic perceptions have resulted in a political economy of defence characterised by the maintenance of defence budgets well beyond its resource capacities. The response in either case tends to be the centralisation of state authority and the pursuit of development policies aimed at maximising revenues rather than social welfare – a process which in Pakistan saw the non-elected institutions assuming dominance over the elected institutions of the state. These non-elected institutions carried a legacy of uneven recruitment patterns from the colonial era, thus exacerbating the problem of integrating diverse linguistic and socio-economic groups.

In the immediate aftermath of independence and partition the questions of sovereignty and state-building were inextricably linked in Pakistan. Notional sovereignty is not the same as the exercise of sovereignty. This work examines how a state, maimed and mutilated at birth, managed to survive and how in the process of exercising Pakistan's sovereignty the bureaucratic and military institutions rose to a position of dominance. The argument distinguishes between the phases of dominance and actual intervention by the military. After rejecting the common view that the weakness of political parties is the

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main variable explaining the first military intervention in Pakistan, it investigates how and why a military already dominant by 1951 decided to directly wield state authority in 1958. However, the political process was by no means a passive element; its complex dynamics contributed to the shaping of the Pakistani state structure, if only because it had to be thwarted and eventually aborted by the military and the bureaucracy operating within the constraints of constructing and consolidating a state in a difficult regional and international setting. The central concern is to show how the imperatives of the international political and economic system combined with regional and domestic factors in defining the nature of the Pakistani state. In other words, the answer to why the military and the bureaucracy came to assume the dominant role in decision-making within the state structure is attempted through a close and careful scrutiny of the different ways in which the interplay of regional and international factors influenced domestic politics and economy, distorting relations between the centre and the provinces in particular and the dialectic between state construction and political processes in general. The nexus between the top echelons of the military and the bureaucracy in Pakistan and the centres of the international system in London and Washington is of special relevance in this context. It is essential to take account of all the subtle and intricate influences that served to aid the senior bureaucratic and military officials in their efforts at derailing and then dismantling the political process during the first decade of Pakistan's independence. The more so since the institutional imbalances established in this period have proven to be of an enduring kind.

Five related themes have informed the analytical narrative throughout. The federal dilemma posed by the almost chronic tensions in the relations between the centre and the provinces, as well as between the provinces; the factors which have inhibited the growth and consolidation of a well-knit national political organisation; the role of the civil bureaucracy and the army in bolstering central authority; the extent to which the international connections of the civil bureaucracy and the military have influenced internal developments in Pakistan, and, finally, the recurrent resort to Islam as a political tactic which can at least provide the appearance of cohesion to an otherwise disparate people.

Most of these themes can be traced back to the decade preceding the partition of India in 1947. Chapter 1 concentrates on the political objectives of Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, and the All-India Muslim League, and the extent to which these were realised. Three significant historical developments need underlining. Unlike India, which inherited British India's unitary central government in

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New Delhi, Pakistan had to create a wholly new central apparatus if it was to survive as a sovereign entity. The All-India Muslim League, the party that took over the reins of government in Pakistan, had no effective organisational machinery in the provinces which became part of Pakistan. The particularisms of these provinces – their strong aversion to any outside central authority, Hindu or Muslim – rather than the attractions of a vague but simple cry of ‘Islam in danger’, were principal driving forces in the making of Pakistan.

The popular view that religious solidarities formed the basis of Pakistan has distracted attention from the problems it faced in creating a central government from scratch. Consequently it has never been fully established how central authority was imposed over territories separated by over a thousand miles. Chapter 2 delves into this issue by assessing the extent to which the administrative structure of the colonial state substituted for the lack of a political party with a high command reaching down into the provinces, districts and localities. The League’s share of the assets of undivided India and the nature of the administrative structure inherited at the time of partition forms the basis for the analysis of state formation in Pakistan.

The absence of a well-developed national political party organisation had an important bearing on the process of state formation in Pakistan. While the provinces continued to be the main arenas of political activity, those who set about creating the central government apparatus were either politicians with little or no identifiable support at the base or civil servants versed in the old traditions of British Indian administration. Chapter 3 examines the disjunction between the formation of the new centre and political activity at the provincial levels in the context of the strategic and economic consequences of Pakistan’s creation. The aim is not to provide consolidated information on provincial politics or the Muslim League. Provincial politics are analysed to the extent that they directly affected the nature of the Pakistani state and its relations with society. The purpose is to show how, while the state was being constructed, the institutional balance of power shifted in favour of the bureaucracy and the military. Through skilful manipulation of international connections, military-bureaucratic dominance within the state structure had already been achieved by the time of the assassination of prime minister Liaquat Ali Khan in October 1951.

Chapter 4 analyses the emerging disjunction between the wielding of state authority and established notions of representative government. It considers how positions within the non-elected institutions of the state, rather than bases of support in society, became the key to exercising political power in Pakistan. The sum total of provincial disaffections

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helped confirm the institutional imbalances. This chapter traces the links between domestic conflicts at various levels and the international compromises to which they led in 1954–5. By looking at the series of crises in the process of constitution-making, Chapter 5 illuminates the dialectic between state consolidation and political processes from a different angle. It questions interpretations which place the responsibility for the 1958 coup solely at the door of inept and corrupt politicians. Instead it investigates how the military and the bureaucracy railed and eventually broke down the political system to ward off challenges to which the state, dominated by these non-elected institutions, was still vulnerable. The negative impact of economic policies, geared to sustain needs of defence and requirements of international allies, had contributed in no uncertain way to a wide array of social disaffections which, on the eve of national elections, various political groups were seeking to mobilise. The analysis of the military intervention of 1958 is placed firmly in the context of these threats emanating outside the state structure but being quickly replicated within.

The balance between state and society could not be fully probed by focusing on the political process alone. By using Islam at the level of ideology and culture as the main point of reference, Chapter 6 considers the nature of the mutual accommodations worked out between state and society. This particular sort of search for legitimacy was fully explored in the first few years after independence and has become a time-honoured device ever since. The chapter offers a different perspective on state-society relations from that afforded by the study of the dialectic between state construction and political processes in the rest of the book.

Finally, Chapter 7, although in the form of an epilogue from the narrative point of view, provides the capstone to the various layers of argument woven together in the earlier chapters. It outlines a conceptual framework within which to place developments in Pakistan since 1958, and shows just how enduring the shifts in the institutional balances have proven to be in subsequent decades. Further it helps understand the subtleties underpinning the extended duration of the state of martial rule, and the conditions under which a reversal from direct intervention to a negotiated level of dominance might be possible.

The crucial first decade of Pakistan's independence lends itself particularly well to historical and political analysis now that important classes of source materials have become available. While most official documents in Pakistan have not found their way into archives where they can be consulted by scholars, this work has made use of all accessible primary sources – official and non-official. Interviews with participants in the events have helped in recapturing some of the flavour

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of the times, although these have not been relied upon to provide factual references. By far the most interesting and illuminating sources for the period up to 1958 were located in British and American archives in London and Washington, DC. Rich in information, these sources are quite indispensable for a thorough analysis of the complex interplay of domestic, regional and international factors in moulding developments in strategically important post-colonial states such as Pakistan. British officials had continued to serve in the Pakistani military and bureaucracy well into the nineteen-fifties while the Americans took a keen interest in Pakistani affairs for their own geopolitical reasons. While being sceptical of the interpretations of British and American diplomats the study has sought to make full critical use of the information and insights obtained from these sources – unlikely to be surpassed in the near future.

Although this is not a work of comparative politics it hopes to engage the interest of the student of comparative politics. An historical and political study of post-independence Pakistan, it should be of relevance to the broader issues of military intervention in politics and the nature of the state in the developing world. Most newly independent countries developed within the same international context as Pakistan. Moreover, many states in the third world experienced shifts in the institutional balance of power broadly analogous to those in Pakistan. So an analysis of Pakistan might well provide some unique insights into the evolution of state structures and political processes in the post-colonial world. Since Pakistan had no central government apparatus to begin with, the particularities of its case throw sharper light on the general problems of state formation, consolidation and the imperative as well as the potential for reconstitution.

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The demand for Pakistan, 1940–1947

The demand for Pakistan was first voiced by the All-India Muslim League in March 1940.¹ Raised on behalf of all Indian Muslims, now deemed to be a nation rather than a minority, it led less than seven and a half years later to a communal carnage and a division of the subcontinent based on the partition of British India's two main Muslim-majority provinces of Punjab and Bengal. Underpinning this momentous but tragic event were some startling facts. Neither partition nor the creation of Pakistan had produced unqualified advantages for Indian Muslims. Punjabi and Bengali Muslims lost the economically vibrant non-Muslim majority districts in the eastern and western halves of their respective provinces. Redrawing India's political frontiers partly along religious lines had justified the exclusion of these districts from a state where Islam ostensibly was to be the main determinant of nationality. Yet the creation of a predominantly Muslim state left over a third of India's Muslims outside Pakistan's freshly demarcated frontiers.

As it emerged in 1947 Pakistan consisted in the north-west of western Punjab, Sind, the North West Frontier Province and Baluchistan, and in the north-east of eastern Bengal and the Sylhet district of Assam. The separation of Pakistan's western and eastern wings by over a thousand miles of Indian territory was simply the most glaring of the many curious features of the new state. Its creation apparently had conceded the claim that India's Muslim minority was a nation entitled to determine its own political future. But the 'two nation theory' – the popular explanation for the creation of Pakistan – does not explain how, while exercising their right of self-determination, the Indian Muslims ended up becoming citizens of two separate and mutually hostile states. Efforts to prove or disapprove the 'theory' have not only distracted from analyses of relations among Muslims but also of the varied regional and local contexts in which they tended to co-exist, cooperate or conflict with Hindus.

¹ For a detailed version of the argument of this chapter see A. Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman: Jinnah, the Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan*, Cambridge 1985.

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There is now overwhelming evidence to suggest that, regardless of whether or not Muslims were in fact a 'nation', the contradictory nature and structural peculiarities of their politics in the Indian context had a greater hand in the making of Pakistan. So it is important to be clear both about the context of Indian politics, and the uses made of the 'two nation theory' by the All-India Muslim League, and especially by its leader Mohammad Ali Jinnah, in the final decade of the British raj in India.

Undeniably the theory has historical antecedents predating the demand for Pakistan. But the view that India's geographically dispersed Muslims were a separate and identifiable community tended to appear and fade with equal ease at the level of political debate. As early as 1909 the British had granted separate electorates to Indian Muslims in all representative bodies. The principle survived the constitutional reforms of 1919 and was later incorporated into the government of India act of 1935. One large consequence of creating a separate political identity for the Indian Muslims was that it effectively consigned them to being a permanent minority in any constitutional arrangement. It also reinforced factional rivalries among Muslim politicians who elbowed for position inside the protected walls of specifically Muslim constituencies. To seek office Muslim politicians – landlords in the main – could deploy their local influence without let or hindrance from organised political parties at the centre or in the provinces. Throughout the first three decades of the twentieth century the Indian National Congress managed, albeit imperfectly, to impose its imprimatur on the old factional structures of local politics. By contrast, Muslim politicians were able to work successive constitutional reforms without any heed to the All-Indian Muslim League set up in 1906.

Indeed there is nothing to show that the local and provincial politics of Muslims ever developed within the context of an all-India Muslim political organisation until the last decade of British rule. Except for brief periods when it made sense to band together and claim to represent the communal interests which the British believed to exist, Muslim politicians continued to seek accommodations with members of other communities at the local and provincial levels. Supra-communal alliances often dictated against too close an alignment with the Muslim League's communal concerns. This was underlined by the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms of the nineteen-twenties which gave Indians a measure of self-government at the local and provincial level, but kept the centre firmly in British hands. The British largely succeeded in driving a wedge between the all-India high commands of the League and the Congress and their local and provincial bases of support. During the

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twenties a separatist Muslim politics held few attractions. Separate representation was no longer enough; the constitutional arrangements ensured against the dominance of the reformed councils by any single community. Alliances cutting across lines of community were forged not only in the United Provinces where Muslims were in a minority, but also in the Punjab and Bengal where they had bare majorities. The provincialisation of electoral politics was matched by fateful developments at the all-India level. Muslim concerns about the Turkish Khilafat found an unlikely spokesman in Mohandas Gandhi. The Mahatma's leadership of the Khilafat movement served to highlight the various possible combinations of religion and politics in the Indian context. The collapse of the movement saw the Muslim League moribund and the Congress split into warring factions over whether or not to enter the reformed provincial councils.

By the time of the constitutional negotiations of the early thirties there was no all-India Muslim political party which could put forth a plausible claim to speak for all Indian Muslims. Paradoxically, it was the Punjab Unionists, a supra-communal alliance of Muslim, Hindu and Sikh agriculturist interests, who dominated the political dialogue of this period. The Punjabi construct of 'Muslim interest' which found form in the communal award of 1932 and the government of India act of 1935 was unacceptable to Muslims in provinces where they were in a minority. The award left Muslims in the Punjab and Bengal in a strong position; they were allowed to retain their separate electorates and received more seats than any other community in the provincial assemblies. Muslim politicians in these two provinces, along with their counterparts in the newly created province of Sind and the North West Frontier Province, which was elevated to the status of a governor's province, could look forward to taking advantage of the provincial autonomy granted under the 1935 act. But full autonomy for the provinces placed Muslims in the minority provinces at a disadvantage. It involved scrapping the official bloc, the one effective safeguard for minority interests.

The revival of the All-India Muslim League in 1934 with Jinnah in the saddle was partly an attempt by disgruntled politicians in the minority provinces, the United Provinces in particular, to revise the new constitutional arrangements. The 1935 act had for the first time opened up the prospect of the British giving Indians substantial power at the centre on the basis of electoral success in the provinces. If Jinnah and the League could somehow link their concerns with those of Muslims in the majority provinces, minority province Muslims might still retrieve some of the old benefits by calling in the centre to redress their provincial grievances. But, until the British actually showed signs of devolving